
Big Timber Ranger District News Release



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Brent Foster, 406-932-5155

Main Boulder Fuels Reduction Project Work Begins

Big Timber, MT... Work on the Main Boulder Fuels Reduction Project has finally begun. The first areas treated will be from the Whispering Pines subdivision to Aspen Campground.

The fuels reduction work will involve selectively cutting and removing trees from National Forest land to reduce the chance and slow down the growth of large fires in the Main Boulder Canyon, thirty miles south of Big Timber.

“This project was approved in August, 2005 and subsequently litigated against by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Native Ecosystem Council,” said Bill Avey, Big Timber District Ranger. “Both Sweet Grass County and the Boulder River Watershed Association, as well as several landowners in the Main Boulder Canyon, have intervened in the case on behalf of the Forest Service to support this project.” The District Court has not made a final decision on this case.

The importance of this project was highlighted during the summer of 2006 when the Main Boulder drainage was evacuated twice, once from threat of the Derby Fire and again because of the Jungle Fire. The 24-mile Boulder River Canyon is home to some 250 private homes and structures, 25 recreational residences, four church camps, six Forest Service campgrounds and numerous wilderness trailheads. On a typical summer weekend 2,000 to 3,000 people occupy the area, using a single-lane country road that dead-ends at a major Wilderness trailhead. Heavy fuel loads and a large outbreak of Douglas-fir bark beetle characterize the canyon.

The three primary goals of the fuels reduction project are to: 1) provide for public and firefighter safety by minimizing the probability and effects of future fire starts; 2) extend the time available for evacuation in the event of a wildfire; and 3) reduce fuel loadings in the Main Boulder River corridor.

“The project was developed with input and support from adjacent private landowners, the local watershed association, and state, county and local officials and several local environmental groups,”

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Highway 10 East, PO Box 1130, Big Timber, MT 59011-1130
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin>

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continued Avey. “Work began this week and will continue as long as frozen ground conditions allow, or until April 30. Visitors to the canyon can expect to see trucks, crews and equipment in this area so please drive slowly as traffic on the road may increase.”

For additional information please contact the Big Timber Ranger District, (406) 932-5155.

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