

Summary of the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project FINAL Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS)

The Gallatin National Forest proposes to implement fuels reduction activities to reduce the potential for severe and extensive wildfire in the Bozeman Creek and Hyalite Creek drainages. The area affected by the proposal includes part of the City of Bozeman Municipal Watershed. This action is proposed because of the fuel conditions in the drainages, which consist of forested stands of generally mature trees. Analyses and fire risk assessments of the area concluded there is a high risk to the integrity of the watershed should there be severe and extensive wildfire. This would affect the quality of the water for Bozeman's domestic use, it would cause a safety concern for the recreating public and firefighters, and a wildfire started on the National Forest system (NFS) lands could enter into the wildland urban interface to the north of the forest boundary.

The Forest Service has worked with the City of Bozeman and other interest groups to develop the issues and alternatives for the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The six alternatives address the significant issues by varying the types of fuel reduction treatments and the amount of acreage treated. These activities include partial thinning in mature stands, thinning of excess standing fuels in small diameter regenerated forest, and broadcast burning in less dense forest. Each of these alternatives accomplishes the purpose of the project in different ways and each has differing effects on resources such as water quality, scenic quality, fisheries and soils.

In March 2010 a Final EIS and Record of Decision was released for this Project. Two administrative appeals were received on the Decision. As a result of the administrative review, the decision was remanded to the Forest because it was not clear how the analysis was consistent with the Regional Soil Quality Standards. The appellants also raised some important issues related to water quality. Because the water quality analysis was significantly revised, the fisheries analysis was also revisited. At about the same time three court decisions were made resulting in the need for additional consideration of issues specific to the Gallatin Forest big game standard (USDA, 1987 p. II-18), and the Clean Water Act exemption for forest roads. Since March 2010, additional information became available related to reasonably foreseeable activity on adjacent lands. Those actions were considered for potential cumulative effects with the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project. The SFEIS was released for public comment in May 2011.

The Final Supplemental EIS is limited to a compilation of supplemental analysis for elk and other big game species, fisheries, soils, water quality, climate change, sensitive species and Management Indicator species with updates to the sensitive plant, weeds, roadless analyses, consideration of cumulative effects from reasonably foreseeable activities in the vicinity of Bozeman Creek and Appendix B – Response to Comments from the comment period held in June 2011 on the SFEIS. The supplemental analysis discloses reduced impacts to these resources compared to the analysis in the FEIS. A notice of availability of the Final SFEIS will be published in the Federal Register in December 2011. The response to comments and errata page with minor changes to reflect the comment period will be circulated. Notice of Availability for the SFEIS and Record of Decision will also be in the Bozeman Chronicle in early December which will initiate a 45 day administrative appeal period.

Project NEPA documents are available for review on the Gallatin Forest Webpage under the **Land & Resource Management** link in the **Projects** folder.

The web address is: www.fs.usda.gov/gallatin

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