
Gallatin National Forest News Release



For Immediate Release

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Court Rules on Main Boulder Fuels Reduction Project Lawsuit

Chief Federal District Judge Donald Molloy issued a ruling on July 30, 2007 regarding the lawsuit over the Main Boulder Fuels Reduction Project on the Gallatin National Forest. The Main Boulder project is located in the Main Boulder Canyon, about 30 miles south of Big Timber, Montana, outside of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

Forest Supervisor Becki Heath approved the Main Boulder Fuels Project in August 2005. However, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and the Native Ecosystem Council, sought to stop the project, first by filing an appeal of the decision, and then a lawsuit.

The purpose of the project is to reduce the amount of trees and brush on about 2,500 acres of land in Main Boulder Canyon, to protect firefighter and public safety in event of a wildfire. Fire behavior modeling shows that, when the project is complete, the speed and intensity of a wildfire will be reduced by over three times. The project is designed to accomplish the fuels reduction work and leave 300 to 500 trees per acre on the site after completion.

Judge Molloy ruled in favor of the Forest Service and allowed the project to continue but restricted the Forest Service from building any temporary road within the Grizzly Bear Primary Conservation Area. According to Bill Avey, Big Timber District Ranger, this decision will affect about 0.7 mile of temporary road and 194 acres of planned treatment. Avey stated that about 145 of those acres can still be treated without building the road. The court ruling also directs the Forest Service to provide a more accurate determination of a Forest Plan management area in relation to a treatment unit within the Primary Conservation Area. Judge Molloy dismissed the rest of Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Native Ecosystem Council's claims.



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Avey commented, “We are glad to be able to go ahead and continue work on this project, which has had widespread support”. Sweet Grass County and the Boulder River Watershed Association intervened on behalf of the Forest Service in the lawsuit. Fuels reduction work has already begun on the project and a great deal of work is scheduled for this fall.

For more information, contact Bill Avey or Brent Foster at the Big Timber Ranger District at 406-932-5155

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