

WEST BEAR VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT
Draft Supplemental
Environmental Impact Statement

Evanston Ranger District
Summit County, Utah

Lead Agency:

USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official:

Brian Ferebee, Acting Forest Supervisor
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
8236 Federal Building,
125 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84138

For Information Contact:

Larry Johnson
Evanston Ranger District
P.O. Box 1880
Evanston, WY 82931
(307) 789-3194

Abstract

Alternative 2 (The Proposed Action) is the Forest Service Preferred Alternative (See Appendix A, Map 2). It includes timber harvesting, prescribed burning, construction of temporary roads, intermittent service roads, and minor reconstruction of existing system roads. Treatment would involve group selection harvest in spruce-fir and mixed conifer stands, small (1 to 5 acre) patch cutting in mixed aspen/conifer stands, conifer removal and prescribed burning in aspen/conifer stands, and prescribed burning in aspen stands. The proposal includes retaining green trees and snags for wildlife habitat. Approximately 1,690 acres within 38 units would be treated under the proposal. Harvests would be accomplished using ground-based systems, and in conformance with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Approximately 330 acres of aspen and mixed aspen/conifer would be burned following removal of conifers on those acres. In addition, about 200 acres would be prescribed burned without prior conifer harvest. Access to the timber would require the construction of approximately 7.8 miles of temporary roads, 0.9 miles of intermittent service system roads, and relocation of approximately 0.6 miles of existing system roads. Approximately 3.4 miles of firelines would be needed. In addition to Alternative 2, Alternative 1 (No Action), and Alternative 3 (Reduced Roads) have been analyzed. Alternative 1 would maintain the existing conditions in the analysis area. Alternative 3 (See Appendix A, Map 3) would reduce road construction and emphasize

prescribed fire without mechanical pretreatment. It would treat approximately 1,390 acres within 28 tentative treatment units. It would require construction of approximately 1.9 miles of temporary roads, no intermittent service system road, and relocation of approximately 300 feet of an existing system road. An estimated 6.4 miles of firelines would be needed to accomplish the prescribed burning.

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the review period for this *West Bear Vegetation Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and to use information acquired in the preparation of the final environmental impact statement, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision-making process. Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the *National Environmental Policy Act* process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' position and contentions (*Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 [1978]). Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement (*City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 9th Circuit [1986] and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 [E.D. Wis. 1980]). Comments on the draft supplemental environmental impact statement should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).

Send Comments to:	Steve Ryberg, District Ranger Evanston Ranger District Wasatch-Cache National Forest 1565 Highway 150 South, Suite A P.O. Box 1880 Evanston Wyoming 82931
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Date Comments Must Be Received: Comments must be received within 45 days of publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. Comments may be

- Mailed.
- Hand delivered to the above address between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.
- Faxed to (307) 789-8639
- Electronically mailed to comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-evanston-mtnview@fs.fed.us
- Comments submitted electronically must be in "Word" (.doc) or "Rich Text Format" (.rtf) or Portable Document Format (.pdf).

SUMMARY

Background

In a March 5, 2007 Record of Decision (ROD) former Forest Supervisor Faye Krueger approved Alternative 2 for the West Bear Vegetation Management Project. Two appeals were received on the project; one of the appellants identified an error in the FEIS. Additionally, Forest Supervisor Krueger saw an opportunity to apply the recently issued direction for the consideration of best available science. On May 25, 2007 Deputy Forest Supervisor Dave R. Myers, acting for Supervisor Krueger, withdrew the decision.

Scope of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

After reviewing the West Bear Vegetation Management Project, Steve Ryberg, the Evanston District Ranger, determined specific areas in need of additional analysis or consideration. The interdisciplinary team was instructed to concentrate on the disclosure of the analysis of soils and some species of wildlife for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

A supplemental document (40 CFR 1502.9 (b) (3), FSH 1909.15 § 18) can provide additional clarification of the previous analysis. This Draft SEIS presents additional analysis to supplement information presented in the West Bear Vegetation Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

This document does not replace the West Bear FEIS in entirety. Instead, information provided in this Draft SEIS will replace discrete sections of the FEIS or provide additional information to supplement the analysis presented in the FEIS. Some sections of this document refer to maps, appendices, or other information contained in the West Bear Vegetation Management FEIS. The West Bear FEIS is available on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/decisions/index.shtml>). To obtain a CD of the FEIS, contact Larry Johnson by phone (307-798-3194) or email (ljohnson@fs.fed.us).

