

**USDA Forest Service  
VERNAL RANGER DISTRICT  
355 North Vernal Avenue  
Vernal, Utah**

January 27, Contact: Scott Steinberg  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 435-781-5154

**LEGAL NOTICE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Opportunity to Comment on the Davenport Draw Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, The Limber Flag Sanitation Harvest and Thinning Project, and The Potholes Prescribed Fire Project.**

The Vernal Ranger District is seeking your input on a proposal to implement mechanical and prescribed fire treatments to reduce fuel loadings, control insect and disease infestation and help reintroduce the historic fire regimes in the east end of the Vernal Ranger District. The Forest Service, Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District, has made a preliminary assessment. The two projects listed below are categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA pending a determination that there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment.

The Davenport Draw Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project is designed to reduce fire risk to private land and improvements located in the Davenport Draw (cutting and thinning of the shaded fuel break not to exceed 1000 acres) fits within FSH 1909.15, 31.2, Category 10--Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire, not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing, not to exceed 1,000 acres.

The Limber Flag Sanitation Harvest and Thinning Project will use mechanical treatments to remove inferior, damaged and stressed, overstocked, diseased trees in the East Fork of the Pothole Creek area fits within Category 14--Commercial and non-Commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction, including removal of infested/infected trees and adjacent live uninfested/uninfected trees as determined necessary to control the spread of insects or disease.

The Potholes Prescribed Fire Project falls under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), passed in December of 2003. Title One of HFRA focuses on expedited hazardous fuel treatment for lands at risk of wildfire and insect and disease epidemics.

The projects are located approximately twenty four miles northeast of Vernal, Utah and can be reached by traveling north on Highway 191 then east on the Diamond Mountain Road (Forest Road #048). Forest Roads #10255 and #10256 are located north of the Diamond Mountain Road and access the Potholes Creek area. The area is characterized by vegetated steep side slopes and narrow canyon bottoms.

Proposed actions to treat fuel loadings are needed to help reduce the fire risk in the area and permit the management of natural fire ignitions to achieve resource benefits and save costly fire suppression expenditures. Additionally proposed mechanical treatments will treat insect and disease infestation.

The Vernal Ranger District will be hosting an "Open House" in Vernal, Utah at the Ashley National Forest Supervisors Office, 355 N. Vernal Avenue, February 9, 2006, Thursday evening from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm. The Open House will be held in the Interagency Fire Center conference room behind the Supervisor's Office. Resource professionals will be on hand to answer questions you might have and further explain specifics about the project as described below. More detailed maps and background information on analysis used to develop the project proposal will be available for your review. A comment form will be provided for any written comments on the project proposal you wish to leave. We

encourage your attendance at the Open House. All comments received at the Open House will be used in the public scoping process.

This comment period provides 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. It is being provided pursuant to the July 2 and September 16, 2005, orders 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 regulations.

### **How to Comment and Timeframe**

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following 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 proposal. You should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Written comments must be submitted to: Scott Steinberg, Vernal District Ranger, 355 North Vernal Ave. Vernal, UT 84078. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone 435-781-5154 or in person; or at official agency function (i.e. public meeting) designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to [comments-intermtn-ashly@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-ashly@fs.fed.us). Comments must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6. Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be eligible to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215.