



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Custer National Forest and
Supervisor's Office
1310 Main Street
Billings, MT 59105

Gallatin National Forest
Supervisor's Office
10 East Babcock
P.O. Box 130
Bozeman, MT 59771

File Code: 1950

Date: November 29, 2011

The Record of Decision and Final Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) for the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project are enclosed. I included a summary of the Final SFEIS along with a CD containing full electronic copies of the SFEIS and ROD. If you would like paper copies of the SFEIS or Record of Decision please contact the Bozeman Ranger District Office.

The Bozeman Municipal Watershed Fuels Reduction Project is in the northern Gallatin Mountain Range near the city of Bozeman, Montana. The area encompasses approximately the lower one third of the Bozeman Creek and Hyalite Creek drainages beginning just to the north of the Moser Creek Road in the Hyalite drainage. The northern part of Hyalite is also drained by Hodgeman and Leverich Creeks. A portion of the Gallatin Fringe Inventoried Roadless Area is included on the eastern side of the project area. The entire project area is considered wildland urban interface (WUI) with many adjacent private homes, and sub-divisions within one-half mile of the Forest boundary. The project area provides much of the municipal water supply for the city of Bozeman. The city water treatment plant is located just outside the National Forest boundary on Bozeman Creek. Two water diversion dams that channel water to the treatment plant, one each on Bozeman and Hyalite Creeks, are approximately one half mile inside the Forest boundary adjacent to the Hyalite and Bozeman Creek Roads.

With this project, the Gallatin National Forest intends to create vegetation and fuel conditions that will reduce the risk of excess sediment and ash resulting from a wildfire event from reaching the municipal water treatment plant. Upon review of the Final EIS and Supplemental Final EIS, Project File, public comments and Forest Service responses for the project, I have selected Alternative 6 with minor changes that will further minimize potential impact to water quality. The details of the decision are in the attached documents. This alternative was developed to respond to changed economic conditions between the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and FEIS, and to respond to public comments on the DEIS. The decision also reflects consideration of court decisions since March 2010 and our response to issues raised during the administrative appeal process in the spring of 2010, which resulted in a withdrawal of the decision I signed last year.

The SFEIS is limited to a compilation of supplemental analysis for Elk and Other Big Game Species, Fisheries, Soils, and Water Quality, with updates to the Sensitive Plant analysis and consideration of cumulative effects from reasonably foreseeable activities in the vicinity of Bozeman Creek. A SFEIS and Record of Decision were released in February 2011 addressing all known issues, concerns and changed conditions since the FEIS. In May 2011 and based on input from others in the Forest Service, I felt it best to offer a more formal period for the public to comment on the SFEIS before finalizing her decision. Based on claims raised in appeal of the February 2011 decision, I also believed that the SFEIS should be revised to further clarify the analysis of certain issues and to address new additions to the sensitive species list. Therefore, I



chose to withdraw the February 2011 ROD and release a Supplemental FEIS for public review and comment in May 2011.

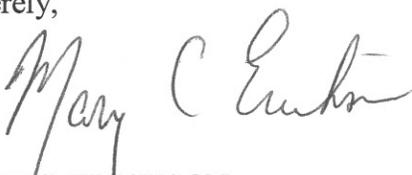
Based on the public comments received in June/July 2011, there was no need for additional analysis in the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS May 2011). However, we revised the SFEIS to include responses to the comments in Appendix B – Response to Comments and to reflect the comment period. The Appendix includes factual corrections, sources where comments are addressed and minor changes in the content. In accordance with 40 CFR 1503.4 the comments, responses and changes are being circulated. The Final SFEIS (November 2011 and Final EIS (March 2010) constitute the supporting analysis for the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Only individuals or organizations that submitted comments or otherwise expressed interest during the comment period for the DEIS and SFEIS (May 2010) may appeal this project (36 CFR 215.13). A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the notice of this decision in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Bozeman, Montana. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record (Bozeman Daily Chronicle) is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source (36 CFR 215.15).

The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the decision should be reversed. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

Additional information is available from Project Leader, Teri Seth or District Ranger, Lisa Stoeffler at the Bozeman Ranger District. Additional copies of the Final SFEIS, Final EIS and Record of Decision are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin> on the Projects and Plans page. To request a paper copy, contact Teri by phone at (406) 522-2520, or by letter to Attn: BMW, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon St. Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718.

Sincerely,



MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor