



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Medicine Bow -Routt  
National Forests and Thunder  
Basin National Grassland

Laramie Ranger District  
2468 Jackson Street  
Laramie, WY 82070-6535  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>

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File Code: 1950/5150-1

Date: February 14, 2006

Dear Forest User:

On September 3, 2004, I mailed a letter to you requesting comments on a proposal to reduce hazardous fuel levels on National Forest System lands bordering the Foxborough and Valhalla private land inholdings (see Map 1). Since that time, a couple of events have occurred that make it necessary to request additional public comments on the proposal: 1) the Proposed Action has changed somewhat, as described below; and 2) hazardous fuel reduction proposals are now subject to notice, comment, and appeal under the 36 CFR 215 rules. This change is pursuant to the July 7, 2005 order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS.

If you submitted comments during the September 2004 comment period, it is not necessary to resubmit them. They have been retained as part of the project record and will be addressed by Forest Service resource specialists during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. If, however, you have additional comments that you would like to submit, please do so within 30 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice requesting comments on the proposal. It is anticipated that the legal notice will be published in the *Laramie Boomerang* on Tuesday, February 14, 2006. No other formal public comment period regarding the Proposed Action or the environmental analysis is planned.

### **Proposed Action – Foxborough Fuel Reduction**

Under the Proposed Action, the Forest Service would implement a variety of vegetative treatments to reduce hazardous fuels within ½ mile west, north, and east of the Foxborough and Valhalla private land inholding (see Map 2). Vegetative treatments would occur on roughly 750 acres and would include understory removal, sanitation/salvage, shelterwood, pre-commercial thinning, and commercial thinning. The Forest Service would also identify a non-forested area that would serve as a slash disposal site for use by the Forest Service and private landowners in the vicinity. Slash would be piled and burned each fall when adequate snowpack exists. Appendix A describes the silviculture prescriptions and slash treatments and includes a table depicting unit numbers, acreages, prescription, and proposed slash treatment by unit.

The proposed treatments would be designed to: a) reduce the hazardous fuel levels on National Forest System lands that are directly adjacent to the private land; and b) increase the ability to control a potential wildfire from burning across National Forest and private land lines.

Specifically, the treatments would result in conditions where (1) a surface fire entering the treated areas would remain on the ground; (2) a crown fire entering the treated areas would



quickly move to the surface; and (3) if a fire did start in the treated acres, it would quickly move to and/or remain on the ground.

**Acres Treated by Treatment Type**

<b>Treatment Type</b>	<b>Acres Treated – Current Proposal</b>	<b>Acres Treated – September 2004 Proposal</b>
Understory Removal (USR) Only	37	40
Sanitation/Salvage	253 (includes USR)	291 (includes USR)
Shelterwood	123 (includes USR)	147 (includes USR)
Pre-commercial Thinning	149	149
Commercial Thinning	191 (includes USR)	234 (includes USR)
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>821</b>
Temporary Roads (Miles)	1.4	1.8
Boundary Treatment (Acres)	40 (included in acreage figures above)	40 (included in acreage figures above)

An emphasis would be placed on removing trees that are overtopped, exhibiting heavy mistletoe infection, and/or that are dead and dying. All trees that are cut would be whole tree skidded to landings and slash piled to be later burned and/or chipped.

Approximately 1.4 miles of temporary road would be needed to access the treatment units. Temporary roads are not planned as part of the permanent transportation system and would be closed and rehabilitated following project implementation. The District would like to begin implementing this project during the summer of 2006.

