



Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA)

Project Update—Winter / Spring 2025 & Spring Public Engagement

The Medicine Bow National Forest will provide LaVA project information regarding ongoing implementation and will accept public input/feedback using several methods in the spring of 2025. There will be no public workshop this year.

Input and Feedback is Needed on:

- New Phase 1 Focus Areas: Cottonwood, Libby
- Previous Phase 1 Focus Areas: Barrett, Middle Douglas, North Brush, Rob Roy, Sandy Battle, South Brush, Woodedge-Morgan
- New Phase 2 Individual Treatments (Preliminary Design): Mullen Fences, Sand Lake, West Kennaday

Information Sources

- Page 2 of this newsletter provides an update on the status of LaVA project planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- Page 3 of this newsletter provides detailed information and a map of all Phase 1 Focus Areas open for input and feedback.
- Page 4 of this newsletter provides detailed information and a map of all Phase 2 Individual Treatments open for input and feedback.
- Page 5 of this newsletter provides links to the LaVA Implementation web page, Story Map, mailing list, and other information on the LaVA project.

How To Provide Input

- The preferred method is to access the [LaVA Story Map](#), go to the *Provide Feedback* tab, choose the “Proceed as Guest” link, read the introductory Help screen, then provide input / feedback on the Focus Areas or Preliminary Treatment areas following the explanation on the Help screen.
- Input / feedback can be provided at any time, however, it will be most helpful if we receive it by July 15, 2025.
- Input / feedback can also be provided by email or phone to Matt Schweich, LaVA Implementation Coordinator at matthew.schweich@usda.gov or (307) 745-2422.

What is the LaVA Project?

The Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis Project, or “LaVA” project, was developed to respond to unprecedented landscape-level tree mortality from bark beetles and other forest health issues that affected hundreds of thousands of acres across the Medicine Bow National Forest since the late 1990s. The LaVA decision authorized up to 288,000 acres of vegetation management on the Forest over 15 years. Objectives of the project include:

- Mitigating hazardous fuels
- Providing for recovery of forest products
- Enhancing forest and rangeland resilience to future insect and disease infestations
- Protecting infrastructure and municipal water supplies
- Restoring wildlife habitat
- Enhancing access for forest visitors and permittees
- Providing for human safety.

What Have We Been Doing?

Since the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in August of 2020, we’ve worked closely with our partners and interested members of the public to plan and implement projects across the LaVA landscape following the five-phase process described in Appendix A of the ROD, the Adaptive Implementation and Monitoring Framework. The table below summarizes the status of LaVA projects in relation to the Appendix A process. Some highlights from the last few months include:

- Initiated planning in seven new focus areas to allow for public comment and initial reconnaissance.
- Shifted three focus areas into the preliminary design phase for development of preliminary treatment areas and projects.
- Completed pre-treatment checklists for three focus areas and shifted projects in those areas to field validation. We expect to implement six or more new projects, including timber sales, fuel reduction, disaster recovery, and wildlife habitat improvement, in these focus areas beginning in 2026.
- Identified 17 high priority projects in 10 focus areas for field validation during the summer of 2025. Additional lower priority projects may be validated if personnel are available.
- Completed 11 implementation checklists, clearing those projects to begin in 2025. One more implementation checklist is under review and expected to be completed in time for the project to begin in 2025. These projects include timber sales, hazard tree removal, pre-commercial thinning, fuel reduction, and wildlife habitat improvement. Collectively, these projects will meet all seven objectives of LaVA.
- Held two formal meetings with our partner group to discuss project planning and implementation.
- Completed an after-action review of the 2024 field season and developed recommendations to improve efficiency of future project planning and implementation.
- Began the process of identifying topics for the first scheduled five-year Supplemental Information Report (SIR) on the LaVA Project.

Appendix A Phase	Spring 2025		Change from Fall 2024	
	Projects	Acres	Projects	Acres
1: Focus Areas	9	n/a	+5	n/a
2: Preliminary Design	4	n/a	-1	n/a
3: Refine and Validate—Low Priority	34	26,037	+8	+3,132
3: Refine and Validate—High Priority	17	7,001	+6	+735
4: Review and Implement	30	12,105	+10	+4,156
5: Monitor and Report	4	1,127	0	+103

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting is the fifth and final phase of the LaVA implementation process. The ROD requires monitoring of all projects following a generic plan (Appendix A, Attachment 6) and applying a set of post-treatment standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Appendix A, Attachment 5). A biennial monitoring report following the outline in Output 4, Appendix A is also required.

