

**File Code:** 2400; 1950**Date:** JAN 06 2017**Route To:****Subject:** Healthy Forest Restoration Act Section 602(c): Request to Designate Additional Insect & Disease Acres on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest**To:** Deputy Chief, National Forest System

I am writing to request additional designations of landscape-scale areas on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest (UWC) to address insect or disease threats under Section 602 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591a), as added by Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, known as the Farm Bill.

The UWC has a net 2,169,596 acres. Previously identified areas covered by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act only compose 181,233 acres of land on the UWC. This accounts for 8 percent of the forest land base that is covered by this designation. The UWC has never implemented a project under the HFRA designation because the project boundaries of previously proposed projects have exceeded the area currently identified under this HFRA authority. The UWC is trying to move forward with its first HFRA project, Red Ryder.

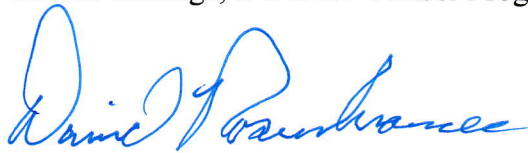
The UWC has worked with pest specialists, geospatial specialists, fire/fuels specialists, and foresters to identify 165 watersheds at the 6th level hydrologic unit code (HUC) that are in need of designation (shown in attachment A Map and Attachment B Spreadsheet). The criteria used to identify these watersheds are: declining forest health based on annual surveys; at risk of increased tree mortality over the next 15 years due to insect or disease infestation, based on the National Insect and Disease Risk Map; and/or contain hazard trees that pose an imminent risk to the public infrastructure, health and safety. These areas encompass approximately 606,433 acres outside of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas.

All proposed watersheds to be designated have experienced a 25 percent decline in tree basal area based on annual surveys. Often these surveys identified portions of a watershed experiencing decline, but this request identifies whole watersheds to be added under the HFRA authority because the portions that are mapped as experiencing this loss don't always adequately identify the areas at risk or in need of treatment. Additional factors in determining areas to include under this authority are areas already impacted by the western bark beetle and spruce bark beetle. These dead trees pose a threat to not only the public on this heavily used recreation forest, but to firefighters trying to suppress fires burning through the dead timber. In FY 16, the UWC saw approximately twice the number of fires it did the previous year.

The UWC is committed to active restoration using tools available under the Farm Bill. Designation of these additional areas on a landscape-scale will be an integral part of their efforts to focus restoration work and add additional capacity to the vegetation restoration actions on the Forest. It will also help accelerate restoration of insect impacted timbered stands on the Forest such as the 13,114 acres in the proposed Red Ryder project area.



For the reasons above, I am recommending these additional watersheds for designation as priority treatment areas under the 2014 Farm Bill. For additional information please contact Mike Dudley, Director of State and Private Forestry; mdudley@fs.fed.us or 801-625-5253 or Tucker Sierzega, UWC NF Timber Program Manager; ttsierzega@fs.fed.us or 801-999-2161.



for
NORA B. RASURE
Regional Forester

Enclosure

cc: T. Sierzega, D. Whittekiend, K. Lee