**Design Criteria Associated with the Proposed Action<sup>1</sup>**

- To meet snag and snag recruitment densities listed in the Forest Plan, large trees that are dead or have declining vigor will be retained throughout the proposed treatment units at an average of 12 snags per acre. When choosing trees for snag retention, trees that are approximately 15” or larger diameter will be retained as a first priority. If multiple large trees meeting this criterion exist, trees with visible cavities, broken/dead/dying tops, heart rot, mistletoe, and/or declining vigor will be favored for retention. Where 15” or larger trees are not available, snags 10” in diameter or greater as described above will be retained. Where concentrated pockets of large diameter snags are present within a treatment area, they may serve as snag retention areas for nearby locations (lodgepole pine regeneration or pole timber) that are unable to provide suitable snags.
- Retain three piles of coarse woody debris per acre, made up of downed wood having the largest available diameter, and in the longest lengths (except in pre-commercial thinning units). These features will provide quality habitat for marten, snowshoe hare, voles or other species occupying the area without compromising the project objectives of minimizing the risk of a crown fire.

**Purpose and Need for the Project**

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<sup>1</sup> Design criteria are pre analysis actions designed into a proposed action to reduce impacts. Design criteria were not included in the September 2004 Proposed Action.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine vegetative treatments needed to reduce the existing, potentially hazardous, levels of timber dominated fuels on approximately 750 acres of National Forest System lands adjacent to the Foxborough and Valhalla private land inholding.

The project is needed to:

- Reduce forest fuels in the Foxborough/Valhalla wildland urban-interface area to reduce the existing wildfire hazard to area private land and structures that are adjacent to National Forest lands.
- Maintain and promote disturbance dependent plant communities in the vicinity.
- Improve area forest health and resiliency.

### **Relationship to Other Plans and Documents**

The Revised Medicine Bow Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, December 2003) is an overall strategy designed to guide the management of the Forest. The intent of the direction in the Forest Plan is to manage NFS lands for multiple uses. To accommodate multiple-use management, the Forest Plan contains direction for different Management Areas. Each Management area has a different management emphasis wherein specific uses are favored over other uses.

Management emphasis within the project area is distributed among three Forest Plan Management Area (MA) prescriptions. The National Forest system lands directly adjacent to, and surrounding, the Foxborough inholding are mapped as MA 5.13 – Forest Products and MA 5.15 – Forest Products, Ecological Maintenance and Restoration. These prescriptions call for using direct control or perimeter control as the wildland fire management strategy. The Foxborough and Valhalla private land inholding is designated as MA 7.1 – Residential/Forest Interface. MA 7.1 prescribes that National Forest System lands immediately adjacent to private lands are managed to minimize risks of catastrophic fires and insect and disease epidemics.

### **Decisions to be Made**

After the analysis process is completed, a decision will be made that includes the following:

- The selected alternative. The selected alternative could be the Proposed Action as described in this scoping letter, an alternative to the Proposed Action, or the No Action alternative;
- Rationale for the decision; and
- Mitigation measures and monitoring requirements necessary for project implementation.

### **Public Participation**

Scoping is an important part of the environmental analysis process and is used to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify the significant issues related to a proposal (40 CFR 1501.7). For these reasons, I encourage you to take the time to consider the proposal and to

submit your comments on it as noted in this scoping letter. As previously mentioned, no other formal public comment period regarding this action or the environmental analysis is planned.

This comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. This comment period is being provided pursuant to the July 7, 2005, order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS. Those who provide timely and substantive comments will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the *Laramie Boomerang* (newspaper of record). The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for the proposed hazardous fuel reduction activity. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. Written comments should be submitted to:

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests  
ATTN: Melissa Martin, Project Coordinator  
2468 Jackson Street  
Laramie, WY 82070  
Facsimile: (307) 745-2398

**OR**

E-mail: [comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-laramie@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-laramie@fs.fed.us). (Acceptable formats for electronic comments are: rtf, pdf or word.)

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Forest Service regulations outlining the requirements for providing comments on a Proposed Action can be found at 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3). These include (1) name and address, (2) title of the proposed action, (3) specific substantive comments on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that should be considered before reaching a decision. In order to obtain eligibility to appeal, each individual or representative from each organization submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR, Subpart B, Section 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request of

confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 10 days.

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For more information concerning this project, please contact Melissa Martin, Project Coordinator at (307) 745-2371.

Thank you for caring about your National Forest!

Sincerely,

/s/ Clint Kyhl  
CLINTON D. KYHL  
District Ranger

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