

Middle East Fork Project Summary of Objection Issues and Suggested Remedies

Project Name: Middle East Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Objector: Jon Spar

Objection Number: 0013

Issue 1. (OG) Alternative 2 will remove too many trees, including old-growth. It will not meet the desires of the East Fork community and other interested parties such as hunters, foresters, local environmental groups, and firefighters.

Suggested remedy: Go with Alternative 3. It will do the least harm and produce the most benefit for the ecosystem, and is favored by an accurate cross section of the community.

Regional Review and Response: This concern is addressed in the response to Public Concern 3619 in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Volume 2, Appendix H. The proposed action, Alternative 2, was collaboratively developed under the framework of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and is consistent with the document, "A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan." The call for action from the community formed the purpose and need for this project and the proposed action. The proposed action implements the recommendations in the CWPP plan regarding the general location and basic method of treatments. An interdisciplinary team of Forest Service resource specialists used information from the CWPP and the public meetings that created that plan, to develop early drafts of the proposed action. Each potential treatment area was scrutinized and modified by resource specialists in an interdisciplinary process to address resource issues. Modifications were made based on their experience, professional knowledge, input from the public, and their site-specific resource knowledge. During the development of the draft proposed action, the specialists took the information back to the public at two open meetings in Sula, Montana, the community nearest the proposed activity, to assure the plan was being implemented as the local community members and other attendees wanted. At both meetings, the participants expressed strong support for the proposed activities.

To clarify, in Section 3.2.8, the effects of treatments such as "thinning from below, slashing and prescribed fire" are presented with respect to the forest resource. Furthermore, 40 percent of the area proposed for treatment under Alternative 2 includes only non-commercial treatments including about 2,200 acres that would be treated through slashing and prescribed fire alone. As described in Section 3.2.8 of the FEIS, where commercial treatments are proposed, Alternative 2 would remove dead and dying trees and thin the live residual overstory from below to improve vigor increasing resilience to bark beetle attack. Density reductions in the desirable overstory would retain the largest, healthiest, and dominant residual trees. The residual trees would be larger, have thicker bark and higher crown heights making them more fire resistant. For additional information about silvicultural options for treating fuel accumulations, see Graham, et al (1999).

In addition, a detailed exploration of additional alternatives is generally beyond the scope of this analysis as covered under Section 104(c) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and described in Section 2.2.2 of the FEIS.