

## **ROCK CREEK INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

### **ANALYSIS AREA**

Gore Geographic Area is within the Yampa Ranger District of the Medicine Bow - Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland. BLM lands in the vicinity of Black Mountain are within the Glenwood Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management. The analysis area is located on Forest system and BLM public domain lands situated north and south of Colorado Highway 134 between Yampa and Kremmling Colorado. The area is predominately lodgepole pine and aspen forest types interspersed with openings of sagebrush and riparian vegetation types.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

Insect epidemics are one of the natural processes in forested landscapes. Some uses of the forest are compromised by tree mortality resulting from insect attacks. Recreation, wood product production, scenery, wildlife habitats and water resources are all adversely affected by large scale insect epidemics and the subsequent increased risk of these areas to large high intensity wildfires.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to reduce the size and intensity of existing and imminent Mountain Pine Beetle epidemics, and to reduce the future risk of large-scale high intensity wildfires within the Rock Creek Analysis Area.

There is a need to:

1. Reduce the susceptibility of the lodgepole stands within the analysis area to Mountain Pine Beetle activity,
2. Actively suppress ongoing Mountain Pine Beetle epidemics to limit mature tree mortality,
3. Salvage and reforest areas quickly after Mountain Pine Beetle epidemics,
4. Relocate and/or decommission segments of the road system that are likely to cause adverse impacts to stream networks,
5. Reduce fuel loading associated with beetle killed trees,
6. Create defensible fire zones around the Lynx and Gore Pass areas,
7. Reduce anticipated mature tree mortality in Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive wildlife species habitats,

### **PROPOSED ACTIONS**

The proposed action consists of three management strategies and their associated actions to limit the long-term impacts of expanding Mountain pine beetle populations. These management strategies include suppression, prevention, and salvage. Table 1 displays each of the proposed management strategies and actions discussed, along with their relationship to the revised 1997 Routt Forest Plan and Resource Management Plan for the Glenwood Springs Resource Area dated January 3, 1984 and revised in 1988.

Suppression related actions are designed to directly impact or kill beetles creating problems. In general, these actions are considered short-term solutions since they only attempt to control existing problems. These actions consists primarily of non-commercial actions

designed to stop epidemics in the early stages of development by cutting, peeling or spraying small groups of infested trees as they develop. Although these actions may result in the commercial removal of infested trees, this is a secondary action aimed at removing as many of the beetles as possible prior to flight, thus attempting to reduce the size and extent of their overall impact. Mechanized treatments may be prescribed in areas where existing patch sizes exceed the amount of area that can be successfully completed using manual labor. Other actions include the use of pheromones to attract, hold, and eliminate beetles. This particular action will likely only be used in conjunction with other actions due to the risk of beetles attacking adjacent uninfested trees.

Prevention related actions are primarily aimed at changing the forest conditions that make forest stands more attractive to mountain pine beetle attack. Most of these actions consist of silvicultural interventions to reduce mature lodgepole pine stand susceptibility to mountain pine beetle attack. Management actions include "thinning" treatments that remove a percentage of existing trees in order to increase the space left between the remaining trees in the stand. Other actions include removing the infected overstory in order to establish or protect younger trees in the stand. These actions all change the physical attributes of existing forested stands in order to provide a long-term response to existing and future beetle epidemics. Forest thinning is also proposed for two areas around the Lynx and Gore Pass areas to create defensible fire zones at these locations.

Protective spraying is also proposed at locations around the Gore Campground, Blacktail Campground, Blacktail Picnic Ground, Lynx Pass Guard Station and Lynx Pass Campground. Protective spraying consists of spraying the trunks of trees up to a height of approximately 45 feet with insecticides like Carbaryl on an annual or biannual basis. This action must occur before trees are attacked by beetles to be effective and can only be implemented on a limited scale.

Associated with silvicultural treatments is the need for new road construction to access treatment areas. It is estimated that approximately 18 miles of new road would need to be constructed to access the treatment areas. Additionally, there are approximately 33 miles of existing roads that are negatively impacting water resources in the analysis area primarily due to the proximity of road segments to stream zones. The proposed action includes evaluating the feasibility of relocating or decommissioning some of these roads.

