



***NEWS
RELEASE***

United States
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service
Salmon - Challis National
Forest
1206 South Challis
Salmon, Idaho 83467



March 16, 2009

Hughes Creek Fuels Reduction Project Approved

Forest Supervisor Bill Wood approved the Hughes Creek Fuels Reduction Project on Thursday March 5th. The Hughes Creek Project approves the treatment of over 13,000 acres in the Hughes Creek drainage on the North Fork Ranger District. Work will be accomplished through the use of prescribed burning, commercial timber harvest and non-commercial thinning. The project also approves the replacement of the Ditch Creek Bridge. Objectives of the project are to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in areas adjacent to private property as well as to the community of Gibbonsville.

“Thanks to the hard work of the Lemhi County Forest Restoration Group we have developed a project that addresses many stakeholders concerns”, said North Zone District Ranger Russ Bacon. Planning for this project began in 2006 with several field trips and meetings between the collaborative group and Forest employees. This collaborative effort sprang out of a desire to move past the traditional method of planning Forest Service projects. “Our traditional method of planning usually involved the Forest Service developing a proposal and then having all interested parties throw rocks at it. More often that not on these complex vegetation management projects the end result was appeals and litigation, not results on the ground.” said Bacon. Collaborative planning requires more front end discussion with interested stake holders during project development. Bacon said, “Thanks to the collaborative process in Hughes Creek many of the areas of disagreement were ironed out during project development. As a result we ended up with a project that received no formal objections that is ready to implement right now.”

The Lemhi County Forest Restoration Group’s members have pledged to work together on projects that restore forest health while providing an economic benefit to nearby communities. They are coordinated and facilitated by Salmon Valley Stewardship, a local group working to promote a sustainable economy and a healthy environment in the Salmon River Region.

Implementation of the project includes over 13,000 acres of prescribed burning, 3,400 acres of commercial timber harvest, 1500 acres of non-commercial thinning and fuels

reduction. Implementation of this project will take many years with work will beginning this spring on over 3000 acres of prescribed burning. Non-commercial fuels reduction work is expected to begin this summer. Work to replace the Ditch Creek Bridge is also scheduled for this summer. Over 3000 acres of commercial timber harvest is scheduled to begin next year at the earliest. “With the downturn in lumber prices, we expect to hold off a bit on these timber sales. We hope to accomplish much of the work in the area through the use of a stewardship contract, which allows the forest to offset the cost of doing service related projects with the value of the timber. The lower the value of the timber, the less service related work we get accomplished. Hopefully, timber values will rebound in the coming years so we can get more work done” , says Bacon. Examples of service related work that could be incorporated into a stewardship contract include noxious weed spraying, culvert replacement, hand piling of fuels and road maintenance.

More information on the project can be found on the Salmon-Challis National Forest Web Site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/projects/> Information on Salmon Valley Stewardship can be found at <http://www.salmonvalley.org/index.html>

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