The following sections describe the purpose and need for action, the alternatives considered in detail, and compares the effects of the three alternatives. There has been no change in the purpose and need for action since the preparation of the FEIS. Corrections, clarification or supplemental analysis of information previously presented in chapters 1 through 4 follow this summary.

Purpose and Need for Action

For more detail about the purpose and need for action, refer to pages 3 through 6, Section 1.1 of the West Bear FEIS.

Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action

This DSEIS documents supplemental analysis of the same three alternatives considered in the West Bear Vegetation Management Project FEIS. These alternatives are summarized below and described in detail in Chapter 2 of the West Bear Vegetation Management Project FEIS. Differences between the alternatives are summarized below.

Alternative 1 - No Action

Under the no action alternative no timber harvest, prescribed burning, road construction, or road relocation would be implemented to accomplish project goals. Previously authorized projects, roads and facility maintenance, and other Forest management activities would remain ongoing. Road management would be in accordance with the current Mountain View/Evanston District Travel Plan (USDA Forest Service 2003a).

This alternative would not preclude Forest management activities identified under previous decisions, nor would it preclude the potential for activities to be identified under future decisions.

Alternative 2 – The Proposed Action

Alternative 2 includes timber harvesting, prescribed burning, construction of temporary roads, intermittent service roads, and minor reconstruction of existing system roads. Treatment would involve group selection harvest in spruce/fir and mixed conifer stands, small (1 to 5 acre) patch cutting in mixed aspen/conifer stands, conifer removal and prescribed burning in aspen/conifer stands, and prescribed burning in aspen stands. Approximately 1,690 acres within 38 units would be treated under the proposal. Approximately 330 acres of aspen and mixed aspen/conifer would be burned following removal of conifers on those acres. In addition, about 200 acres would be prescribed burned without prior conifer harvest. Access to the timber would require the construction of approximately 7.8 miles of temporary roads, 0.9 miles of intermittent service system roads, and relocation of approximately 0.6 miles of existing system roads to reduce sedimentation and improve drainage. All temporary roads would be recontoured / rehabilitated after harvest. Proposed reconstruction or relocation of existing roads would emphasize improving drainage design of the roads near stream crossings and relocating or improving drainage where the roads are near stream channels. Approximately 3.4 miles of firelines would be constructed where needed prior to burning to reduce the probability of fire escaping the boundaries.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 provides an alternative that requires no new construction of roads and reduces the amount of temporary roads compared to Alternative 2. Alternative 3 also emphasizes prescribed fire without mechanical treatment. It would treat approximately 1,390 acres within 28 harvest units. It would require construction of approximately 1.9 miles of temporary roads, no intermittent service system road, and relocation of approximately 300 feet of an existing system road to reduce sedimentation and improve drainage. Temporary roads would be recontoured/rehabilitated after harvest as with the proposed action. An estimated 6.4 miles of firelines would be needed to accomplish the prescribed burning.

Conifers would not be harvested from Units 34 (Reservoir East Sale), 41 and 42 (Mill City Burn) prior to burning; the units would be burned without prior treatment other than fireline construction.

Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

Table Summary 1. Comparison of Alternatives.

Issue	Resource Values Analyzed		Effects of Alternatives		
			Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3
Water Resources	Water yield increase in Acre-Feet / % (3.1.3.5, 3.1.4.3)	West Fk Bear	0	~164 acre feet / .5 %	~149 acre feet / .4 %
		West Fk Bear Above Whitney	0	~12.9 acre feet / .2%	~9.5 acre feet / .2 %
		Hayden Fork	0	~39 acre feet / .1 %	~39 acre feet / .1 %
		Timing of increased runoff (3.1.4.3)	No change	No change	No change
		Increase in peak flow (3.1.4.3)	No change	Slight increase	Slight increase
		Water Quality (3.1.4.2, 3.2.4)	No change	Very slight effect	Very slight effect
		Wetlands (3.1.4.1)	No change	Slight improvement from road relocation	No effect
		Floodplains (3.1.4.1)	No change	No effect	No effect
Soils		Wepp modeled erosion (3.2.4, 3.2.4.1)	No change	Very low	Very low
		Soil compaction (3.2.4.1)	No change	~12-15% of each activity area (harvest unit)	~12-15% of each activity area (harvest unit)
		Burning - hydrophobic soils (3.2.4.2)	No change	No effect	No effect
		Productivity (3.2.4.1)	No change	At least 85%	At least 85%
Aquatic Habitat		Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (3.3.4.1)	No change	Slight increase in impacts	Slight increase in impacts
Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Aquatic Species		Bonneville cutthroat trout (3.3.4.3)	No change	"May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend toward Federal listing or a loss of viability"	"May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend toward Federal listing or a loss of viability"
		Amphibians (3.3.4.4)	No change	Minor favorable and adverse effects	Minor favorable and adverse effects
Aquatic Management Indicator Species		Forest-wide trend in population of Bonneville cutthroat trout. (3.3.4.5)	No change	No effect	No effect

