



File Code: 1950/5150

Date: March 26, 2007

Dear Interested Citizen,

Thank you for your interest and participation in the Pintler Ranger District, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. We are beginning the formal planning process for the **Anaconda Job Corps Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Hazard Abatement Project** and would like your ideas. This process of requesting your input is known as scoping. We have prepared an initial proposal formally known as a 'proposed action.' The proposed action is described in brief below and gives an indication of the kinds of work we would undertake.

The Job Corps Center has an approximate population of 240 students living on the center with 60 additional staff members who live or work on site. The center is an administrative site within the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and was built in the early 1960's on a former Forest Service campground site. Forest Road #195 is the only access into and out of the center. There are also approximately 5 private residences along road #195 above and below the Job Corps Center.

Background Information:

The Anaconda Job Corps Wildland Urban Interface project is proposed in response to elements of the National Fire Plan and the President's Healthy Forest Initiative which address hazardous fuels reduction and reduced risk from wildfire to people and property. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is working in conjunction with the Anaconda Job Corps Center and following the Deer Lodge County Community Wildfire Protection Plan which was produced as a collaborative effort between the county, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Headwaters RC&D. This plan identifies the Job Corp Center as being in an area rated as a High Priority Protection Zone.

The Center is located at the site of a former Forest Service campground on a bench above Foster Creek. Existing vegetation at the site consists of an aspen grove and open grassland currently being colonized by conifers. Surrounding the center are stands of relatively young (~80 years) lodgepole pine that became established following large-scale clearcutting to provide fuel for mining and smelting operations in Anaconda and Butte. Juniper and limber pine have become established on drier upslope areas. An outbreak of mountain pine beetle is currently occurring, resulting in substantial mortality of the lodgepole pine.

A Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) rating is defined as the amount of departure from the natural fire regime. The natural fire regime for the project area is described as mixed severity with a 35-100 fire return interval, and this regime is characteristic of Fire Regime Group III. Because it is likely that the project area has missed several fire intervals, it can be classified within Fire Regime Condition Class 2 and 3, which is characteristic of fire regimes that have been moderately altered or significantly altered from the historical ranges. Within these FRCC, there exists a moderate to high risk of losing key ecosystem components from fire. When fires occur in areas such as those described for the Anaconda Job Corps, there is potential for catastrophic damage to occur.

The project area is located mostly in Management Areas ME1 and MA1. Small portions (less than 15 acres) of Management Areas MC2, MC4, MF1 and MC1 are also included in the project area. Management Areas preceded by the letter "M" denotes a municipal watershed. This project is located in the municipal watershed for the communities of Anaconda and Butte. The following table displays timber

and fire protection standards for each of the Management Areas for the project.

Table 1: Management Area direction for the Anaconda Job Corps Fuels Reduction Project

Management Area	Management Direction
MA1	Limit tree removal to that needed to maintain or improve recreation values and provide for public safety. Forested land is classified as unsuitable for timber management. Emphasize fire prevention. Control wildfire to protect the investment in sites and provide public safety. Minimize impact of fire suppression equipment. Allow prescribed fire to reduce fire hazards or enhance the vigor.
ME1	Allow even-aged and uneven-aged timber management systems. Use control or containment fire management strategies and use prescribed fire with planned ignitions for slash disposal and the enhancement and maintenance of the timber and forage resources.
MC2	Permit harvesting of logs and forest products when compatible with winter range thermal cover needs. Timberland classified as unsuitable. Use control or confine fire management strategies, depending upon location. Use prescribed fire with planned and unplanned ignitions for the enhancement and maintenance of winter range forage.
MC4	Classify timberland as unsuitable. Manage timber to maintain or enhance big game spring, summer and fall habitat. Permit harvesting of forest products, such as Christmas trees and post and pole products when compatible with elk calving and summer range management goals. Use control or confine fire management strategies depending upon location. Use prescribed fire with planned and unplanned ignitions for the enhancement and maintenance of the area's wildlife forage.
MC1	Classify timberland as unsuitable. Permit harvesting of logs and forest products, such as Christmas trees and post and poles when compatible with winter range thermal cover needs. Use control and confine fire management strategies. Use prescribed fire with planned and unplanned ignitions to enhance and/or maintain winter range forage.
MF1	Contains timberland classifies as suitable. Manage timber only where riparian values can be protected. Wildlife and fish habitat needs will be the significant factor in determining the amount of material, to be removed, the harvest unit size and the silvicultural system emphasized. Allow prescribed fire from planned ignition for slash disposal and to improve aspen and willow regeneration for wildlife habitats.

Purpose and Need:

The purpose of the Anaconda Job Corps Wildland Urban Interface project is to reduce hazardous fuels and subsequently the risk of loss to infrastructure on the Anaconda Job Corps Center site and other

private lands. I am concerned about firefighter safety, public safety, and protection of values at risk. By reducing fuel loads, creating fuel breaks, and restoring more historic vegetative conditions, the effectiveness of fire suppression resources would increase. Historic conditions in the area had a more open forest with fewer conifer trees, and larger stands of aspen which helped to reduce catastrophic wildfire potential and severity.

