Welcome to the Ashley National Forest’s latest project planning newsletter! Here are our current proposed projects and information on how to stay involved in the management of your National Forest System (NFS) lands.

**IN THIS ISSUE:** 14 projects
- **EISs (3)** - three ongoing (including forest plan revision)
- **EAs (7)** - one completed last quarter and six ongoing
- **CEs (4)** - four new

---

**High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep Analysis EIS**

This is an evaluation of the effects of continued domestic sheep grazing in the High Uintas Wilderness.

*Next step:* We are reviewing the 1,759 comment letters submitted during the 45-day comment period on the supplemental draft EIS, which ended 8/28/2023. After consideration of comments, we will then release the final EIS and draft record of decision (anticipated spring 2024).

*Contact:* Paul Cowley, 801-999-2177, paul.cowley@usda.gov

---

**Soapstone Calcite Project EA**

This project would involve authorizing small-scale hardrock mining operations for decorative calcite near the headwaters of Iron Mine Creek on the Ashley NF. Approximately 1 mile of new access road would need to be constructed, which would cross both the Ashley and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NFs.

*Next step:* We plan to conduct a combined public scoping and comment period this fall (2023).

*Contact:* David Herron, 435-781-5218, david.herron@usda.gov

---

**Note:** The levels of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis referred to below are:
- **EIS** = environmental impact statement
- **EA** = environmental assessment
- **CE** = categorical exclusion

★ = new listing in this issue
The proposed project would authorize up to 24,000 acres of fuels reduction treatments across the Forest each year. Treatment boundaries would be designed to meet objectives and move areas toward desired conditions.

Next step: The 45-day objection period on the draft decision notice closes 11/13/2023. Contact: Lars Christensen, 435-781-5126, lars.christensen@usda.gov

On the entire Ashley:

Ashley National Forest Aspen Restoration Project EA

This is a programmatic evaluation of the restoration of aspen stands outside of designated wilderness.

Next step: We expect to release the final decision notice, including incorporation of the objection reviewing officer’s instructions and recommendations, this fall (2023).

Contact: Kristy Groves, 435-781-5203, kristy.groves@usda.gov/Emilia Sopranzi, 530-647-5373, emilia.sopranzi@usda.gov

Ashley National Forest - Forest Plan Revision EIS

We are revising our 1986 Forest Plan to update our management framework for current natural resource conditions.

Next step: The objection period closed 6/20/2023. We expect to complete the objection resolution process by late 2023. See https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ashley/landmanagement/planning for more information.

Contact: Anastasia Allen, 406-270-9241, anastasia.allen@usda.gov

Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Restoration Project EA

The proposed project would authorize up to 24,000 acres of fuels reduction treatments across the Forest each year. Treatment boundaries would be designed to meet objectives and move areas toward desired conditions.

Next step: The 45-day objection period on the draft decision notice closes 11/13/2023.

Contact: Lars Christensen, 435-781-5126, lars.christensen@usda.gov
The BLM is considering a trona mine proposal from Pacific and Atlantic Soda Company. A portion of the proposal involves construction of a water pipeline across the northern end of the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

Next step: We anticipate the draft EIS will be released for comment this winter (2023/2024).

Contact: Rhett Burkman, 435-781-5133, rhett.burkman@usda.gov

We are developing a new management plan for the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA). The plan will include direction for all resources and resource uses in the NRA.

Next step: We plan to have a 30-day comment period on the EA this winter (2023/2024).

Contact: Ryan Buerkle, 435-781-5204, ryan.buerkle@usda.gov

This project would involve the development of a recreation and interpretive site to provide for public education, enjoyment, and protection of the Henry’s Fork prehistoric rock art site.

Next step: The 45-day objection period on the draft decision notice (released with the EA and finding of no significant impact) closes 10/16/2023.

Contact: Jeffrey Rust, 435-781-5156, jeffrey.rust@usda.gov
**Ashley Karst Timber Stand Improvement CE**  
We are proposing to **thin young lodgepole pine stands** across approximately 7,571 acres in the Ashley Karst National Recreation and Geologic Area.  

*Next step:* We expect to complete the categorical exclusion review this fall (2023).  

*Contact:* Sam Nielsen, 435-781-5148, samuel.nielsen@usda.gov

---

**Marsh Peak Allotment Boundary Adjustment EA**  
We plan to **adjust the boundaries surrounding the Marsh Peak grazing allotment** to facilitate and improve livestock management on the neighboring Lake Mountain and Black Canyon allotments.  

*Next step:* Implementation (final decision notice signed 9/26/2023)  

*Contact:* Todd Irish, 435-781-5168, todd.irish@usda.gov

---

*Photo: L. Tullis, USDA FS. Aspen leaves in the Cart Creek area, Vernal Ranger District, September 2021.*
Anthro Reentry Lop and Scatter CE. Reentry of approximately 7,820 acres of previously treated shrub communities with a hand crew using chainsaws to remove the encroaching conifer. Contact: Bob Christensen, 435-781-5232, robert.christensen@usda.gov.

Harmston Canyon ATV Trail CE. Construction of a new portion of motorized trail connecting with existing roads open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use to create a loop trail along the Elkhorn Loop Road. Contact: John Titre, 505-388-8367, john.titre@usda.gov.

Yellowstone ATV Trail CE. Reconstruction of the Yellowstone ATV Trail connections from 50 inches to 60 inches wide. Contact: John Titre, 505-388-8367, john.titre@usda.gov.

Next step for D3/4 CEs: Finalize the categorical exclusion reviews and decision memos (anticipated fall 2023).

IN PROGRESS

South Slope Fuels Reduction Project EA

We are working with the Ute Tribe on a proposed cross-boundary fuels management project on the south slope of the Uinta Mountains. The project area generally encompasses the zone from Yellowstone Canyon to Uinta Canyon.


Contact: Emilia Sopranzi, 530-647-5373, emilia.sopranzi@usda.gov or Joseph Williams, 435-781-5212, joseph.l.williams@usda.gov.

Looking Back at Fiscal Year 2023

What were the Ashley National Forest's project priorities in fiscal year 2023?

- Fulfilling responsibility to protect/restore ecosystems and mitigate wildfire risk
- Implementing the regional range strategy
- Commitment to serving and supporting our public and our communities
- Maintaining and improving recreation opportunities, partnerships, and volunteerism

Please call or email any of the above contacts with questions on these projects! And if you have any general questions regarding this newsletter, feel free to contact Lesley Tullis, Environmental Coordinator, at 435-781-5103 or at lesley.tullis@usda.gov.

Thank you for your interest and input and we look forward to continuing to work together to plan good work on the ground that will help sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Ashley National Forest to meet the needs of present and future generations.