

Decision Memo
Bald Mountain Salvage

USDA Forest Service
Bighorn National Forest
Medicine Wheel Ranger District
Lovell, Wyoming

Decision

It is my decision to approve the Bald Mountain Salvage project. The project will treat approximately 190 acres of National Forest System land to reduce the spread of insects and disease and to remove damaged timber

The project is located in Township 56 North, Range 91 West, Sections 28 to 32; and Township 56 North, Range 92 West, Section 25 on the Bighorn National Forest, Medicine Wheel Ranger District, in Big Horn County, Wyoming.

Background

In 2002, a wind event impaired approximately 190 forested acres near Bald Mountain. In 2004, the Forest Service proposed a sanitation salvage project, called Bald Mountain Salvage, to remove the wind and beetle damaged timber and to reduce the insect infestation on the affected area.

Project

Dead, dying, and adjacent live Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir will be harvested using a sanitation cut to control insects and disease on approximately 190 acres. Most of the area is expected to regenerate naturally.

No more than ½ mile of temporary road will be constructed and no permanent road construction will occur.

Purpose and Need

The project purpose and need is to reduce the spread of insects and to remove the damaged timber before marketable value is reduced by deterioration of the wood.

Categorical Exclusion

The planned action falls under Section 31.2 (14 – Tree Removal to Prevent Spread of Insect/Disease) of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 Environmental Policy and Procedures, Interim Directive 1909.15 2003-2, which states:

Commercial and non-commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction, including removal of infested/infected trees and adjacent live uninfested/uninfected trees as determined necessary to control the spread of insects or disease. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.

Figure 1.

Categorical Exclusion 14 Direction	Applicability to the Project
Goal: Prevent the spread of insects and disease	The activity is designed to reduce the spread of insects within the project area and adjacent timber stands.
Allowable Activities: Commercial and non-commercial felling and removal of any trees necessary to control the spread of insects and disease.	The activity is designed to fell and remove trees infested with insects and adjacent uninfested trees to control the spread of insects. Wind damaged trees will also be removed.

Acres Limit: 250 acres	The project is 190 acres.
Road Restrictions: No new permanent roads and less than ½ mile of temporary road construction.	The project is designed to limit temporary road construction to less than ½ mile. No new permanent road construction is planned in the project.
Geographic Restrictions: Not allowed in wilderness or wilderness study areas, national recreation areas, inventoried roadless areas, and other specified areas of significance.	The project is not located within a wilderness, wilderness study area, national recreation area or other specific areas of significance.

Findings Required by Other Laws

Compliance with the Forest Plan and the National Forest Management Act

The project was designed to conform to Land and Resource Management Plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines for Management Areas 4B and 6B. Management area 4B emphasis is wildlife with a focus on indicator species and Management Area 6B emphasis is livestock grazing. The project is not located within an area deemed suitable for timber production. The planned action meets Forest Plan direction as required by the National Forest Management Act

Compliance with National Direction

The planned action is in compliance with the Healthy Forest Initiative and addresses the growing forest health crisis on federal lands.

Clean Air Act

The planned action will not affect air quality in the project area, surrounding airsheds, and local communities.

Clean Water Act

Best Management Practices for soil and water protection will minimize sediment production during and following project implementation.

National Historic Preservation Act

The project will not adversely impact any recorded historic sites. If any previously undiscovered historic properties are encountered during project implementation, the Forest archaeologist will be notified immediately and the area protected from further disturbance until a determination can be made on the newly discovered sites. A Class III survey was conducted by the district archaeologist; SHPO concurred with the findings of no adverse impacts.

Endangered Species Act

Forest Service policy is to protect the habitats of federally listed proposed, candidate, threatened, or endangered species from adverse modification or destruction, as well as to protect individual organisms from harm or harassment. There are no federally listed species known to exist in the project area.

Environmental Effects

There are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. No additional concerns, issues, or pertinent situations were brought up during scoping.

I have also considered the potential for cumulative effects and concluded that they will not be significant. My conclusion is based on the review of the Biological Evaluation, the low risk of environmental impact, the minimal environmental change expected, findings related to extraordinary circumstances and on-the-ground review and discussions with district resource specialists.

I have determined that according to FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30.3(2) no resource conditions are present that lead to a finding of extraordinary circumstances that might cause the action to have significant effects, f Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Resource Condition	Applicability to the Project
Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species	There are no known TES plant or wildlife species that will be adversely affected by the proposed actions. The project will not affect the viability of any native or desired non-native wildlife species.
Flood plans, wetlands, or municipal watersheds	The project will result in no net loss of wetlands or alter the current floodplain. The project is not in a municipal watershed.
Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas	The project is not located within a wilderness, wilderness study area, or national recreation area.
Inventoried roadless areas	The project is not located within an inventoried roadless area.
Research natural areas	The project is not located within a research natural area.
American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites	No known cultural resources will be affected. Tribal consultation has been completed and the consulted tribes have no cultural concerns related to this project.
Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas	No heritage sites were located within the project area.

Public Involvement

The Bald Mountain Salvage project proposal was provided to the public for comment on April 1, 2004 in the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions and published in the Sheridan Press on March 22, 2004. Actions identified for public comment included salvage of dead and dying trees and sanitation harvest to control insects and disease on Engelmann spruce. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping. One comment was received; the concerns were outside the actions proposed within the scope of this document.