We have identified several objectives we would like to meet. Specifically, there is a need to:

- Reduce the risks of wildfire to the Anaconda Job Corp Center and private homes in the Foster Creek drainage
- Provide for firefighter and public safety
- Restore and maintain conditions that represent a properly functioning ecosystem
- Improve Fire Regime Condition Class
- Reduce severity of wildfire resulting from insect infestation on forest lands and adjacent private lands
- Restore the vigor of aspen stands by reducing conifer encroachment
- Reduce the density of understory conifers within forested stands

Proposed Action:

In order to achieve these objectives, we are proposing the following projects on National Forest System Lands in the vicinity of the Anaconda Job Corps site (see attached maps):

1. Commercially thin conifer species on approximately 114 acres, reducing the stand to 80 square feet of basal area (cross-sectional area of all trees at a height of 4.5 feet above ground). Conifers would be removed from within viable aspen clones, and removed from up to a tree length around the clones.
2. Slashing (cutting down) of small diameter (0.5-7 inches in diameter) conifer, aspen and understory brush on approximately 23 acres.
3. Cutting of dead and dying trees found in the stands. The intent of the cutting is to remove conifer trees that have been attacked by insects in order to decrease dead fuel loading that could affect fire behavior within the stand.
4. Slash, pile, and prescribe burn Juniper trees from approximately 460 acres of grasslands.
5. Slash created as a result of activities will be burned, chipped or removed.
6. Remove hazard trees in and around Center facilities.

The Anaconda Job Corps project area includes 13 treatment units, totaling approximately 660 acres, within T5N, R12W, Sections 16-21. The project area is located approximately nine miles west of Anaconda, Montana and located immediately adjacent the Anaconda Job Corps Center.

Table 1. Treatment Units

Unit Number	Unit Acres	Fuels Treatment (Slashing needed prior to Prescribed burning)
1	14	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
2	11	Thin Conifers less than 7 inch dbh- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash

3	6	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
4	8	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
5	46	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
6	37	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
7	25	Slash Junipers-Prescribe Burn
8	12	Thin Conifers less than 7 inch dbh- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
9	42	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
10	474	Slash Junipers-Burn
11	3	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
12	1	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
13	8	Commercial Thin- Burn, Chip or Remove Slash
TOTAL TREATMENTS	13 Units	657 acres

The municipal watershed designation requires the Forest Service to coordinate with the State of Montana as required by the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1323), and to design and implement projects in accordance with FSM 2542.12 and specific standards and guidelines in the municipal watershed plans. BMPs will be incorporated and will serve as the principal mechanism for controlling non-point pollution sources and meeting soil and water quality goals. Site productivity will be sustained.

A Source Water Protection Plan has been developed for the public water system that serves the Anaconda Job Corps Center. This project meets the intent of that plan and protects the Centers water source.

Decision to be Made:

As the Pintler District Ranger, I will decide whether or not to implement the proposed action or another alternative developed by the Forest Service in response to specific resource issues and public comments. I may choose one of the alternatives or may select components from among the proposed action and alternatives. I may also select the No Action alternative, resulting in continuation of current management practices.

This project is being proposed as a categorical exclusion under Category 31.2 (10), “Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire, not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing, not to exceed 1,000 acres.”

This project is located in a wildland-urban interface, as defined in the Deer Lodge County Wildfire Protection Plan. The area is not in wilderness or wilderness study area, does not include the use of herbicides or pesticides, and does not include the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure. Existing road locations will be used, insofar as they access the proposed treatment area.

How to Get Involved:

I would like your ideas about the fuel treatment projects, specifically those ideas that would help in decision making. Your comments would be most effective if I receive them no later than April 27, 2007. The process we follow is best implemented when your ideas tell us what your best solution might be and when you help us develop issues that our resource specialists will analyze.

Please send your written input to:

Email epbrown@fs.fed.us

Mail Pintler Ranger District
88 10-A Business Loop
Philipsburg, MT 59858

Fax (406) 859-3689

Your comments, including your name and address, will be considered part of the public record on the proposed actions and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered regarding these projects. If you need more information on submitting comments anonymously, please contact us or refer to 36 CFR 215 and 7 CFR 1.27(d).

If you would like to be included on the Anaconda Job Corps WUI project mailing list, please let us know. Persons not responding to this mailing will not receive further information regarding this particular project. If you wish to participate in this environmental analysis or to be kept informed of the process but are unable to respond to this scoping document, please contact us at the address above. If you have an email where you can be reached, we prefer to use that format whenever possible. For any other questions, contact Erin Brown at 406-689-3243.

Sincerely,

CHARLENE F. BUCHA GENTRY
Pintler District Ranger

Enclosures