



File Code: 1950

Date: October 18, 2007

Re: Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project-
Public Scoping

Dear Landowner or Interested Citizen:

The Sandpoint Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests is considering a fuel reduction project in the Gold Hill area, which will hereafter be known as the Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project. The project is located on National Forest System (NFS) lands within sections 5-6 of Township 56 North, Range 1 West of the Boise Meridian; sections 30-32 of Township 57 North, Range 1 West of the Boise Meridian; and section 25 of Township 57 North, Range 2 West of the Boise Meridian, in Bonner County, Idaho. The general area is locally known as the Gold Hill or Gold Mountain area, and is bisected by Forest Road 2642. See the attached map for more details. I am sending you this letter because you have either expressed interest in this project or you own property adjacent to the NFS lands in this area.

The primary objective of this project will be to reduce wildland fuels and lessen the risk of a landscape fire event in the area between Bottle Bay and Sagle Slough. This area has been identified as wildland-urban interface (WUI)—an area or zone where structures and other human development intermingle with wildland fuels. The Bonner County Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Planning Committee collaboratively identified this area as a priority for reducing wildland fuels and fire risk on public land and for mitigating fire risk on private land.

A second purpose of this project will be to improve the overall health and resiliency (or sustainability) of the forest stands in this area. Decades of fire suppression, coupled with overcrowded forest stands, prolonged drought, and escalations of forest insect and disease populations are leading to substantial tree mortality, significant forest fuel accumulation, and changes to stand structure and composition in many areas.

In order to evaluate the actual fire risk related to wildland fuels in this area, the Forest Service began forest stand evaluations late in 2006. While performing these surveys, foresters and fuel specialists identified and prioritized areas in need of fuel reduction treatment by considering existing stand conditions and expected stand development; presence and extent of forest pathogens; fuel type and hazard; adjacency to private land, public infrastructure or roads; past and current fire history; as well as spatial arrangement on the landscape.

I also recognize that public lands in this area are valued for many resources, not just forests. This area is extremely important not only for scenic characteristics for the Sandpoint area and Lake Pend Oreille watershed, but is also a focal point for recreational users (i.e. hikers, motorized trail users, hunters, etc.) in the surrounding area. Many other factors including wildlife, soils, and hydrology will also be considered during project development. As a result, we are seeking public input from adjacent landowners, visitors and recreational users of the area, as well as interested citizens. We want to ensure that we address all pertinent issues to this project.



At this time, I encourage you to let us know if you have particular concerns or interests regarding this area, or if you simply wish to continue to be informed as we develop a proposed action. For your convenience, I am enclosing a comment form. We would like to incorporate pertinent issues into our developing project and proposed action, as well as collaborate with those who express interest. If we do not receive a response from you **by November 9, 2007**, we will remove your name from our mailing list in order to improve efficiency.

Please contact the project leader, Jennifer Costich-Thompson, at jcostichthompson@fs.fed.us, 208-263-5111, or 208-443-6811 if you have specific questions about this developing project. Thank you for your time and participation. We look forward to your continued interest and involvement in the management of your National Forest!

Sincerely,

RICHARD P. KRAMER
District Ranger