Issue	Resource Values Analyzed		Effects of Alternatives		
			Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3
Properly Functioning Condition	Age Class Diversity and Species Composition. (3.4.4.1)		Continued gradual move away from PFC (Gradual loss of aspen and continued shortage of young age classes)	Improvement in conifer and aspen age class diversity	Improvement in conifer and aspen age class diversity
	Fragmentation, biological diversity, and ecological integrity. (3.3.4, 3.4.4, 3.6.4)		No change in fragmentation. Continued trend toward mature and old forest habitat and potential for large stand replacing fires	Slight increase in fragmentation. Slight improvement in diversity of habitat. Ecological integrity maintained	Slight increase in fragmentation. Slight improvement in diversity of habitat. Ecological integrity maintained
	Disease and insect infestations (3.4.4.2)		Continued gradually increasing risk of landscape bark beetle epidemics	Age and species diversity and lower conifer density leading to future stand conditions that would be less likely to support beetle epidemics	Age and species diversity and lower conifer density leading to future stand conditions that would be less likely to support beetle epidemics
	Acres and percentage of forest type in fire regime condition classes. (3.5.4.1)		Gradual trend toward substantially altered fire regimes.	Slight improvement in watershed fire regime condition class	Slight improvement in watershed fire regime condition class
	Prescribed fire effects with and without fuel from conifer tops and limbs. (3.4.4.1)		No change	~418 acres of conifer/aspen moved to seral aspen based on 80% burn effectiveness.	~209 acres of conifer/aspen moved to seral aspen based on 40% burn effectiveness
Old Forest	Acres (%) of old forest in the ecosection. (3.4.4.4)	Spruce/Fir	No change, 83,319 acres (67%)	Change in old forest structure on 575 acres	Change in old forest structure on ~389 acres
		Mixed Conifer	No change, 60,169 Acres (43%)	Change in structure on ~427 acres	Change in structure on ~348 acres
	Acres of old forest in the analysis area. (3.4.4.4)	Spruce/Fir	No change	Change in old forest structure on ~575 acres	Change in old forest structure on ~389 Acres
		Mixed Conifer	No change	Change in structure on ~427 acres	Change in structure on ~348 acres
Noxious Weeds	Effects on noxious weeds. (3.4.4.3)		No change	Increased risk mitigated by equipment washing and follow-up treatment	Slightly less risk than Alt 2 mitigated by equipment washing and follow-up treatment
Sensitive Plants	Effects on sensitive plants. (3.4.4.5)		No change	No effect, one identified site protected.	No effect, one identified site protected.

Issue	Resource Values Analyzed		Effects of Alternatives		
			Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3
Wildlife	Changes in forest habitat from timber harvest and prescribed burning. (3.6.4)		No change	Temporary increase in spruce/fir and mixed conifer forest gaps and large openings in conifer/ aspen forest	Same as Alt 2 with fewer spruce/fir and mixed conifer acres treated
	Effects of roads on noise, barriers to movement, fragmentation. (3.6.4)		No change	Increased traffic and equipment noise, Slight increase in snow compaction, temporary barriers to movement of some species.	Same as Alt 2 with proportionately less effect due to less road mileage.
	Effects of harvest and roads on migratory birds. (3.6.4.5)		Continued decline in forest habitat age and species diversity	Generally positive effects on aspen dependent and habitat generalists with minor adverse effects on old forest dependent species.	Same as Alt 2 with fewer effects on old forest dependent species.
Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Terrestrial Species	Effects on Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Terrestrial Species and their denning, nesting, and foraging habitat. (3.6.4.1)	Bald eagle	No change	“No effect”	“No effect”
		Canada lynx	No change	“May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect”	“May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect”
		Wolverine, boreal owl, great gray owl, three-toed woodpecker northern goshawk	No change	“May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend toward Federal listing or a loss of viability”	“May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend toward Federal listing or a loss of viability”
Terrestrial Management Indicator Species	Terrestrial Management Indicator Species and their denning, nesting, and foraging habitat. (3.6.4.4)	Snowshoe hare	No change	Slight short-term reduction in habitat and hares, increase after 10-15 years	Same as Alt 2 with fewer acres treated
		Beaver	No change	Minor favorable effect in Mill City area	Minor favorable effect in Mill City area
		Northern goshawk	Gradual long-term decline in nesting and foraging habitat associated with mixed conifer and aspen and early successional stands	Short-term reduction in suitable nesting habitat and foraging opportunities, long-term maintenance of conifer/aspen habitat	Same as Alt 2 except that fewer acres would be treated