Implementation Date

Implementation of the project will begin immediately upon signature of the District Ranger, Medicine Wheel-Paintrock Ranger District.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant 36 CFR 215.12(2)(f) as outlined in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, section 31.2 item 14. Additional information concerning this project is available for public review at the Bighorn National Forest, Supervisor’s Office, 2013 Eastside 2nd Street, Sheridan, WY 82801. Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Megan Smith, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Bighorn National Forest, Phone (307) 674-2629 or email mhsmith@fs.fed.us.

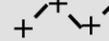
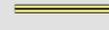
 /s/ Dave Sisk
David Sisk
District Ranger, Medicine Wheel-Paintrock Ranger District

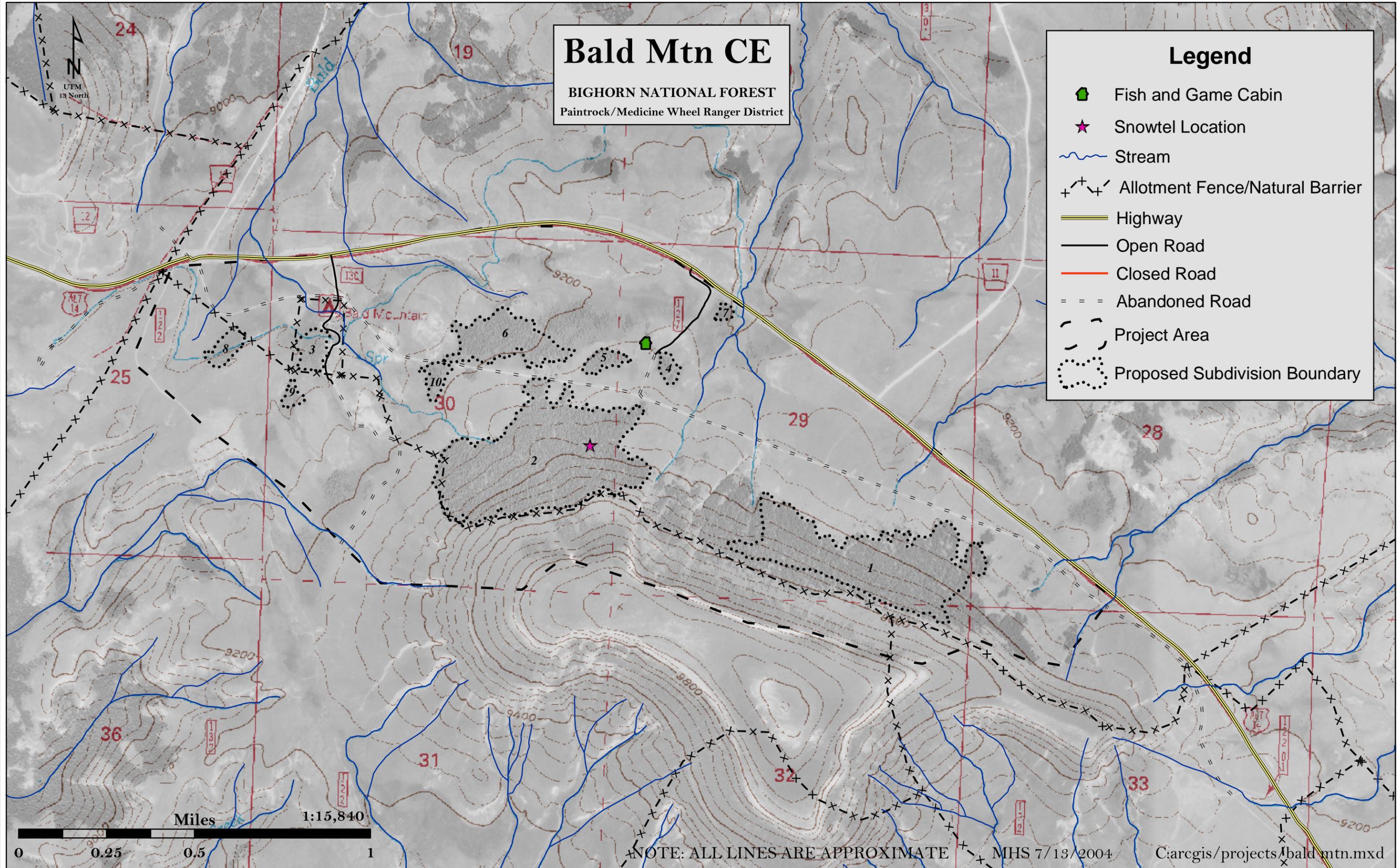
 08/19/2004
Date

Bald Mtn CE

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST
Paintrock/Medicine Wheel Ranger District

Legend

-  Fish and Game Cabin
-  Snowtel Location
-  Stream
-  Allotment Fence/Natural Barrier
-  Highway
-  Open Road
-  Closed Road
-  Abandoned Road
-  Project Area
-  Proposed Subdivision Boundary



NOTE: ALL LINES ARE APPROXIMATE MHS 7/13/2004 C:\arcgis\projects\bald mtn.mxd