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Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Fillmore Field Office  
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Dear Interested Public Land User,

On August 22, 2002, President Bush announced the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities. The **Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project** is one of the demonstration projects for the President's Healthy Forests Initiative. This initiative calls for administrative improvements to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency and better results in projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and restore forest health. More information about the Healthy Forest Initiative can be viewed at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/HFI.shtml>.

### Proposed Action

The Fillmore Field Office Manager and the Fillmore District Ranger are proposing to reduce hazardous fuels on approximately 14,329 acres along the west side of the Pahvant Mountain Range, in the vicinity of Scipio, Holden, Fillmore and Meadow, Utah. The purpose of the proposed action is to change fire behavior conditions near these communities to reduce the risk of uncharacteristically intense and severe wildfire and secondary effects, such as flooding, to these communities and the environment while providing for firefighter safety.

Sagebrush-grasslands, pinyon-juniper, and Gambel oak would be treated in seven treatment units, ranging from approximately 490 to 4,929 acres in size. Approximately 40-80 percent of the vegetation would be removed in each treatment unit. Treatment methods include cutting vegetation by hand; piling or scattering cut vegetation; burning cut vegetation by hand or helicopter; and broadcast burning by hand or helicopter. Broadcast burning would be applied to create a patchwork burn pattern of burned and unburned vegetation; for example, 40-80 percent of the vegetation would be burned, leaving 20-60 percent unburned. Treatments would begin in 2003 and are anticipated to be completed by 2008.

### Background

The communities of the Pahvant Front, including Scipio, Holden, Fillmore and Meadow are within a wildland urban interface, the highest priority for treatment as identified in the National Fire Plan ([www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)). The National Fire Plan is an interagency effort between the Forest Service, the Department of the Interior and the National Association of State Foresters to manage impacts of wildland fire on communities. This is a long-term effort of working collaboratively on the issues of hazardous fuels reduction, fire fighting, rehabilitation and restoration, community assistance and accountability.

The Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project falls under the hazardous fuels reduction program of the National Fire Plan. The hazardous fuels program provides direction to reduce the impacts of unwanted wildland fires on communities, natural resources, and cultural resources. Past disruptions of natural fire cycles, as well as other management practices, have resulted in wildfires of increasing intensity and severity. Treatment of hazardous fuels would help reduce the impacts of wildfires on communities and restore health to fire-adapted ecosystems.

The BLM Fillmore Field Office began analyzing fuels reduction activities along the Pahvant Front in 1991. Several Environmental Assessments (EA) were completed including the Holden Springs EA (1991), Section 31 EA (1996), Frampton Heights EA (1996), and Meadow Creek EA (1998). These EAs

and associated Decision Records analyzed and approved fuels reduction involving cutting, but not prescribed burning. The Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project EA discloses the effects of prescribed burning vegetation already cut, or planned for cutting, as described in these BLM EAs.

### **Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact**

We have completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) and proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project, Healthy Forest Initiative – Fuels Reduction 2003 project. The EA, FONSI and associated environmental analysis documents can be viewed on the project website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/rifc/pahvant/pahvant.htm>.

This EA looks quite different from the traditional Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service approach. The effects analysis in the EA is focused on supporting our determination that there would be no significant impacts resulting from the proposed action. While in the past we have included more details of the environmental analysis in the EA, the Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project EA is focused more on supporting the FONSI, which meets the requirements of our laws and regulations<sup>1</sup>.

### **Providing Comments**

The public is invited to comment on our proposed action. Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be accepted as appellants. Substantive comments are those within the scope of, are specific to, and have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons that the Responsible Officials should consider in reaching a decision. Each individual, or representative from each organization submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to attain appeal eligibility. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project. Comments should include the information required pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), as published in the Federal Register on June 4, 2003.

Please send written comments to: Robert S. Gardner, District Ranger, Fillmore Ranger District, 390 South Main, P.O. Box 265, Fillmore, UT 84701; Phone: (435) 743-5721. Fax: (435) 743-4113. Comments may also be delivered to the above address during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m, Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of the EA and FONSI sent to you, please contact Diane Freeman, Team Leader, 115 East 900 North, Richfield, UT 84701 or call (435) 896-9233. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following publication of the legal notice in the *Richfield Reaper*.

We appreciate your interest and participation in the proposed project thus far and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert S. Gardner

/s/ Rex Rowley

ROBERT S. GARDNER  
District Ranger  
Fillmore Ranger District

REX ROWLEY  
Field Manager  
Fillmore Field Office

<sup>1</sup> For information on the core elements of the EA process, see the President's Council On Environmental Quality memo under the Healthy Forest Initiative:  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/guidanceforenvironmental\\_assessmentsofforest\\_healthprojects\\_memo.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/guidanceforenvironmental_assessmentsofforest_healthprojects_memo.pdf)