

**File Code:** 2400; 1900**Date:** SEP 21 2015**Route To:****Subject:** Healthy Forest Restoration Act Section 602(c): Request to Designate Additional Insect & Disease Acres for Radnor Resource Project on the Flathead NF**To:** Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Section 8204 of the Farm Bill amends the Health Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) to address qualifying insect and disease infestations on National Forest System lands. Section 602(b) of HFRA allowed Governors to request areas to be designated as part of an insect and disease treatment program. On April 7, 2014, Montana Governor Bullock requested designation of over 5.1 million acres as an initial effort to address the forest health issues on the national forest system in Montana. On May 20th, Chief Tidwell notified the Governor that most of the requested acres (over 4.9 million acres) meet the criteria in Section 602. (There was slight modification to two 6th level Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs) that did not meet the designation criteria and removal of two 6th level HUCs that were incorrectly identified.)

The Flathead National Forest recommended original insect and disease designation areas under HFRA Section 602(b) and (c). These insect and disease areas were identified using watershed boundaries, a common coarse filter approach to landscape management. The Radnor Resource Management Project on the Flathead National Forest (Tally Lake Ranger District) is currently being developed and has potential to use the Insect & Disease Categorical Exclusion (CE) authorized under Section 603 of HFRA. It has been determined that mapping of the initial designated areas had errors. Acres in the Lebeau Natural Research Area were erroneously designated and acres meeting the criteria for designation outside the research area were not included.

The analysis area for the Radnor project encompasses the Lebeau watershed outside of the Lebeau Research Natural Area. The original designation mapping shows that approximately 347 acres of the RNA were erroneously included in the original designation process. No activities are proposed in these RNA acres. Additionally, the original designation mapping failed to include acres that meet one or more of the criteria for designation. The Forest would like to amend the designation of the insect and disease area to include an additional 473 acres. (See attached map and shape files.)


Mapping of the additional acres requested to be designated shows forest health is declining and tree mortality is increasing due to mountain pine beetle infestation and root disease. (See reference in attached map to 2012 National Insect and Disease Risk Map for the Stillwater River-Hellroaring Creek Watershed). Hazard trees are also posing imminent risk to public infrastructure, health or safety (campgrounds and system roads/trails in the project area). The acres to be added are also immediately adjacent to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan boundary and were identified as areas of concerns by adjacent landowners (State and private) during the collaborative process.

Amending the insect and disease area designation would allow the Forest to proceed expeditiously with the Radnor Resource project as an Insect & Disease CE. The proposed management activities on approximately 550 acres would: address the insect and disease situation and improve forest stand conditions related to Forest Plan objectives for vegetative structure and species composition; reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI; and reduce the risk of hazard trees.



Please direct any questions concerning this request to Tera Little (Northern Region Farm Bill Project Coordinator; 406-329-3146 or teralittle@fs.fed.us) or to Tami MacKenzie (Team Leader; 406-758-3508 or tmackenzie@fs.fed.us).

406 7 5 3508



LEANNE M. MARTEN
Regional Forester

Enclosures

cc: Christine Dawe, Tera Little, Jacob Donnay, Tamara MacKenzie