

Process for Cutting Infested Trees on FS Lands Adjacent to Private Land Helena National Forest 2008

Objective: Address the frequent and urgent requests from neighbors of National Forest lands for the treatment of currently infested trees (before the needles turn red and/or fall off). Focus will be on landowners who are treating their own property to lessen insect susceptibility and fire hazards.

Location: Trees that are successfully infested and killed by mountain pine beetle or pine engraver (still with green needles) or hazard/dead trees (red needled or bare) within 100' of the boundary between Helena National Forest System lands and private land. Stressed or damaged live trees suffering from agents such as western spruce budworm, red turpentine beetle, needle fungi, or other non-lethal insects/pathogens will not be considered imminently dead or hazardous.

Timeframe: September 15– December 1, 2008 & May 1 – December 1, 2009.

Process:

1. Landowner may call (406) 495-3755 (HNF Bug Line) and leave a message indicating interest in the program. The landowner will need to provide some information such as: name, address, phone #, legal description, directions to property, and number of trees. Landowner will need to have pre-identified the trees they propose to remove.
2. Requests will be listed and prioritized for a site visit. Turnaround may be delayed due to the expected high volume of requests; field visits may be limited depending on number & location.
3. A Forest Service representative will visit each of the trees proposed for cutting to confirm its status and check for resource concerns and existing infrastructure (nests, power lines, roads, improvements on Forest Service and neighboring properties, etc.). If it is agreed that the tree is dead or imminently dead (currently infested) the Forest Service representative will paint the base of the tree using different colors for dead versus green infested. If the landowner is unable to cut all trees, they shall prioritize to cut the green infested trees first.
4. The Forest Service representative will assess the number of cords to be removed, and determine appropriate slash disposal methods. The Forest Service representative will discuss and complete a detailed information form with the landowner documenting the agreement. This form will be returned to the Ranger Station and placed on file with front-line collection officers.
5. Prior to cutting trees, the landowner may then come in to the Ranger Station to purchase the fuelwood permit(s) and the detailed agreement form will be attached.
6. Following implementation, the FS may schedule a site visit to monitor resulting conditions.

Permits:

- A fuelwood permit will be issued at a cost of \$5 a cord (minimum 4 cord, maximum 12 cords). This permit is in addition to existing permits held by the landowner, and combined cannot exceed 12 cords.
- **Forest products obtained are not available for re-sale to other parties.**
- No skidding of treated material or ground disturbing activities will be permitted.
- Branches will be lopped and scattered (not to exceed 2'); chipped; or piled depending on documented Forest Service assessment.
- Green infested trees should be bucked to firewood lengths (18"), split, debarked if possible, and/or scattered to dry. Burning or disposing of the wood prior to spring is desirable. These trees should not be cut from May-August due to the risk of pine engraver build-up and the release of turpines that may attract mountain pine beetle during flight.
- Dead trees (red needles or no needles) may be cut at any time.
- If it is not possible to cut all designated trees, the landowner shall prioritize to cut green infested trees before dead trees unless the dead trees pose a clear hazard to infrastructure.

