

Legal Notice of Proposed Action

Opportunity to Comment on Bighorn Sheep Habitat Improvement Project

The Forest Service, Ashley National Forest, Flaming Gorge Ranger District, is preparing an Environmental Assessment for the Bighorn Sheep Habitat Improvement Project. The project analysis area lies approximately 30 miles north of Vernal Utah, in Daggett County. It is situated on the slopes above the Flaming Gorge Reservoir from Bears Tusk on the west to Gold Point on the east.

The proposed action includes the following activities: Lopping and scattering the conifer, with a focusing on juniper, on the slopes along the Flaming Gorge Reservoir; and, over the next several years, burning the slopes containing the downed tree species to promote regeneration of grasses and forbs. The project area includes shrub lands and conifer forest ecotones having scattered but increasing numbers of juniper. These vegetation types provide habitat for a variety of grass- and shrub-dependent species. They also provide high valued habitat for bighorn sheep. The encroachment of conifers, mainly juniper, into these vegetation types is resulting in the gradual displacement of grass and brush plant communities. As the number and size of conifers increase, habitat values for bighorn sheep decreases. Removing conifers, focusing mainly on juniper removal, will maintain the proposed treatment areas as shrub and grass ecotones supporting more than one plant community.

The proposed action description and other information are available for review at Flaming Gorge Ranger District. Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from Diane Probasco at the Flaming Gorge Ranger District, 25 W. Hwy. 43, Manila, Utah, 435-781-5280, dprobasco@fs.fed.us.

The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide early and meaningful participation on a proposed action prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. Those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

How to Comment and Timeframe

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 Vernal Express. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. 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.

Send your written comments to: Jeff Schramm, District Ranger, Flaming Gorge Ranger District, P.O. Box 279, Manila, Utah 84046. Jeff Schramm is the Responsible Official for this project. He can also be reached at (435) 781-5263. Comments may also be hand delivered to the Flaming Gorge Ranger District, 25 W. Hwy. 43, Manila, Utah, during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments should be sent to comments-intermtn-ashley@fs.fed.us. It would be most useful for the forest to receive your electronic comments in Microsoft word (*.doc) or rich text format (*.rtf). Those using electronic means may submit a scanned signature. Otherwise, another means of verifying the identity of the individual or organizational representative may be necessary for electronically submitted comments or comments received by phone. This is pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6b.

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It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely comments will have eligibility to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6.