

Request for Comment Barrette Creek Fuels Reduction Project

The Barrette Creek Fuels Reduction Project Environmental Assessment (EA) is available for public comment. Based on public input during the analysis, the EA evaluated a No Action Alternative and one action alternative that met the purpose and need for the project. The project area is located between the Bird and Fire Creek Drainages on the Ninemile Ranger District, approximately eight miles northwest of the Ninemile Ranger Station. The project area is located in sections 12 and 13, T16N, R24W, PMM, Montana.

The Ninemile Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest proposes a combination of fuel reduction activities including: commercial improvement cutting and thinning from below and crown thinning to reduce crown bulk density, percent crown cover, and ladder fuels on ten units, totaling 655 acres. An additional thirty acres will be treated non-commercially by thinning and slashing under story trees to reduce ladder fuels. This project was developed to reduce hazardous fuels, within the Wildland Urban Interface along private property boundaries, and make progress towards accomplishing objectives in priority areas identified in the Missoula County Community Fire Protection Plan.

In treatment unit 7, the District is also proposing to build approximately 800 feet of temporary road to tie into the existing road system. The temporary road would provide access to forest lands, needing fuels reduction, immediately adjacent to private property. The temporary road would be re-contoured and completely obliterated upon completion of the project. In addition, four road segments in the project area will be decommissioned to a level 3-S closure.

No decision has been made yet and your comments are invited and encouraged. Comments for this proposed project must be postmarked or received within 30 days after publication of this notice in the *Missoulian*. Only those who submit timely comments or other expression of interest by the close of the comment period will be accepted. Each individual or a representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or be prepared to verify their identity upon request.

After comments are received, there will be a determination regarding potential significant impacts. If there are no significant impacts it will be documented as such in a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI), and then a Decision Notice (DN) will be prepared that includes the comments that were made on the project and how they are addressed in the decision. Once the DN is signed, it will be subject to the administrative appeal process where individuals may request that the decision be reviewed by a higher organizational level of the Forest Service.

Submit written comments to: Garry Edson, District Ranger, Ninemile Ranger Station, 20325 Remount Road, Huson, Montana 59846. The Ninemile Ranger District office is open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday for those who wish to submit hand-delivered comments. Electronic comments may be sent to comments-northern-lolo-ninemile. Acceptable electronic formats include word perfect, rtf, and MS word.

Comments should include: 1) name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of project on which the comments are being submitted; and 3) specific facts and supporting information for the District Ranger to consider. The names and addresses of people submitting comments will be included as part of the public record. An electronic version of the Barrette Creek EA is available on the web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo/>, under plans and projects. If you would like a paper copy of the EA, or would like more information, please contact Jeff Hayes, Team Leader, at the Ninemile Ranger District (406) 626-5421, or at the address above.