Issue	Resource Values Analyzed		Effects of Alternatives		
			Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3
	Forest-wide trend of Terrestrial Management Indicator Species (3.6.4.4)	Snowshoe hare	No change	No significant effect on forest-wide trend	No significant effect on forest-wide trend
		Beaver	No change	No significant effect on forest-wide trend	No significant effect on forest-wide trend
		Northern goshawk	No direct effects	No significant effect on forest-wide trend	No significant effect on forest-wide trend
Browsing / Aspen	Browsing impacts on past aspen treatment. (3.6.4.7)		No change	Possible minor effect on rapidity of aspen establishment	Possible minor effect on rapidity of aspen establishment
Recreational Use	Dispersed camp sites. (3.7, 3.8)		No change	Meets Forest Plan scenic integrity objectives, minimal direct effects on areas adjacent to 94 sites	Same as Alt 2
	Noise from timber harvest operations. (3.8.4.4)		No change	Adverse weekday effects on up to 109 campers at one time while harvest or haul operations are ongoing within ½ mile of camp sites	Same as Alt 2
	Effects of truck traffic on recreational traffic. (3.8.4.4)		No change	Estimated 4 loads per weekday with up to 9 loads per day using Whitney Road for ~308 days	Estimated 4 loads per weekday with up to 9 loads per day using Whitney Road for ~221 days
	Effects of road relocation on recreational use. (3.7, 3.8)		No change	Slightly improved access to some sites, removes shoreline road on Beaver Lake	Slightly improved access to some sites.
	Effects of harvest operations on snowmobiling. (3.8.4.1)		No change	Minor effect on opportunities before December 15	Same as Alt 2
Economic Efficiency	Estimated economic efficiency comparison of alternatives. (3.9.4)		0	Benefits: \$1,096,200 Costs: \$644,100 PNV: \$452,000	Benefits: \$694,600 Costs: \$438,300 PNV: \$256,000
Timber Utilization	Anticipated timber sale size. (3.9.4)		0	1,489 acres, 10,220 Hundred Cubic Feet (CCF)	864 acres, 6,582 Hundred Cubic Feet (CCF)
	Anticipated timber sale scheduling. (2.1, 3.8, 3.9)		None	Moffit: ~5,580 CCF Reservoir E: ~3,500 CCF Mill City: ~1,140 CCF	Moffit: ~3,860CCF Reservoir E: ~2,720 CCF
	Anticipated size categories of timber to be offered. (2.1)		None	Moffit: Sawlogs Reservoir E: Sawlogs Mill City: Sawlogs and poles.	Moffit: Sawlogs Reservoir E: Sawlogs Mill City: None
	Volume of merchantable timber burned (3.9.4)		None	Up to 100 CCF	Up to 1,200 CCF

The Notice of Intent to prepare a supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement was published in the *Federal Register* on January 24, 2008 (vol. 73, no. 16). Public scoping is not required for supplements to environmental impact statements (40 CFR 1502.9(c)4(4)).

Publication of the Notice of Availability for this Draft SEIS in the *Federal Register* will initiate a 45-calendar-day public review and comment period. As detailed in the Abstract, comments will be accepted for 45 days following the date of that publication. Those who provide comments or otherwise express interest during the comment period are eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

Following the review and consideration of comments received on this DSEIS, Acting Forest Supervisor Brian Ferebee, the Responsible Official, will decide among the alternatives considered in the EIS. A final decision is expected in April 2008

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Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

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