

Comments Received at Kanab, UT
Warm Fire Salvage Public Meeting
February 9, 2007 GSENM Visitor Center

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An overview of the methodology and design features used to develop the proposed action was presented to a group of nine members of the public. As the Warm Fire Team (Kyra Sanders, Neil McCusker, Erin Woodard, Scott Clemans, Louise Congdon) explained the process, comments and questions were encouraged, resulting in the responses recorded here. I attempted to categorize the comments by topic to make consideration easier. However, many of the comments applied to several resource areas, so the readers are encouraged to review all comments rather than just their resource interest area.

Soils Related Comments

How certain are you that soil protection methods will be successful? Are you using a science-based method, and have your methods been modified from previous implementation monitoring?

Post-treatment stabilization timing needs to fit the salvage tree removal and seeding timing (e.g. seeding annual grasses on skid trails during the proper germination period).

Disclose the specific soils-related concerns broached by the public, researchers or other agencies. The public may want to have some discussion with those who have concerns about soils, but won't be able to if the specific concerns are not shared with the public.

Wildlife Related Comments

Residual snag amounts within the salvage areas and untreated areas needs to be greater than what the Forest Plan recommends. Disclose the amount of snags retained by salvage area and untreated areas. A spatial display would be useful.

Use large tree snag longevity research, and leave groups rather than single trees.

Consider identifying "quiet areas" for hunters and wildlife appropriate for the landscape. This may require season closures to reduce human disturbance during key birthing times.

Will there be a need for goshawk seasonal restrictions?

Are the fire effects likely to lead the Pediocactus to ESA listing?

Animal use and mobility in areas of high snag retention (i.e. untreated areas and snag corridors) may be compromised in the future as snags fall into jack-straw configurations. Please show how you considered these effects to wildlife and how important those effects can be to different groups of wild animals.

Heritage Related Comments

What methods will be used to protect heritage resources?

Timber Harvest and Economics Related Comments

Will the proposal or selected alternative specify the removal instrument (i.e. timber sale versus stewardship contract)?

Economic analysis should capture both timber sale and stewardship options. The bottom line for each will differ.

Community involvement in the treatment implementation needs to be included in the economic/social discussion of the EIS. The public needs to know that this project has some certainty of being implemented. The flexibility for multi-sized and different extraction implements (i.e. timber sale and stewardship contracting) should be built in to allow the most participation by the most diverse abilities in the local community. The implementation design should allow all sizes of companies to participate.

The MOU signed by the Regional Forester and the Governor of Utah should be described, and included in the economic/social evaluation of alternatives. The Forest Service should honor that MOU with this project – make it part of the purpose and need.

Recommend all-winter logging for all salvage areas in all alternatives. However, caution should be used for times when snow is on the ground, but the soil is not frozen. Need to build in options for the operator and resource protection to maximize the periods to accomplish salvage. (Discussion between two commenters)

Keep in mind that stewardship contracting funds can be applied to areas outside the salvage units (i.e. Pinyon-juniper, cactus, meadow areas).

Does funding affect consideration of potential activities or treatment methods considered in this EIS and other projects?

Silvicultural Treatment Comments

What are the expectations of success in replanting areas? Is the team factoring in recent changes caused by global warming and will that affect planting success? Is the Forest Service using new science in planting methods or still using 1950s (old) research?

Plan post-fire plantation areas in a method that will allow fire suppression efforts and prescribed fire areas to more easily protect the planting investment. Too many times, plantations in an area of prescribed burning have caused fire managers headaches in trying to keep fire out of young plantations.

Consider microsites when identifying areas to plant or use as long-term fuelbreaks.

Initial stocking rates in planting areas need to be lower than FS Manual/Handbook direction to allow areas for future planting to re-establish uneven aged conditions. The planting rates should be more in line with the historical range of variability.

Implementation Monitoring and Pre-Proposal Monitoring Comments

Monitoring for pests and non-native invasive species needs to be planned into the proposal. Capture the monitoring in the EIS process in a way that you can know it will be implemented in the future.

The EIS Team visited several past fires to get a sense of where the Warm Fire recovery area may be at different time-points in the future. Provide this list of areas considered and a map so the public can benefit from seeing these same areas on their own.

Compare the 1977 Moquitch fire effects (approximately 1400 acres), pre-fire stand conditions, and post-fire moisture/recovery treatment successes to the Warm Fire areas to define potential expectations over

time. Moquitch happened around the same time of year, and near the Warm Fire, so it should be instructive to review.

Fire and Fuels Related Comments

Recommend the team review the Snider, Daughert and Wood paper in the economics section of the Journal of Forestry, December 2006, pp. 431-437, focusing on page 435. Fire hazard reduction and economics need to include the spatial arrangement of fuels and actual non-monetary value to reduce future fire intensity, severity and spread.

Go bigger for fuels treatments. As planted and natural regeneration is accomplished, access to areas with future high fuels will become more limited. It is better to clean up as much as you can now than wait a few years when down wood and areas with investments (i.e. planting) reduce the ability to change fuel loads.

Assistive Displays and Presentation Methods Comments

Spatially display the desired future conditions for different stands/areas, and describe the process of identifying what that DFC is based on (i.e. science, pre-fire data, historic range of variability, etc.).

Spatially display the amount of snag fall through time to help the public understand the future fuel loading and risk of damaging fire.

Graph the acres and tonnage of potential down wood through time across salvage and non-salvage areas to help the public grasp the locations and risks associated with all alternatives. A spatial display would be very helpful to understanding how the future fuels and fire risks will be altered.

Map areas where salvage will accomplish fuels reduction needs, and non-salvage fuels management treatment areas. The public wants to see how much risk will be managed, or where potential topographic features may compound fire risks in the future.

Include an acronym crosswalk and glossary. Consider creating a card that can be removed from the document and used as a bookmark that has this information on it for reader convenience.

Recreation and Scenic Integrity Comments

Not salvaging may have a profound impact on recreation opportunities. As snags fall, the public's ability to use the burned area for recreation will be reduced for hiking, biking, four-wheeling, horseback riding, and snowmobiling. Consider this in project design and effects evaluation.

Is the scenic integrity map displayed at the public meeting a long term desired future condition type map, or a short-term display of design features to guide the project development?

The fire created new, unique visual vistas – can we manage those for the future, or does the Forest Plan require that we manage those to close back in, thus restricting the view? We would like to keep some of the long-range vistas created by the fire.

Include native flowering plant seed in sowing areas for soil stabilization and along shoulders of the highway and primary roads to appease the eye.

Public Safety/Hunting Comments

Forest roads with maintenance levels of 2-5 should not be treated differently from other roads with the same maintenance level outside the burn area. The public should accept the risk that they are entering a “wild” environment with a variety of hazards and prepare themselves accordingly.

Salvage areas should consider line of sight for hunter safety (i.e. ability to shoot from ridge to ridge but unable to see the potential full trajectory of the weapon). Leave sufficient standing snags to reduce projectile travel, or cut enough so the full range of the projectile is visible.

Known public informal (undeveloped campsites or picnic sites) use areas should be protected by cutting hazard trees.