Lastly, salvage management actions include removing any merchantable timber within already beetle-killed areas. Other actions include cutting and piling dead trees, burning slash piles, or underburning in beetle killed areas that increase to the future risk of large high intensity wildfires adjoining urban interface areas, administrative sites, and campground areas.

These actions are proposed on approximately 13,500 acres of National Forest System Lands (Forest Service jurisdiction) and on approximately 1,000 acres of Public Lands (Bureau of Land Management jurisdiction).

The table 2 below identifies the range of management actions that are appropriate in suppressing Mountain Pine Beetle epidemics for each the management strategies.

**Table 1: Description of Proposed Management Strategies by Management Area.**

<b>Management Area – or Management Emphasis and acreage within the Analysis area</b>	<b>Appropriate Treatment Strategies</b>	<b>Types and amount of treatments proposed</b>	<b>Associated Treatments</b>	<b>Desired Future Condition or Desired Outcome</b>
MA 1.12 – Wilderness (Approximately 83 acres of National Forest System Lands)	None	None	None	Forested vegetation in late successional or generated by natural processes such as fire, insects or disease – evidence of these disturbance processes is present.
MA 1.5 – National River System Wild Rivers Designated and Eligible (Approximately 1,284 acres of National Forest System Lands)	None	None	None	Landscape has predominantly natural appearance, insects and disease and wildfires are allowed to influence forest structure if compatible with other Wild River values.
MA 4.2 – Scenery (Approximately 4,692 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention and Suppression	1,200 acres of Silvicultural Treatments. 4,692 acres identified for additional Suppression Actions	0.4 miles of new road construction.	High quality scenery, allows timber harvest and other uses. Appearance is predominantly natural.
MA 4.3 – Dispersed Recreation (Approximately 1,481 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention and Suppression	475 acres of Silvicultural Treatments. 1,481 acres identified for additional Suppression Actions.	0.5 miles of new road construction.	Vegetation composition and structure will exist in a range of successional stages.
MA 5.11 – General Forest and Rangelands Forest Vegetation Emphasis (Approximately 2,601 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention, Suppression and Salvage	225 acres of Silvicultural treatments. 2,601 acres identified for additional Suppression Actions.	No new road construction.	Vegetation composition and structure will exist in a range of successional stages to meet wildlife, range, and timber objectives.
MA 5.12 – General Forest and Rangelands Range vegetation Emphasis (Approximately 10,617 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention, Suppression and Salvage	2,400 acres of Silvicultural Treatments. 10,617 acres identified for additional Suppression Actions.	6.1 miles of new road construction.	These areas are managed to sustain values associated with areas of woody vegetation and open grassland and to provide habitat and forage for livestock and wildlife.
MA 5.13 – Forest Products (Approximately 39,292 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention, Suppression and Salvage	9,100 acres of Silvicultural Treatments. 39,292 acres	8.2 miles of new road construction.	Vegetation composition and structure will be managed for a mosaic of tree groups with different ages and heights while providing for

<b>Management Area – or Management Emphasis and acreage within the Analysis area</b>	<b>Appropriate Treatment Strategies</b>	<b>Types and amount of treatments proposed</b>	<b>Associated Treatments</b>	<b>Desired Future Condition or Desired Outcome</b>
		identified for additional Suppression Actions.		a sustained yield of forest products.
MA 5.41 Deer and Elk Winter Range (Approximately 3,808 acres of National Forest System Lands)	Prevention, Suppression and Salvage	3,808 acres identified for additional Suppression Actions.	None	Vegetation composition and structure will be managed to meet the needs of deer, elk, and other species on their winter range.
Commercial Forest Lands (Approximately 3,200 acres of Public Lands)	Prevention, Suppression and Salvage	600-100 Acres of Silvicultural Treatments. 3,200 acres identified for additional suppression actions.	3 miles of new road construction.	Protect commercial forest lands from severe pest damage, loss of growth and promote healthy stands.
Noncommercial Lands (Approximately 2,070 acres of Public Lands)	Suppression	Suppression actions on 2,070 acres	None	
Private Lands	As determined by Landowner	As determined by Landowner	As determined by Landowner	Forest Service and BLM will coordinate actions to match agency objectives and actions to match adjacent landowners actions and objectives to the extent that budget and Resource Management Plan allows.

