



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Supervisor's Office
10 East Babcock
P.O. Box 130
Bozeman, MT 59771

File Code: 1950/2430/5150

Date: August 8, 2005

Interested Party

Enclosed is a copy of the Main Boulder Fuels Reduction Project Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for your review. The Main Boulder Fuels Reduction FSEIS incorporates by reference the entire Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), supplementing the northern goshawk analysis by replacing pages 3-80 and 3-81 of the FEIS and includes an amended Biological Evaluation, responses to SDEIS comments, and 2005 goshawk survey information.

The original FEIS and ROD were released in January of 2005. Two appeals of the decision were received and were being processed when on April 4, 2005 the decision was reversed, finding a need to supplement the northern goshawk analysis and reconsider potential effects of the proposed action to the northern goshawk. The effects to goshawk have been re-analyzed in the FSEIS and the substantial comments and responses to the DSEIS have been included in Appendix B of the FSEIS.

The Main Boulder EIS addresses the effects of implementing a hazardous fuel reduction project on up to 2500 acres on National Forest System lands outside of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness in the wildland/urban interface areas along the Main Boulder River Corridor. The project area is adjacent to the Boulder River, encompassing a distance of approximately 24 miles by ½ mile and is located approximately 30 miles southwest of Big Timber, Montana on the Big Timber Ranger District of the Gallatin National Forest. The legal description for the project is T3S R12E, T4S R 12 E, T5S R12E, and T6S R12E P.M, Sweetgrass and Park Counties, MT.

We are planning fuel management treatments from the forest boundary near the Natural Bridge and Falls, south to the Box Canyon Guard Station. Vegetation types include Douglas-fir, Engleman and white spruce, lodgepole pine, aspen, and native grasslands. All of the treatments have been designed to maintain the visual integrity of the corridor.

Collaboration with the public is an important part of this project. The proposal has been developed with input from adjacent private landowners, the local watershed association, as well as state, county, and local officials and groups.

This project is anticipated to take 5-7 years to complete, beginning in the winter of 2005.

The primary goals of the proposed action, which have formed the purpose and need are to:



Provide for public and firefighter safety by minimizing the probability and effects of future human-caused fire starts and/or helping to reduce the intensity of a potential wildland fire leaving the wilderness and entering the wildland/urban interface of the Main Boulder River Corridor.

Extend the potential time available for evacuation in the event of a wildfire by reducing the fire hazard along the Main Boulder Road.

Reduce fuel loadings and break up the composition of vertical and horizontal fuels in the river corridor, where possible, to be more consistent with natural pre-suppression levels.

The EIS analyzes the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative, along with 5 other action alternatives considered but dropped from detailed analysis. Based on the analysis presented in the EIS, my selected alternative is Alternative B, the proposed action, because it best meets the purpose and need for the proposal and addresses the issues considered in the analysis.

Copies of the FSEIS, FEIS, and ROD are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin> on the Projects and Plans page. To request a hard copy of the FSEIS or ROD, contact Barbara Ping by phone at (406) 522-2558, or by letter to Attn: Barbara Ping, Forest Ecology Group, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon St. Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215 (June 2003). A written appeal, including attachments, must be submitted to the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer (36 CFR 215.8) within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of the FSEIS and this decision in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Bozeman, Montana. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the availability of the FSEIS and decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.15. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59807

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

In electronic appeals, the subject line must contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF). If the sender does

not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Written appeals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service, e-mailed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the appeal period. Hand delivered appeals must be time and date imprinted at the Responsible Official's office by the close of business on the last day of the comment period.

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

Individuals and organizations that submitted substantive written or oral comments during the 45-day comment period (36 CFR 215.6) for the Environmental Impact Statement may file an appeal. Comments received from an authorized representative(s) of an organization are considered those of the organization only; individual members of that organization do not meet appeal eligibility requirements solely on the basis of membership in an organization; the member(s) must submit substantive comments as an individual (36 CFR 215.13).

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.9, if no appeal is received, implementation of this project may begin on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of the appeal disposition.

Additional information is available from Bill Avey, Big Timber District Ranger, at (406)-932-5155.

Sincerely,



REBECCA HEATH
Forest Supervisor