



File Code: 1950

Date: June 3, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

The Heber Ranger District, Uinta National Forest is initiating scoping and is asking for public comment on a proposal to treat several stands of spruce in the Bryant's Fork drainage, located near the southern end of the Strawberry River watershed. The stands are currently infested with a rapidly expanding population of Spruce Bark Beetle.

The stands in Bryant's Fork, as along most of Strawberry Ridge, vary from being dominated by subalpine fir mixed with aspen, to almost pure Engelmann spruce. The spruce areas range from mid-sized mature stands to large diameter old stands. A rapidly growing spruce beetle infestation was recently discovered in these stands. Several years of drought, abundant host trees and mild winters have likely contributed to the rapid expansion of endemic beetle populations to the current epidemic levels. A treatment is currently under way to reduce beetle populations in the short term. This proposal addresses the long term forest health and structural diversity issues.

The purpose of the proposed action is to modify the structure and composition in the stands such that they are no longer susceptible to significant outbreaks of spruce beetle while retaining the overall forested spruce character of the area. While the trap tree treatment currently in progress will reduce populations in the short term, stand conditions remain that are susceptible to another rapid population buildup if no further treatments occur.

This proposed action is needed because without further treatment, it is likely that spruce beetle populations would again rapidly expand and cause extensive mortality in these stands. This mortality adjacent to the recreation residences would pose a significant fire hazard.

The proposed action is to use a timber sale (salvage and sanitation) in these stands to reduce average stand diameter and density, as well as promote regeneration of spruce in the understory. Areas that would regenerate to aspen would be clearcut in patches to create young aspen stands. Operations may be designed to assist with removal of hazard trees within the cabin lots.

The attached Scoping Document gives additional details of the current proposal. Additional sources of information and information on the project schedule are in the attachment. Your written comments should be submitted to me by July 2nd, 2004.

/s/ Steven W. Scheid
STEVEN W SCHEID
Acting District Ranger

Enclosure

