



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Medicine Bow – Routt  
National Forests and Thunder  
Basin National Grassland

Yampa Ranger District  
300 Roselawn Ave., PO Box 7  
Yampa, CO 80483-0007  
970-638-4516  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>

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Dear Interested Parties:

The Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland (MBR), Yampa Ranger District, requests your input about beetle issues on the Routt National Forest lands in the Red Dirt area.

The MBR is initiating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for the Red Dirt Integrated Management Project. The analysis area will be the Red Dirt Geographic Area (see enclosed map). The Red Dirt Geographic Area encompasses about 45,443 acres of National Forest Service lands. The area is intermingled with approximately 4,015 acres of state and private lands.

The Red Dirt Geographic Area began showing signs of increasing Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) activity in the summer of 2005. A dramatic increase in tree mortality was noted in 2006, with as many as 75% of the mature lodgepole pine being impacted. Many of the remaining mature pine were killed in 2007, with an estimated 90% now considered to be dead. Beetles have also been observed attacking younger trees in the 4” to 6” diameter range. The large scale effects of the MPB epidemic are expected to hinder the ability of the Forest Service to meet long term Resource Management Plan goals and objectives for the area.

The Red Dirt Assessment, completed in November 2007, identified resource values at risk due to large scale, high intensity beetle epidemics and wildfires within the Red Dirt area. Resource values threatened by these disturbances include; hydrologic flows, timber production, wildlife habitats, developed recreation sites, transportation systems, heritage sites, and urban interface areas. The assessment identified forest management strategies to reduce the long-term impacts of large scale mature tree mortality to these resources.

Salvage actions are intended to capture the value of dead and dying trees, to remove mistletoe infected trees to protect stand regeneration, and to reduce concentrations of dead and dying trees that increase the potential for large, high intensity wildfires. Forest thinning creates changes to existing stand densities and age distributions, accelerating tree growth. Road construction or reconstruction is needed to provide access to treatment areas outside of roadless areas. Road repair and decommissioning will correct existing or anticipated erosion and water flow problems likely exacerbated by increased water flows resulting from beetle induced tree mortality.



Enclosed please find the attached copy of the Red Dirt Integrated Management Project proposal and associated maps. We ask that you provide site-specific comments that can be used to further refine and evaluate a range of alternatives for consideration.

In addition to this scoping letter, the Forest Service will be holding an open house with the purpose of helping you to understand the analysis process, and to obtain input regarding the enclosed proposed actions. The meeting will be held on:

May 6, 2008	Yampa Ranger District office, Yampa, Colorado	3 pm to 6 pm
May 7, 2008	Kremmling FS/BLM office, Kremmling, Colorado	3 pm to 6 pm

Sincerely,

*/s/ Oscar P. Martinez*  
OSCAR P. MARTINEZ  
District Ranger