



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

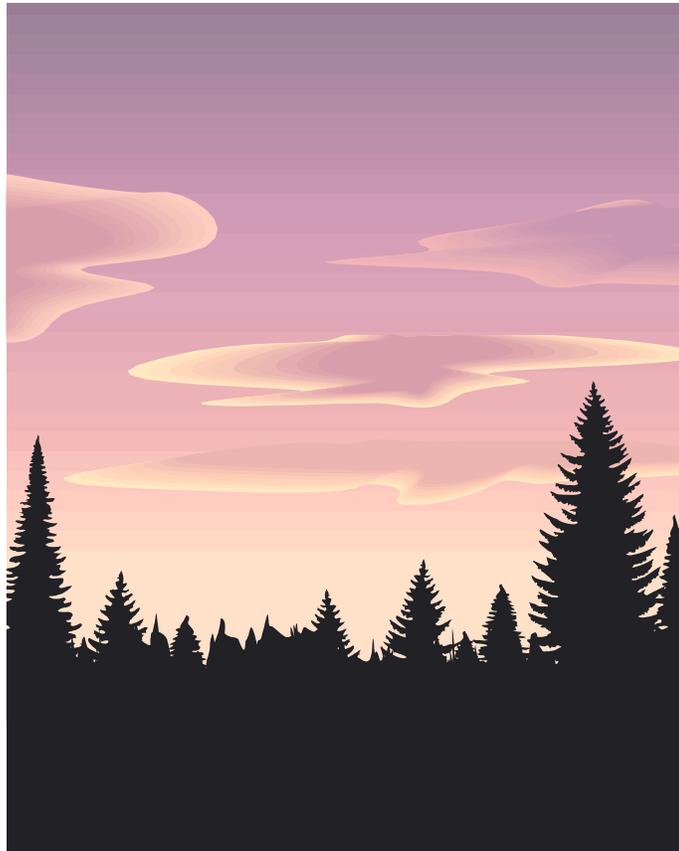
August 2006



# Environmental Assessment

## Valley Face Fuels Reduction Project

Flathead National Forest  
Tally Lake Ranger District  
Flathead County, Montana



**DISCLAIMERS:**

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDAs TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202)720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

Data Accuracy - The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. For more information, contact:

Flathead National Forest  
1935 3rd Ave. East  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 758-5200

If a map contains contours, these contours were generated and filtered using the Digital Elevation Model (DEM) files. Any contours generated from DEM's using a scale of less than 1:100,000 will lead to less reliable results and should be used for display purposes only.

# Valley Face Fuels Reduction Project

## Environmental Assessment

**Flathead National Forest  
Tally Lake Ranger District  
Flathead County, Montana**

**Lead Agency:**

**USDA Forest Service**

**Responsible Official:**

**Cathy Barbouletos**, Forest Supervisor  
Flathead National Forest  
1935 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. East, Kalispell, MT 59901

**For Further Information  
Please Contact:**

**Bryan Donner**, Planning Team Leader  
Tally Lake Ranger District  
1335 Hwy 93 West, Whitefish, MT 59937  
(406) 863-5408  
**[bdonner@fs.fed.us](mailto:bdonner@fs.fed.us)**

**Abstract:** This environmental assessment (EA) summarizes the analysis performed and resulting effects of the proposed implementation of vegetation treatments and other activities to reduce hazardous fuels in the Valley Face analysis area. This project was conducted under the authorities of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. A watershed level analysis and public scoping early in the planning process confirmed the need to reduce hazardous fuel levels and reduce the vulnerability of the forest to large scale, dramatic disturbances. A proposed action (Alternative B) was developed to meet these needs. Issues that influenced the development of an alternative to the proposed action (Alternative C) were wildlife security, old growth habitat, soil productivity, forest aesthetics, and the amount of tree retention within individual vegetation treatment areas. Alternative C responds to the stated needs while emphasizing these specific issues. A no action alternative (alternative A) was also analyzed. The *Preferred Alternative* for this project is Alternative C.

This page left blank intentionally.

## Table of Contents

### CHAPTER 1 - PURPOSE AND NEED

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION .....	1
PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION .....	1
BACKGROUND .....	2
EXISTING CONDITION .....	3
PURPOSE AND NEED .....	4
PROPOSED ACTION .....	5
DECISIONS TO BE MADE .....	5
RELATIONSHIP TO THE FOREST PLAN .....	5
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SCOPING .....	6
APPLICABLE LAWS AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS .....	9

### CHAPTER 2 - ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION .....	11
ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS .....	11
ISSUES .....	11
<b>ALTERNATIVE DESCRIPTIONS</b>	
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL	
<i>Alternative A (No Action)</i> .....	13
<i>Alternative B (Proposed Action)</i> .....	13
<i>Alternative C</i> .....	20
ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY .....	19
FEATURES COMMON TO ACTION ALTERNATIVES .....	25
MONITORING .....	31
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES .....	34

**CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT  
and ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

	<i>Page</i>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT BY RESOURCE AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ALTERNATIVES</b>	
Vegetation .....	<b>43</b>
Invasive Plant Species – Noxious Weeds .....	<b>83</b>
Threatened and Sensitive Plants .....	<b>92</b>
Fire and Fuels .....	<b>98</b>
Air Quality and Smoke Management .....	<b>124</b>
Water Resources.....	<b>136</b>
Aquatic Species .....	<b>144</b>
Soils .....	<b>154</b>
Wildlife (Introduction) .....	<b>177</b>
Old Growth Habitat and Old Growth Associated Wildlife Species .....	<b>181</b>
Snags and Downed Woody Material Wildlife Habitat .....	<b>195</b>
Riparian and Wetland Wildlife Habitat .....	<b>203</b>
Commonly Hunted Big Game .....	<b>207</b>
Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Wildlife Species .....	<b>218</b>
Neotropical Migratory Birds .....	<b>253</b>
Recreation .....	<b>257</b>
Visuals / Scenery .....	<b>262</b>
Heritage Resources .....	<b>269</b>
Economics .....	<b>273</b>

**CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

<b>PREPARERS AND CONTRIBUTORS</b> .....	<b>281</b>
<b>AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PEOPLE CONSULTED</b> .....	<b>281</b>

**LITERATURE CITED**

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A Glossary .....	<b>A-1</b>
Appendix B Forest Plan Management Area Descriptions, Goals, and Standards .....	<b>B-1</b>