



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Apache-Sitgreaves
National Forests
Alpine Ranger District

P.O. Box 469
Alpine, AZ 85920
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File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 31, 2005

Dear Friends of the Apache-Sitgreaves:

The Environmental Assessment for the Nutrioso Wildland Urban Interface Fuel Reduction Project has been completed and is being mailed to those who have previously requested to be included on the project mailing list, or have submitted specific written comments related to the project.

The project was planned under authority of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218 Subpart A; it is not subject to notice, comment, and appeal procedures under 36 CFR 215 (218.3). The objection period closes 30 days after newspaper notice of publication as described below.

The Nutrioso Wildland Urban Interface (NWUI) encompassing area was originally identified in the year 2000. Analysis for the project was initiated on November 18, 2004, by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest's Supervisor to meet direction described in the Federal Wildland Fire Policy of 1995, the 10-year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan 2001 & 2002, the A-S NFs Land and Resource Management Plan, and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.

The NWUI Fuel Reduction Project proposes to reduce fuels by thinning, chipping, and/or pile burning and broadcast burning in order to reduce fire risk to the community of Nutrioso and adjacent outlying communities and State lands. The project is located on the Alpine and Springerville Ranger Districts of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The Responsible Official who will issue a decision on this project is Forest Supervisor for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Elaine Zieroth. **Additional information** regarding this proposed project can be obtained from James D. Copeland, jcopeland@fs.fed.us or Richard Davalos, rdavalos@fs.fed.us, Alpine Ranger District, P.O. Box 469, Alpine, AZ. 85920, 928-339-4384.

The proposal has been continuously listed in the A-S NFs Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) since February, 1998. The proposal was provided to 446 members of the public and other agencies for comment in a scoping report dated January 21, 2005. On January 21, 2005, a letter was sent to all on the mailing list, informing interested parties that the project is being planned under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and is subject to the "Objection Process" (36 CFR 218) instead of the "Appeal Process" (36 CFR 218). Required public meetings to describe and discuss the proposal and receive comments was held in Nutrioso, AZ on December 9, 2004, and February 12, 2005. Forest Service Representatives from the ID Team were involved in these and other meetings sanctioned by Apache County for development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as part of the collaborative process.



Eligibility to File Objections:

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted written comments specific to the proposed authorized hazardous fuel reduction project, either during scoping or other public involvement opportunities on this Environmental Assessment (218.6). Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual, objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. If an objection is submitted on behalf of a number of individuals or organizations, each individual or organization listed must meet the eligibility requirement of having previously submitted comments on the project (218.6)

Filing an Objection:

The objection must contain at a minimum, a sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the proposed project objected to, specific issues related to the project, and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection. Incorporation of documents by reference shall not be allowed.

Individuals and organizations filing an objection must also provide the following information: (218.7)

- Objector's name and address; with telephone number if available.
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request, (a scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic objections).
- For objections with multiple names or multiple organizations, identification of the lead Objector is required. Verification of the identity of the lead Objector shall be provided on request.
- The name of the proposed project, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name of the National Forests and Ranger Districts on which the proposed project will be implemented.

Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Reviewing Officer, Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, 333 S. Broadway, SE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87102, FAX 505-842-3173 within 30 days following the publication date of the legal notice in the newspaper of record. The office business hours for those submitting **hand-delivered objections** are: 0800 – 1630 Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. **Electronic objections** must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. It is the responsibility of Objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (218.9).

The publication date of the legal notice in the White Mountain Independent newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object to this proposed project should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Time extensions of the objection time period are not permitted (218.9).

Timing of Project Decision and Implementation:

When the objection-filing period has ended and responses have been made to all objections by the Reviewing Officer, the Responsible Official may make a final decision on the proposed project. The Reviewing Officer shall issue a written response to the Objectors within 30 days following the end of this objection-filing period (218.9). When no timely objections are filed, a decision can be made on the fifth business day following the close of the filing period (218.11). Implementation may begin immediately after the decision is made.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeffrey A. Rivera for
RICHARD DAVALOS
District Ranger