



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lewis and Clark
National Forest
Rocky Mountain
Ranger District

1102 Main Ave. NW
P.O. Box 340
Choteau, MT 59422
406 466-5341
FAX 406 466-2237

File Code: 1950

Date: April 30, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

I am writing to inform you that the Rocky Mountain Ranger District has completed the Benchmark Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment (EA). The Benchmark Project area is located in Lewis and Clark County and is approximately 13 air miles southwest of Augusta, Montana. Major drainages included in the project area are the South Fork of the Sun River, Ford Creek, and Wood Creek. The project area is within Townships 19 and 20 North, Ranges 9 and 10 West. The total project area considered includes approximately 10,593 acres. Activity is proposed on 767 acres.

The purpose of the project is to reduce hazardous fuels that pose a risk to human life, recreation residences, permitted guest lodges, Forest Service administrative sites, campgrounds in the vicinity of the Benchmark Road, and private property adjacent to the National Forest's eastern boundary. The actions associated with this project are proposed because a number of recreation residence owners have expended significant time and money to reduce hazardous fuels on their permitted lots; however, Forest lands adjacent to these tracts remain untreated. The lands surrounding recreational residence tracts and permitted lodges in the Benchmark area are characterized by dense timber with significant downfall. Natural barriers to fire spread are infrequent and fuels occur in a continuous manner both to the north and south of the Benchmark road. Additionally, the alignment of major drainages in the area is conducive to supporting large fires, driven by prevalent winds from the west. The proposed treatments are intended to influence the direction of fire spread (away from recreation residents, lodges, campgrounds, and administrative sights), reduce overall fire intensity, provide survivable space near structures, and provide conditions conducive to effective fire management actions. The project would reduce fuels on 767 acres using hand thinning and slashing, some commercial thinning, and broadcast burning.



The EA is available for review on the Lewis and Clark Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lewisclark/projects/>. If you desire a hard copy or compact disk of the EA, please contact the project leader Russell Owen at 1102 Main Avenue North, Choteau, MT 59422 or by telephone (406) 466-5341 ext. 123. You may also contact Michael Munoz, District Ranger, at (406) 466-5341 ext. 121.

Comments on the project will be accepted for 30 days from the day after publication of legal notice of the project in the Great Falls Tribune; please check the Tribune for the exact date. Written comments should be sent to, Michael A. Munoz, Rocky Mountain District Ranger, P.O. Box 340, Choteau, MT, 59422. Electronic comments may be submitted to: comments-northern-lewisclark-rocky-mtn@fs.fed.us. Please type "Benchmark Project" in the subject line.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael A. Muñoz
MICHAEL A. MUÑOZ
District Ranger