

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

**USDA Forest Service
Uinta National Forest
Heber Ranger District
Wasatch County, Utah**

Bryant's Fork Spruce Trap Tree Treatment #2

The Heber Ranger District of the Uinta National Forest is seeking public comment on a revised proposed action for the second proposed spruce bark beetle treatment on National Forest system lands in the Bryant's Fork area of the Heber Ranger District. The Bryant's Fork drainage is on the west side of Strawberry Reservoir approximately 25 miles south of Heber City, Utah.

A rapidly growing spruce beetle infestation was discovered in the Bryant's Fork drainage in 2003. In 2004 a "trap tree treatment" was implemented to reduce the spread of the spring beetle hatch in order to allow for time to complete a proposal and analysis for a longer term solution. The 2004 treatment involved dropping approximately 185 "trap trees" before the beetles flight to bait them into infecting the trap trees rather than infecting standing green trees. The trap trees were then debarked and hauled off the Forest through a stewardship contract. Cut trees are more attractive to beetles than standing green trees, and research has documented the effectiveness of using trap trees to concentrate emerging infestations and reduce the amount of live trees infested. The 2004 treatment was successful in reducing the infestation for 2005 and a proposal to treat the infestation for the long term with a salvage sale is in the process of being analyzed. It is now apparent that the analysis of a salvage sale to remove beetle infested trees will not be completed in time to contain the 2005 spring flight. It is therefore proposed that a second trap tree treatment be implemented to continue some containment of the infestation.

The proposed action is to fell about 200-300 spruce trap trees in May 2005, on approximately 200 acres in the Bryant's Fork drainage (same area treated in 2004). The trees would be debarked and left in place, or else removed in the fall of 2005 or early spring of 2006. The trees would be debarked on site or immediately after being transported to a mill in order to kill the spruce beetle larvae. Without treatment the spruce trees in this drainage, and potentially most spruce along Strawberry Ridge could be dead in a few years. The location of these stands coupled with the heavy fuel loadings created by spruce beetle killed trees could pose an extreme fire threat to the Bryant's Fork Summer Home owners immediately adjacent if left untreated.

The prior scoping document for this project sent on March 31, 2005 (advertised in the Provo Daily Herald on March 27, 2005) contained the same description of Proposed Action with 100-150 trap trees needed based on 2004 observations and projected bark beetle flight. Two entomologists from Forest Health Protection (FHP, USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry) did an assessment of the area during the week of April 6, 2005. The original recommendation from FHP was to fall 1 trap tree per every 3 infested trees depending on diameter of infested trees and degree of bark beetle activity. During the April 6 assessment of the area it became apparent that it would be necessary to fall 1 trap tree per every 2 infested trees over much of the area to have any containment of the beetle flight. A recommendation by FHP which will also be implemented is to triple the amount of funnel traps (pheromone baited devices

to catch bark beetle) planned for the project area. The funnel traps will be deployed in areas which do not have suitable trap trees, and where younger 8-12" diameter spruce are at risk for bark beetle mortality.

The public is invited to provide comments on this proposal. Substantive comments previously submitted on the proposed project will be considered. If you have any additional comments, please send them. Comments should be as specific as possible and have a direct relationship to the proposal. Please send written comments to: Julie King, District Ranger, Heber Ranger District, P.O. Box 190, Heber City, UT 84032; phone: (435) 654-0470; FAX: (435) 435-654-5772; or e-mail: comments-intermtn-uinta-heber@fs.fed.us. Comments need to be postmarked or received within 15 days beginning the day following publication of this notice in the *Provo Daily Herald*. Comments may also be delivered to the Heber Ranger District located at 2460 South Highway 40 during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215, this legal notice provides an opportunity to comment on this proposal. If you would like additional information please contact Julie King at (435) 654-0470.