**Table 2: Description of Management Strategies and Associated Treatment Actions.**

STRATEGY	ACTION	SCALE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Prevention	Protective Spraying	Individual Tree	Highly effective	Expensive, must be applied prior to attack by beetle
	Thinning – Stand Density Reduction	Stand to multiple stands		
	Changing Species Composition	Stand to multiple stands		Must have other tree species in the stand.
	Changing age class distribution of stands	Multiple stands to landscape		
Suppression	Mechanical sanitation of standing infested trees	Stand	Removes source of beetles from site; reduces potential infestation of adjacent stands; economic gains &/or products may be recovered	Timing is critical – must be done before beetles fly; difficult to find all infested trees; short-term effect only; requires multiple treatments
	Lethal standing trap trees	Stand	Beetles are killed as they enter tree, so no brood is produced	Need to cut green trees; potential for pulling beetles into stand and sustaining green standing attacks if there aren't enough traps; high cost
	Individual tree sanitation on site (burn, peel, bury, tent to solarize)	Tree	Removes source of beetles from site; reduces potential infestation of adjacent stands; effective if all down spruce are removed; economic gains &/or products may be recovered	High cost; requires multiple treatments; Difficult to located all infested trees
	Individual tree sanitation on site - tent with pesticide	Stand	Removes source of beetles from site; reduces potential infestation of adjacent stands; effective if all down spruce are removed; economic gains &/or products may be recovered	Uncertain effectiveness
	Trap out beetles	Stand	Act as beetle sinks, remove beetles from site	Uncertain effectiveness; spill over or unintended mortality likely nearby to treatment; non-target insects are killed, including beneficial species
	Disaggregate beetles with Verbenone	Stand	Repels beetles from site; non-target insects largely unaffected	Uncertain effectiveness; only useful in limited circumstances
	Aggregate beetles with tree bait	Stand	Effective at “mop up” in a wide range of circumstances following sanitation	Timely removal of attacked trees is essential; only useful in limited circumstances; requires multiple treatments
Salvage	Salvage	Stand	Can accelerate regeneration of stand and does reduce fuel loadings.	No benefit to control of bark beetle epidemics.

**Table 3: Description of How Strategies and Actions are Designed to Address Resource Problems.**

Resource / value adversely affected by Beetle mortality	Strategy	Action	How does the Action reduce effects to resource or value
Recreation	Prevention	Protective Spraying	Keeps individual trees in Developed sites alive – maintaining large tree character
		Density Reduction	Reduces intensity of bark beetle activity in and adjacent to Developed Sites.
Watershed	Prevention	Density Reduction	Reduces intensity and potential for loss of mature tree cover, reducing increase in water yield and resultant potential for stream channel instability.
	Suppression	Suppression	Reduce loss of mature tree cover, , reducing increase in water yield and resultant potential for stream channel instability.
	Salvage	Salvage	Reduces potential for development of large high intensity fires and can accelerate regeneration of stands.
Fuels	Prevention	Density Reduction, Regeneration harvest, shift in species composition	Reduces potential for development of hazardous fuels profiles.
	Suppression	Suppression	
	Salvage	Salvage	Reduces potential for development of large high intensity fires and can accelerate regeneration of stands.
Wildlife	Prevention	Prevention	Can reduce loss of viability of goshawk territories and nest stands.
	Suppression	Suppression	
Timber Production	Prevention	Prevention	Reduce loss of live growing stock to beetle mortality, works toward a distribution of stand ages conducive to sustained yield and even flow objectives.
	Suppression	Suppression	Reduce loss of live growing stock to beetle mortality.
	Salvage	Salvage	Can accelerate regeneration of stands.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **FOREST SERVICE SCOPING AND ANALYSIS SCHEDULE**

Scoping is an important part of the environmental analysis process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a Proposed Action (36 CFR 1501.7). For these reasons, you are encouraged to take the time to consider the proposed action, and to submit your comments by **May 29, 2004**.

This letter and request for public comments has been mailed to other federal, state, and local agencies, adjacent landowners, and individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by decisions related to our proposal. Notice of this public involvement effort has also been given through the local news media.

