

Decision Summary - Roadless

Project Name	Buckskin Saddle Integrated Restoration Project		
Forest	Idaho Panhandle National Forest	Region	Northern
Choose Type of Activity (Wilderness, Roadless, Energy infrastructure, Minerals, Vegetation CE, Land Management Plan) and level of Decision (No DM, DM, DN/FONSI, ROD)			
Roadless Areas - Vegetation management and trail reconstruction proposed. EA - DN/FONSI			
Planned Decision Date	March 12, 2021.		

Summary Description

Purpose/Need
<p>Located on IPNF website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52563</p> <p>The purpose and need for this project is to promote forest conditions that reduce wildfire hazard and improve forest landscape resiliency by providing for forest composition and structure that best resist insects and disease on National Forest System lands, while aiding wildfire suppression efforts to reduce the potential impacts of wildfire in order to protect resource values and private lands adjacent to the project area. More specifically, to the project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the resiliency and resistance of the forest vegetation to disturbances. • Decrease the quantity and arrangement of hazardous fuels to create a lower severity fire environment. • Contribute to local economies through the production of timber products. • Reduce sediment delivery to streams from the forest road and trail networks. • Improve wildlife habitat. • Improve scenic quality. • Maintain and improve trails and trailheads; and • Improve existing system roads to provide for safe and efficient travel.
Intended Selected Action
<p>Implement Alternative 2 – Modified - Final Decision</p> <p>One action alternative was analyzed in the environmental assessment and three other alternatives were considered but not given detailed study.</p> <p>The intended selected action includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,005 acres of commercial vegetation treatments, including 4,518 acres of seed tree, 96 acres of Seed tree and precommercial thin, 7,683 acres of shelterwood, 441 acres of improvement harvest, and 267 acres of commercial thin. • 6,469 acres of non-commercial vegetation treatments, including: 912 acres of precommercial thinning, 5,091 acres of natural fuel burning, 135 acres of mechanical fuel reduction, and 331 acres of whitebark pine restoration. • Road management activities include: 172 miles of road maintenance, 24 miles of system road construction, 98 miles of road storage, 9.5 miles of road decommissioning, and 3 miles of temporary road construction. All miles of system road construction will be put into long-term storage and made hydrologically inert upon completion of project related use.
Potentially Significant Effects or Extraordinary Circumstances (if any)
<p>There will be no potential significant effects.</p> <p>There will be vegetation treatments in two inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). However, there will be no road construction (permanent or temporary) in inventoried roadless areas. The Idaho Roadless</p>

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Commission reviewed and supported the below actions. Activities overlapping Idaho IRAs and subject to the Idaho Roadless Rule, include:

- In the *Packsaddle IRA*: 1,293 acres of natural fuel burning, 331 acres of whitebark pine restoration; and 14.9 miles of motorized trail reconstruction.
- In the *Shafer Peak IRA*: 101 acres of shelterwood timber harvest and 294 acres of natural fuel burning; 1.7 miles of existing trail reconstructed and changed to a non-motorized use designation in the IRR General Forest theme. In the IRR Backcountry Restoration theme and within the Community Protection Zone (CPZ), 117 acres improvement cuts and 114 acres shelterwood and an additional 390 acres of natural fuel burning (no commercial tree cutting/removal). In addition, the 3.9-mile motorized Green Monarchs trail (#69) would be reconstructed to address erosion issues. Also, within the Backcountry Restoration theme but outside of the CPZ, approximately 587 acres would be treated with a natural fuel burn.
- The intended selected action complies with the Idaho Roadless Rule. The action is within the exceptions identified in 36 CFR section 294 (c)(1), in paragraphs (i) through (vii) and paragraph (d), or both. Management activities focus on restoring the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, within the range of variability that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period (“Roadless” report page 9).

Public Involvement (include State, local governments and Tribal consultation)

The Buckskin Saddle Project has been developed in collaboration with the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) and the Coeur d’ Alene Tribe. We received 20 letters from interested parties. The local communities of Clark Fork, Kilroy Bay, and Pine Cove support this project because it reduces hazardous fuels around private land and improves road conditions for safer access and egress.

The interdisciplinary team conducted a thorough analysis of the comments (see Response to Comments document on PALS), adjusted the proposed action, and responded to all substantive comments. Based on a review of the public comments, the Responsible Official concluded that there were no substantive issues that would warrant further analysis, or reason(s) to add another alternative(s). As a result of public input from PFC and a field trip with members of the Coeur d’ Alene Tribe several proposed units (totaling 395 acres) and 9.7 miles of proposed road construction were dropped from the intended selected action.

Timeline Considerations (statutory, court-related, administrative) and Objections Status

Objection process has been completed and objection response letters to the objectors have been posted on PALS. Our biologists are working with USFWS to clarify grizzly bear issues before signing a final decision in mid-March.