



File Code: 1950

Date: February 14, 2005

Scoping for the Smith Bates Ridge Timber Sale Project

The Leadore Ranger District is seeking your thoughts on its proposal to commercially harvest through selective thinning approximately 42 acres of timber. A brief description of what we are proposing to do follows for your review and the opportunity to help us refine the project proposal.

Project Purpose and Need

The purpose for the proposed Smith Bates Ridge Timber Sale is to provide commercial timber products to local communities to help bridge the time gap between now and when larger timber projects become implementable. The project is needed to allow for the continuation of uneven-aged management of a Douglas-fir timber stand. The project is also needed to implement the thinning of overly-dense pockets of trees within the stand, which will result in improving the health of the remaining trees and in reducing the risk of a stand-replacing from being able to move through the stand.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to mechanically harvest approximately 40 thousand board feet of commercial timber product, through selective thinning, of 42 acres of trees. One contiguous project site (harvest unit) of 42 acres is proposed. The logging system to be used for harvesting the project site will be tractor logging. Existing road systems would be used, so no new construction of either permanent or temporary roads would occur. Leadore District proposes to commercially harvest trees greater than 7 inches in diameter at breast height. Leadore District also proposes to precommercially thin trees that are submerchantable in size. Harvest will not occur in roadless areas or designated old growth habitat areas. Harvest will not occur within suitable habitat for American lynx. The predominate species to be harvested is Douglas-fir. Harvesting would be done in 2005 and 2006. Slash would be treated by piling and burning slash in areas where high concentrations exist, and by lopping and scattering tops and branches for natural decomposition back into designated skid trails.

Location

The Smith Bates Ridge Timber Sale would be located on the ridge that is between Jack Smith Gulch and Bates Gulch. The legal description of the proposed project site is T.16N. R24E. Sec15 NESW1/4 and SENW1/4; Boise Meridian, Lemhi County, Idaho. One contiguous project site (harvest unit) of 42 acres is proposed. The proposed harvest site was selected because: 1) it was in an area that is environmentally suitable for timber harvest, 2) was not in a roadless area, 3)



was not in designated old growth habitat, 4) was not in an area considered suitable American lynx habitat, 5) was not on steep slopes, 6) was not in a riparian area, 7) had existing access, and 8) was considered to be economically viable.

Land Management Direction

The proposed harvest units are on national forest lands. Direction on management of these national forest lands is contained in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Salmon National Forest (1988). The proposed harvest areas are within management area 5B of the Land and Resource Management Plan. Management direction for management area 5B provides direction to manage for a medium level of commercial sawtimber production and utilization.

Public Involvement

An interdisciplinary team consisting of various natural resource scientists is analyzing the effects of the Smith Bates Ridge Timber Sale Project. It is anticipated that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS because it fits the criteria of category 31.2-12, described in Forest Service Handbook Interim Direction (ID) 1909.15-2004-3, July 6, 2004. This category is for "the limited timber harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 1/2 mile of temporary road construction". At this time we have not identified any adverse environmental effects or potential adverse effects to especially sensitive environmental situations (extraordinary circumstances). If the proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, a Decision Memo will be prepared that will not be subject to administrative review (appeal (CFR 215.12(f))). If approved, logging could begin in the spring or summer of 2005.

The scoping document can be viewed on the Salmon-Challis National Forest Internet website at www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc under **Projects and Plans** as "Smith Bates Ridge Timber Sale Project-Scoping Document".

If you have any comments or concerns, which pertain directly to this proposed action, we would like to hear from you. Please send your written comments or concerns to Dennis M. Hilliard, District Ranger, Leadore Ranger District, PO Box 180, Leadore, ID 83464, (208) 768-2500. Electronic comments on the project can be emailed to comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-leadore@fs.fed.us. Your comments must be received by March 16, 2005. All comments received during this period will be considered in making a final decision.

For further information, contact Michael Steck, Project ID Team Leader, Leadore Ranger District, Leadore, ID 83464, (208) 768-2515, msteck@fs.fed.us, or Dennis M. Hilliard, District Ranger, Leadore Ranger District, PO Box 180, Leadore, ID 83464, (208) 768-2500, dhilliard@fs.fed.us.

Notice: Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will also be accepted.

Sincerely,

/s/ Dennis M. Hilliard
DENNIS M. HILLARD
District Ranger