

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre & Gunnison National Forests

Issue Update, December 2012



The Capital Christmas Tree...from Colorado to the People of the United States!

The 2012 Christmas tree for the Capital building in Washington, DC was provided by the White River National Forest. Over the past months, the Forest Service coordinated with teachers and youth groups to host activities that afforded Colorado's youth the opportunity to create ornaments to use on the tree from recycled materials and promote Colorado! In addition to the Capital Tree, approximately 60 smaller trees were provided to place in offices throughout D.C. and the decorations were used on these trees as well.



The Capitol Christmas Tree, dubbed The Peoples' Tree, stopped in Grand Junction and Montrose on November 8 and was accompanied by lots of activities and festivities in these towns. The tree arrived on the Capital lawn on November 26, on a Mack truck driven by Former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. Decorated and lit with 10,000 low-energy LED lights the tree was presented in a Dec. 4th ceremony led by Speaker of the House John Boehner. The tree will remain lit throughout the holiday season.



The tradition of the Capitol Christmas Tree, began in 1964 when House Speaker John W. McCormack placed a live Christmas tree on the Capitol lawn. This tree lived three years before succumbing to wind and root damage. In 1970, the Capitol Architect asked the U.S. Forest Service to provide this Christmas tree. Since then, a different National Forest is chosen each year to provide The People's Tree. That national forest also works with state forests to provide 'Companion Trees', or smaller Christmas trees for offices around the capital. 2012 will be the third time that Colorado has provided the Capitol Christmas Tree. In 1990, it was provided by the Routt National Forest, and in 2000 by the Pike National Forest.



Secure Rural Schools Projects-In June, Congress extended the Secure Rural Schools Act and associated funding for another year. Counties who elect to receive Title II funds participate in the GMUG Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). Beginning with 2008 funds, the RAC has reviewed and recommended 30 projects for funding, totaling over \$1,000,000. These projects must provide watershed protection, soil protection, habitat restoration or improvement and/or support improved water quality on, or effecting, National Forest System lands. Proposals to treat noxious weeds, install open-bottom culverts for fish passage, reconstruct and move trails, provide/replace toilets and road reconstruction have been implemented. All projects must be completed or funding obligated by September 30, 2013.

Montrose Forest Products, LLC-Is the name of the former Intermountain Forest Products mill in Montrose. Neiman Enterprises, Inc. out of Hulett, Wyoming purchased the mill as part of their holdings. Several timber sales have been successfully bid by the mill. The Forest is working to provide vegetative treatment sale offers, focused on timing and quantity to

provide opportunities for wood supplies to help sustain multiple mills and in support of healthy forests, local economies and job creation.

Mount Emmons Molybdenum Mine-On October 10, U.S. Energy submitted a Plan of Operation (PoO) for full mine development to the Forest Service. The Mt. Emmons Mine is located near Crested Butte, CO and lies within the viewshed and watershed for the town. Under the 1872 Mining Law, federal lands are available for mining claim and development. The Forest is reviewing the PoO and coordinating the review with other offices (the State, Forest Service regional and Washington offices) and resource specialists to determine if sufficient information and clarity has been provided in the information, to formally "accept" the Plan of Operations. The review is an iterative process with the Company. After 30 days of review, the Forest Service sent a letter to U.S. Energy identifying the need for additional time for review.



Forest Headquarters-The Forest Headquarters is a leased building and the current lease expires in 2014. Efforts to acquire land and finances to build a new, "green-certified" office are ongoing. The Forest Service has worked with local partners to identify options for land and other considerations. In the event that funding is not provided, the Forest will utilize the building planning that has occurred to date in any subsequent bid prospectus and/or lease agreement.

West Elk Coal Lease Modifications-In August, the GMUG completed a final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for Federal Coal Lease Modifications COC-1362 and COC-67232. The Decision made was to “Consent to Lease” to the BLM and associated requirements to provide protection to surface resources under management of the Forest Service. The ROD was appealed and the administrative review upheld the Forest Supervisor’s decision. The FEIS and ROD were provided to the Bureau of Land Management for their review and future actions related to the Coal Lease Modifications.



Uncompahgre Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (CFLRP)-The Uncompahgre



CFLRP continues to be a high-accomplishing project and is in its fourth year of implementation. The efforts and accomplishments of this group were selected this year as one of the Chief’s Honor Awards. The Chief’s award will be presented in December to representatives in Washington, DC. In fiscal year 2012, some of the accomplishments include the implementation of: three stewardship contracts, 1000 acres of prescribed fire to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, improvement of about 4,000 acres of wildlife habitat, treatment of over 500 acres of noxious weeds, work on planning for a 150,000 acre restoration project, continued citizen

monitoring efforts, providing work/education opportunities for several local high school youth and teachers (Delta and Montrose).

Travel Management Implementation-Travel management and planning is a system that is continually being refined to be responsive to both public and environmental needs. The goal is to establish a sustainable system of travel. The Forest is in the second year of implementation of the Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan and continues to refine and implement the Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre Plans.



Forestwide, 1,716 miles of motorized trails are open for use and 951 miles of trails are open to mountain bike use. Fourteen information kiosks and numerous route signs were installed to advise citizens about travel management and provide recreation information. Forest staff continue to perform law enforcement and provide information and education contacts to forest recreationists. Over the past year, approximately 10,160 staff hours involved making these contacts in the field.