Comments can be submitted on the Web at: [r2\\_mbr\\_vis@FSNOTES](mailto:r2_mbr_vis@FSNOTES). When submitting comments on the web, the **SUBJECT LINE** must be “**Rock Creek**” to ensure proper routing. All future documents and information on the Rock Creek Integrated Management Project efforts will be posted at [www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/forest\\_health](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/forest_health) and you are encouraged to use this site for all your participation in the analysis. Please let us know if you want to remain on the mailing list for hard copy information on winter recreation. When submitting your comments, please include your full name and address.

Written comments should be submitted to: Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Attn: Andy Cadenhead, 925 Weiss Drive, Steamboat Springs, Colorado 80486. Telephone Number: (970) 870-2220. Fax Number: (970) 870-2284. After receiving your comments, the Forest Service will identify and analyze the issues raised, use the issues to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and issue a draft Environmental Impact Statement. Currently, plans are to complete a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Decision Notice for the analysis. Completion of these documents during the spring 2005 would allow implementation of the selected alternative during the Summer of 2005.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

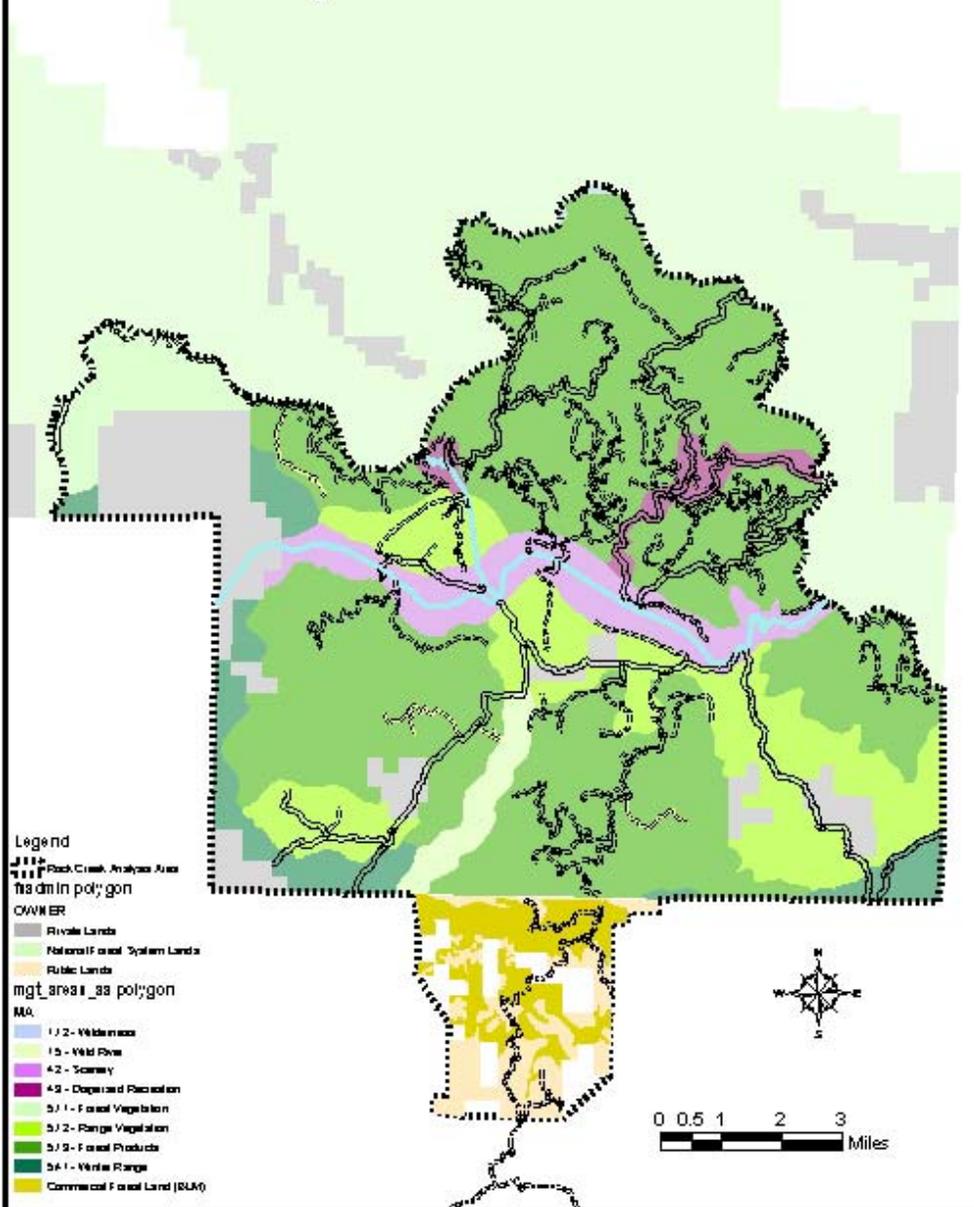
Implementation would start in the summer of 2005 and is expected to occur for 5 to 8 years.

