



File Code: 1950

Date: February 25, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

The Fairfield District of the Sawtooth National Forest is considering a variety of vegetation treatments and forest fuel management activities in the Upper South Fork of the Boise River drainage (see attached maps). The proposed project area is adjacent to a block of private lands containing dozens of homes, cabins, outbuildings and a large church camp.

During the South Barker fire this last year, a lot of work on both private lands and National Forest System Lands was accomplished by clearing undergrowth and removing dead and dying trees in order to help prevent the fire from reaching cabins and private properties.

Although some work was done on the Forest adjoining the private lands, there is more work to do to help protect private lands and structures from potential wildfire along the river corridor. Therefore, the Fairfield District is proposing a variety of vegetation treatments and forest fuel management activities in the area.

The Upper South Fork Boise River Vegetation Project, as we call it, encompasses a total of approximately 9,100 acres of National Forest System lands. The project currently targets approximately 1,000 acres within the 9,100 acre project area for a variety of mechanical and manual vegetation treatments in conjunction with the use of prescribed fire. Our survey work and preliminary analysis show that there are about 200 acres of forested land that could be treated to:

- Reduce tree crown continuity (increase tree crown separation),
- Remove ladder fuels from beneath and around the residual trees,
- Remove beetle infested, dead and dying lodgepole pine trees.

In addition, approximately 800 acres of aspen could be treated with prescribed fire to reduce conifer competition and to facilitate new and vigorous aspen growth. Increasing the aspen stands within the project area may reduce fire spread and fire intensity of potential future wildfires by breaking up the continuity of the vegetation, while generating healthy aspen stands that do not readily sustain crown fires. Slash generated by the project would be treated by piling, burning or chipping to reduce fuel build up and future fire hazards. There may be temporary road construction for access and removal of the wood products, however all temporary roads would be obliterated and rehabilitated upon completion of the project.

The specific objectives of these activities are to create openings in the forest canopy and expand existing natural and manmade fuel breaks to help lower the intensity and slow the rate of spread of a potential wildfire, thereby allowing private lands and structures to be more easily protected.



As we continue with this analysis, we are seeking your comments. Your comments are needed to help us identify the pertinent issues and opportunities to be used in evaluating the proposed treatments.

This letter will serve to initiate the 30-day comment period under the requirements of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA/36 CFR 218), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and their implementing regulations. In order to have legal standing to object to a decision on this project, you must submit specific written comments related to the proposed action or express an interest in the project to the address or email listed below during the comment period. **The official comment period will end on April 3, 2009**, and comments must be received in writing via email or a letter by this date. Your comments can be submitted in any of the following ways:

- Write us a letter. Our mailing address is Fairfield Ranger District, P.O. Box 189, Fairfield, ID 83327 Attn: Upper South Fork Boise River Vegetation Project.
- Fax us your letter to (208) 764-3211, Attn: Upper South Fork Boise River Vegetation Project.
- Contact us by email. Send electronic comments to comments-internmt-sawtooth-fairfield@fs.fed.us.

This letter and the attached maps may also be viewed on the Sawtooth National Forest Website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sawtooth/projects/>.

In addition to providing this opportunity for written comment, a **public meeting** to discuss this project is scheduled for **Wednesday March 11th**. The meeting will be at the Camas County Senior Citizens Center, 129 West Willow St., Fairfield Idaho, at **7:00 pm**.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mike Dettori
MIKE DETTORI
District Ranger

Attachments