



**Scoping Document
File code 1950**

**Davis Creek Prescribed
Fire Project**

**USDA Forest Service
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache
National Forest
Salt Lake Ranger District
Davis County, Utah**

**Comments Due: August 28th,
2009**

Note to Reader

Earlier this month you were mailed a scoping document for the Davis Creek Prescribed Fire Project. Unfortunately the correct regulatory language was not included so we are sending out this corrected version with a new public comment period. The project described earlier has not changed.

The Purpose of this Scoping Document

The Salt Lake Ranger District proposes to conduct a prescribed fire within the upland portion of the Davis Creek watershed. The goal is to reduce hazardous fuels adjacent to the wildland urban interface and increase the age class diversity of oak/ maple shrublands. The proposed treatment area is located on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, on the Front Range below Bountiful Peak and above the city of Farmington, Utah. It is a 555-acre unit that occurs between 6800 ft and 8600 ft elevation. Within the treatment unit ignitions near recreation trails, and dispersed camp sites would be avoided. The project objective would be to treat 30-50% of the upper watershed with mixed severity prescribed fire. The purpose of this document is to inform the public and solicit feedback from community groups and individuals that may have issues, concerns, ideas, or information that should be addressed in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

This project is authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and will therefore be subject to the objection procedure at 36 CFR 218 in lieu of the appeal procedure at 36 CFR 215

What is being proposed?

Large, contiguous areas of dense Gambel oak/ bigtooth maple vegetation occur along the Wasatch Front in Davis County. This fuel type presents serious difficulties and hazards when controlling wildfires adjacent to the urban interface. The lack of natural fuel breaks and steep side slopes severely limit the capability of firefighters to utilize ground-based suppression resources safely. These limitations will result in more reliance on air tanker and helicopter resources, which could add considerable costs to future fire suppression efforts.

The overriding goal of the prescribed fire treatments would be to reduce fuel loading and break up the fuel continuity. During ignitions riparian areas (streams) and stringers of conifer that occur in the drainage bottoms and sub-drainages of Davis Creek would be avoided. Ignitions would occur greater than 300 ft. away from drainages and allowed to back into these areas. Upland areas where relatively dense oak/ maple stands exist would be targeted during ignitions. Throughout the burn unit 30 to 50% of the surface area will be treated with prescribed fire to top-kill the oak/maple. No more than 15% of the total area should burn with high severity. Prescribed fire would be applied in the fall (September-November) to minimize effects to wildlife including nesting and migrating birds.

Thinning of oak/maple vegetation along the ridgelines and within the unit would be completed by hand crews as needed prior to burn implementation. Materials would be bucked and scattered within the burn unit area. These actions would enhance the existing natural fuel breaks for the purpose of containing the prescribed fire. Maintenance of the lower fuel breaks created by the Davis County I-III treatments (2004) may be required prior to burn implementation (see map). This activity would be limited to the areas previously thinned within the present analysis area (see map). Maintenance activities would include cutting the re-sprouting oak/ maple and other woody vegetation as needed. There will be no additional cutting of large diameter (>1 in) stems within the previously treated areas.

Why are we proposing this project?

The Cities of Farmington and Centerville will continue to experience natural and human caused wildfires in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Recently, the Farmington Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was drafted by citizens and local government with assistance from the Utah Division of Natural Resources fire management staff. The plan has requested that the Forest Service reduce hazardous fuels on public lands adjacent to the community. Hazardous fuel loads within the project area range from 25 to 35 tons per acre and canopy heights in many places are 20 to 30 feet tall. Prescribed burning would reduce the older, decadent shrub stands by consuming dead wood and leaf litter accumulations and top-killing 30 to 40 percent of the Gambel oak/ Maple in the treatment area. This would break up the thick continuous stands of brush and produce a mosaic of multi-aged brush and small openings. These reductions in fuel height and fuel continuity would alter the behavior of future wildfires near homes and private property.

Preliminary issues

Disturbance to wildlife and habitat - The implementation of both cutting and burning activities would occur during the fall and winter seasons (September- March) in order to avoid disturbances to neotropical migratory birds and other wildlife. No ignition activities would occur within 300 feet of the stream channel. The proposed action is expected to reduce the likelihood of large catastrophic wildfire which would have negative impacts on wildlife, soils, and watershed resources.

Mudflows – A debris flow occurred shortly after the Farmington wildfire when a high intensity rain event occurred over the severely burned area. This event caused flood damage to private property in the foothills adjacent to the forest boundary. After the debris flow occurred the Forest Service conducted an analysis of flood potential in the Davis Creek watershed and adjacent community. The forest hydrologist has identified flood sensitive areas in the project area and would work with the prescribed fire managers to mitigate the risk of impacting sensitive soils. A prescribed fire treatment would be conducted during favorable weather conditions and at a time of the year when the likelihood of widespread high severity fire is minimal. In contrast, if an unplanned wildfire event would occur during extreme weather conditions and with the current fuel load it could have the maximum potential to cause extensive soil erosion and flooding.

What is the decision to be made?

The decision to be made is whether or not to implement a prescribed fire in the Davis Creek watershed below Bountiful Peak. The decision would be implemented in the fall of 2010 or 2011 weather and other conditions permitting.

Who will make the decision?

The District Ranger, Cathy Kalow, is the official responsible for making the decision.

We want to hear from you.

We welcome your comments. Please contact us if you have additional information or concerns that should be addressed in the Environmental Analysis, or if you have alternative ideas that should be considered as alternatives to the proposed action.

Specific questions regarding the proposal should be directed to Eric LaMalfa, at (801) 625-5106; FAX (801) 625-5914, or email elamalfa@fs.fed.us. The information in this notice can also be found on the web at;

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/uwc/projects/wcnf/proposed/index.shtml#sl>

Your comments will be available for public review and may be released in their entirety if requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

When do we need your response?

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments must be received by **August 28th, 2009**. Written comments must be submitted to: Salt Lake District Ranger, 6944 South 3000 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84121. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official’s office during normal business hours via telephone (801) 733-2675 or in person; or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to **comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-saltlake@fs.fed.us**.

Sincerely,

/s/ Catherine H Kahlow
CATHERINE H. KAHLOW
District Ranger

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