### **FOIA REQUIREMENTS**

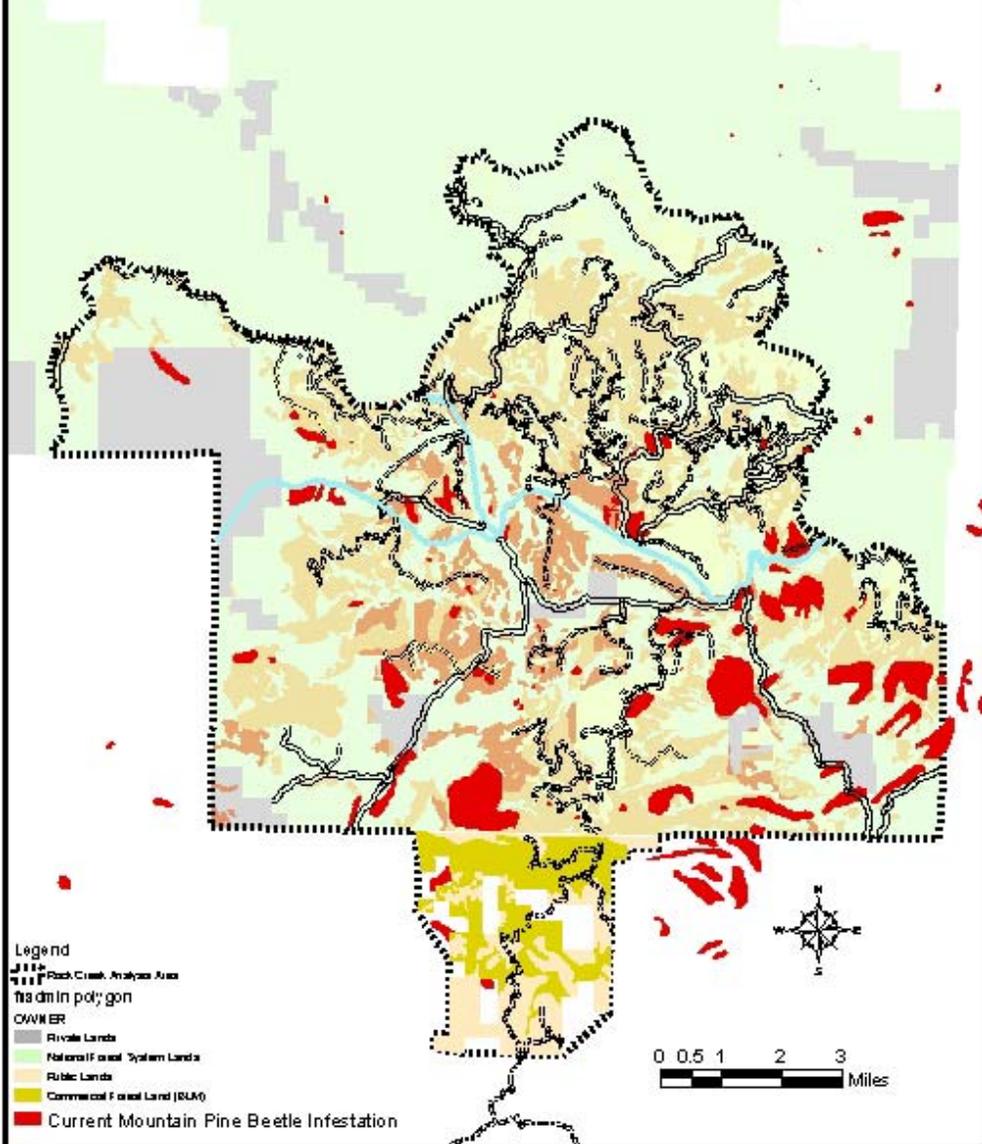
Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those commenting, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality. If the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 15 days.

