

Scoping Statement
Freak Mountain Fuel Reduction Project
USDA Forest Service / Shoshone National Forest
South Zone / Washakie Ranger District
Fremont County, Wyoming

Introduction

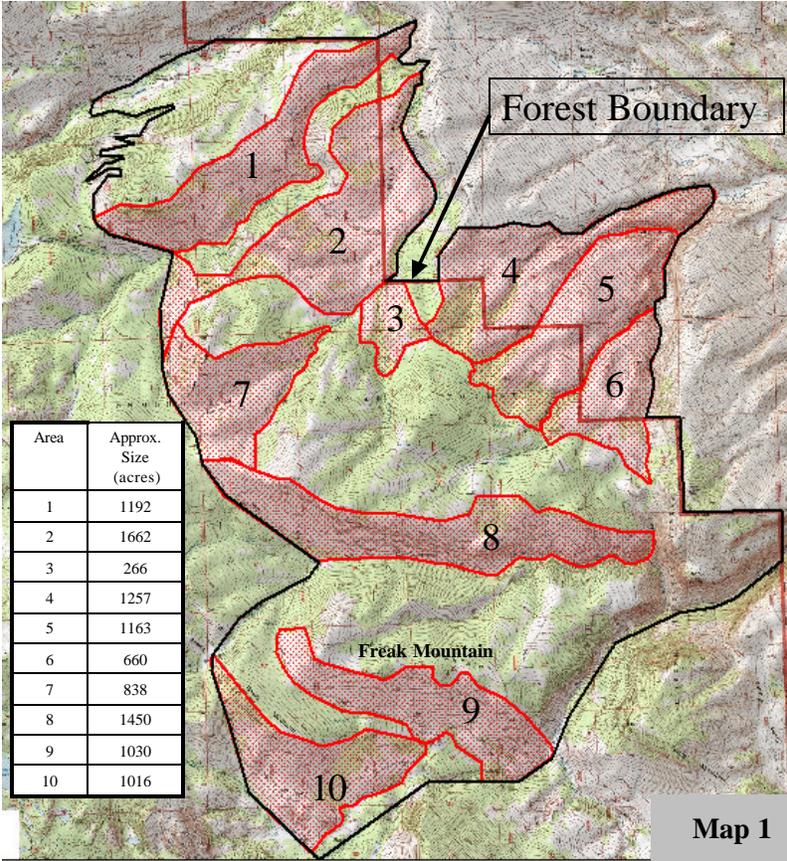
The Shoshone National Forest is proposing a multi-year fuel reduction and vegetative management project along the southeastern boundary of the Washakie Ranger District to address problems, issues, and concerns identified through cooperative efforts with adjacent property owners and State and Federal agencies. The project area has been identified as approximately 18,500 acres located at: T.31N., R.100W., Sections 3-11, 13-23, 27-32 and T.32N., R100W., Sections 19, 20, 29-33 and T.32N., R.101W., Sections 24, 25, 36 and T.31N., R.101W., Section 1 and 12. The project area lies from the Little Popo Agie River north to Sawmill Creek and the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie River and from the National Forest boundary west to the Indian Ridge Trail within the Washakie Ranger District.



Figure 1 - Photo taken looking west into Brown's Canyon. Photo depicts extent of decadent sagebrush with bordering timber stands.

Proposed Action

The proposal includes the use of prescribed fire, as the primary treatment tool, to improve forest health and reduce potential human health and safety concerns along the Forest’s wildland urban interface. Treatment would be staged over approximately 10-years allowing for coordination of range allotment use and recovery. The project would be considered successful if a vegetative mosaic is achieved with 40% of the approximately 18,500 acres treated with prescribed fire. Burning would occur in spring or fall of each year depending on environmental and meteorological objectives and/or constraints. Mechanical treatment, including commercial timber harvest will be considered in areas determined to be economically and logistically feasible. Treatment on property not located on the Shoshone National Forest would require documented agreements with other Federal, State, private organizations and/or private individuals. All actions would be taken in an effort not to adversely affect other resources within or near the treatment areas.



Map 1. Proposed Project area includes approximately 18,500 acres. Numbered zones depict possible prescribed burn locations within sagebrush-dominated habitat. The District is considering additional treatment, mechanical and/or prescribed burn for the remaining proposed project area.

Purpose and Need

Purpose for the Action. The primary purpose is to develop and implement a vegetation and fuels management strategy to address forest health and human health and safety concerns from wildfire risk, resulting from increasing fuel loading due to drought and insect and disease. Secondary benefits that would derive from this action include improved bighorn sheep and elk

habitat, regeneration of decadent aspen stands, improved forage for domestic livestock, improved overall forest health and reduce wildfire risk on and spreading from National Forest System Lands.

Need for the Action. The proposed project is needed to reduce existing fuel levels within the proposed project thereby reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfire and improving overall vegetative health. These objectives are consistent with the goals and objectives expressed in the Shoshone National Forest Plan (as amended) for Management Areas 2A (Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation / Pages III-118 thru III-123), 3A (Semi-Primitive Non Motorized Recreation / Pages III-132 thru III-139), 5A (Big Game Winter Range / Pages III-158 thru III-162) and 7E (Wood Fiber Production / Pages III-173 thru III-180). In addition, the Forest Goals for this area include (Section III-6 thru III-8):

- Manage vegetation types outside of wilderness to provide multiple benefits commensurate with land capability and resource demands.
- Improve the health and vigor of vegetation types outside of wilderness.
- Reduce the accumulation of natural fuels.
- Improve habitats where vegetation conditions are significantly below biological potential.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Public involvement began in fall of 2002, in informal meetings with adjacent property owners, Wyoming State Forestry, Fremont County Firewise, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to discuss aspects of the existing and desire conditions and possible needs/opportunities within the proposed area. This notice is the public's opportunity to identify and submit issues and concerns they feel the Forest Service should address related to this project. If you feel you have information pertinent and specific to the proposed action, we welcome your participation.

Contact

The public¹ should submit any issues and/or comments related to this project in writing to: Mark King, NEPA Coordinator, South Zone/Washakie Ranger District, 333 E. Main Street, Lander, WY 82520, by email at comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-washakie@fs.fed.us or faxed to (307)578-1204 ATTN: Mark King. Please refer to "Freak Mountain" in the subject line of your response. **Your comments would be most helpful if received before January 16, 2004.**

Questions related to the proposed action should be directed to Burns Davison, District Ranger, Washakie Ranger District, telephone (307)332-5460, or email at bdavison@fs.fed.us.

Burns Davison
District Ranger

Washakie Ranger District

¹ NOTE: If you no longer want to be included on the NEPA mailing list to receive scoping notices, please notify the office so that we can maintain a current mailing list. Scoping Notices, Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) and other related NEPA documents and decisions are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/shoshone/planning.htm>.