Thank you for your participation!

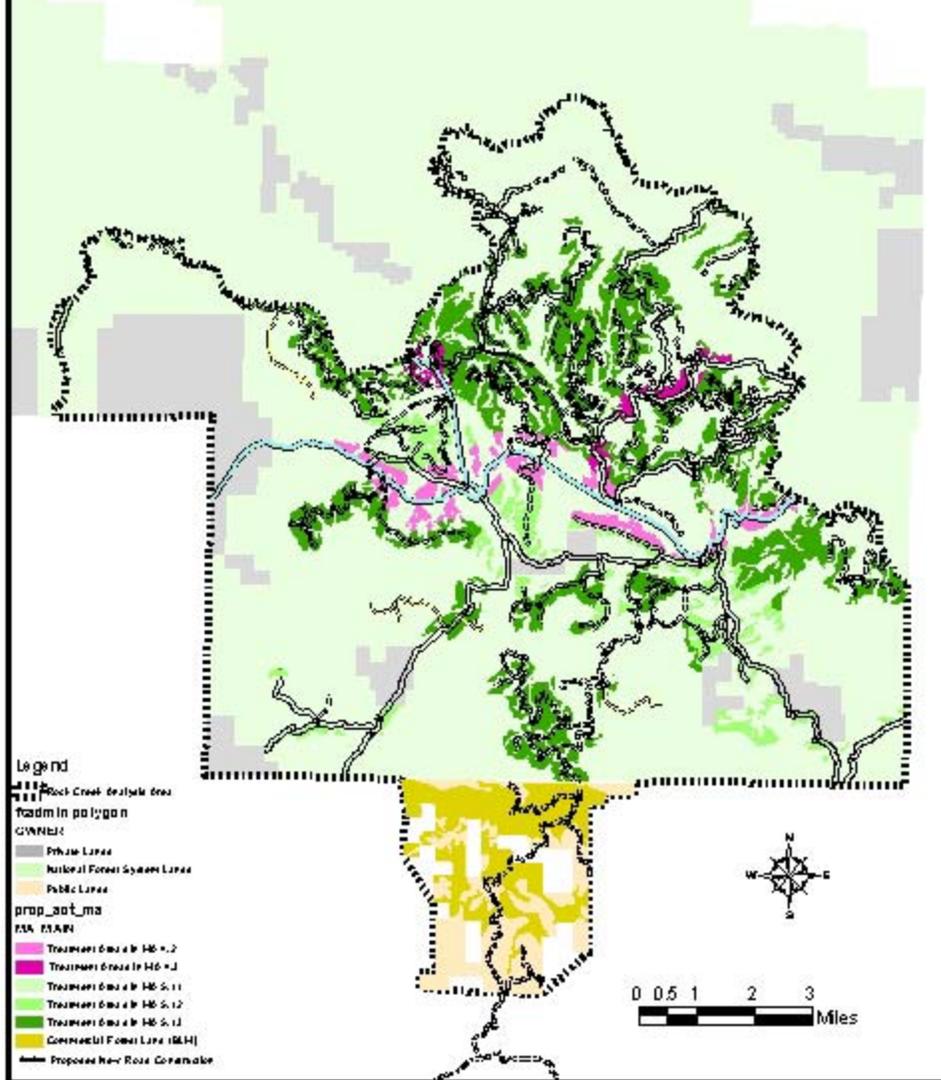
# Rock Creek Analysis Area Management Area Allocations



# Rock Creek Analysis Area Mountain pine Beetle Hazard Ratings and Current Mountain Pine Beetle Infestations



# Rock Creek Analysis Area Proposed Silvicultural Treatment Areas and New Road Construction



# Rock Creek Analysis Area Proposed Bark Beetle Suppression, Spraying and Roads to Evaluate Decommissioning or Relocation