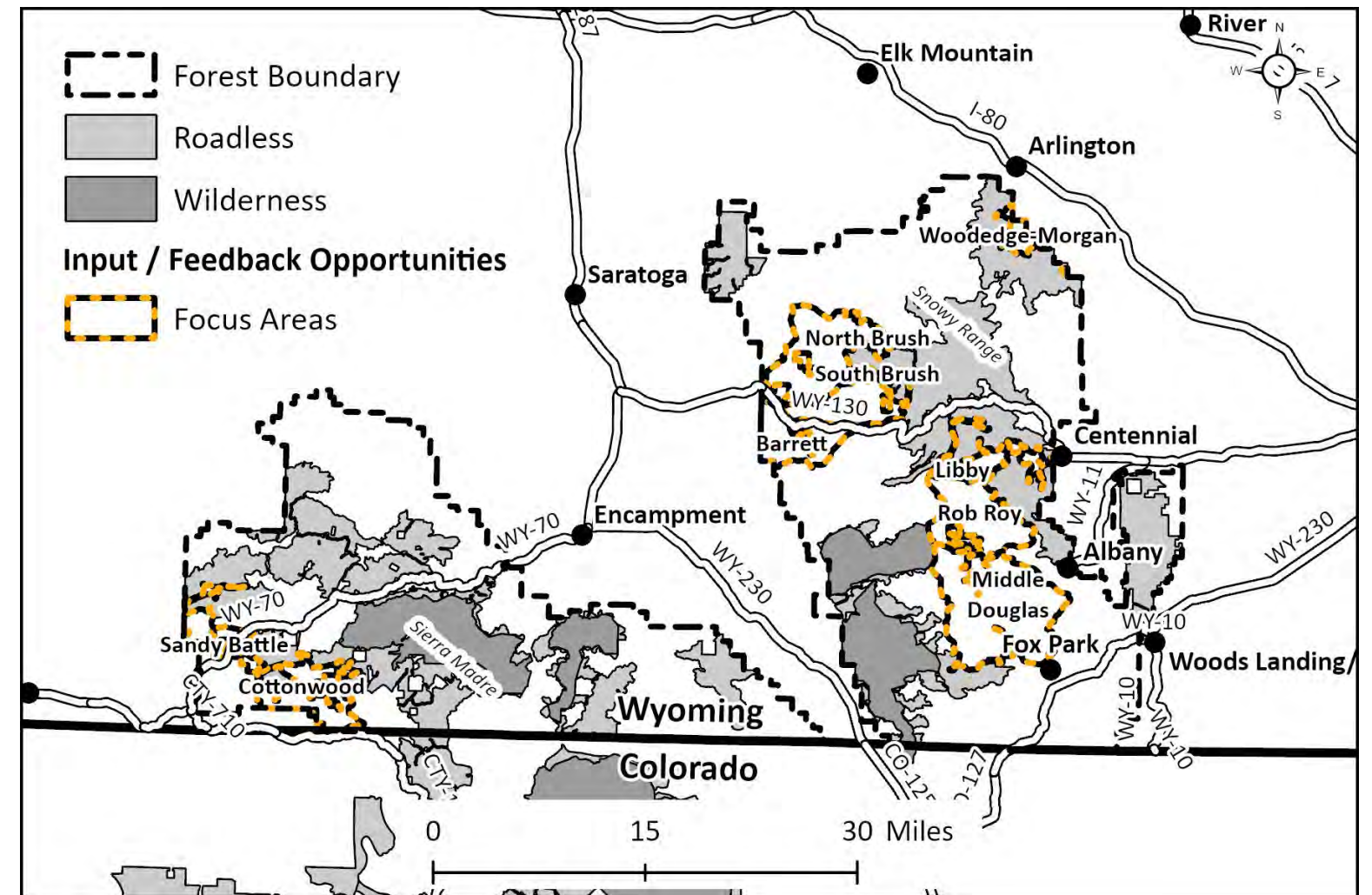
The primary intent of this phase is to answer the questions:

- Did we do what we said we were going to do?
- Did we get the expected outcomes?
- Do we need to adjust future treatments?

Monitoring and discussions at our third annual field trip in the fall of 2024 indicated that implementation continues according to plan, SOPs and design features are generally being applied correctly, and project objectives are being met. We are currently developing the second biennial monitoring report, which we expect to release in the summer of 2025. Some improvements to the implementation process and other adaptive management action were identified and will be included in the monitoring report. The results of monitoring will also be used to inform the upcoming scheduled SIR.

Phase 1: Focus Areas

- Nine focus areas listed in the table below and shown on the map to the right. Seven of these were listed last year.
- Cottonwood and Libby are new focus areas this year.
- Projects in these focus area have not yet been developed.
- We are currently soliciting public input and feedback on these focus areas. See Questions to Think About below.
- The table below shows which LaVA objectives we think can be met in each focus area.
- We expect to focus primarily on meeting Objective #2 (Forest Products), but also Objective #1 (Fuels), as we develop projects in these focus areas.
- Implementation of projects in these focus areas could begin in 2027 at the earliest, but most will not start until 2028.
- Your input and feedback will be most helpful if we receive it by July 1, 2025.
- Your input and feedback will be used to inform development of preliminary treatment areas and the Pre-Treatment Checklist.
- Next Step: Phase 2: Individual Treatments—the U. S. Forest Service and partners will identify preliminary treatment areas and complete the Pre-Treatment Checklist over the next year.



Focus Area	LaVA Objectives*						
	#1 Mitigate hazardous fuel loading	#2 Provide for recovery of forest products	#3 Enhance forest and rangeland resiliency to future insect and disease infestations	#4 Protect infrastructure and municipal water supplies	#5 Restore wildlife habitat	#6 Enhance access for forest visitors and permittees	#7 Provide for human safety
Barrett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cottonwood	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Libby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Middle Douglas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Brush	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rob Roy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sandy Battle	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Brush	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodedge-Morgan	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

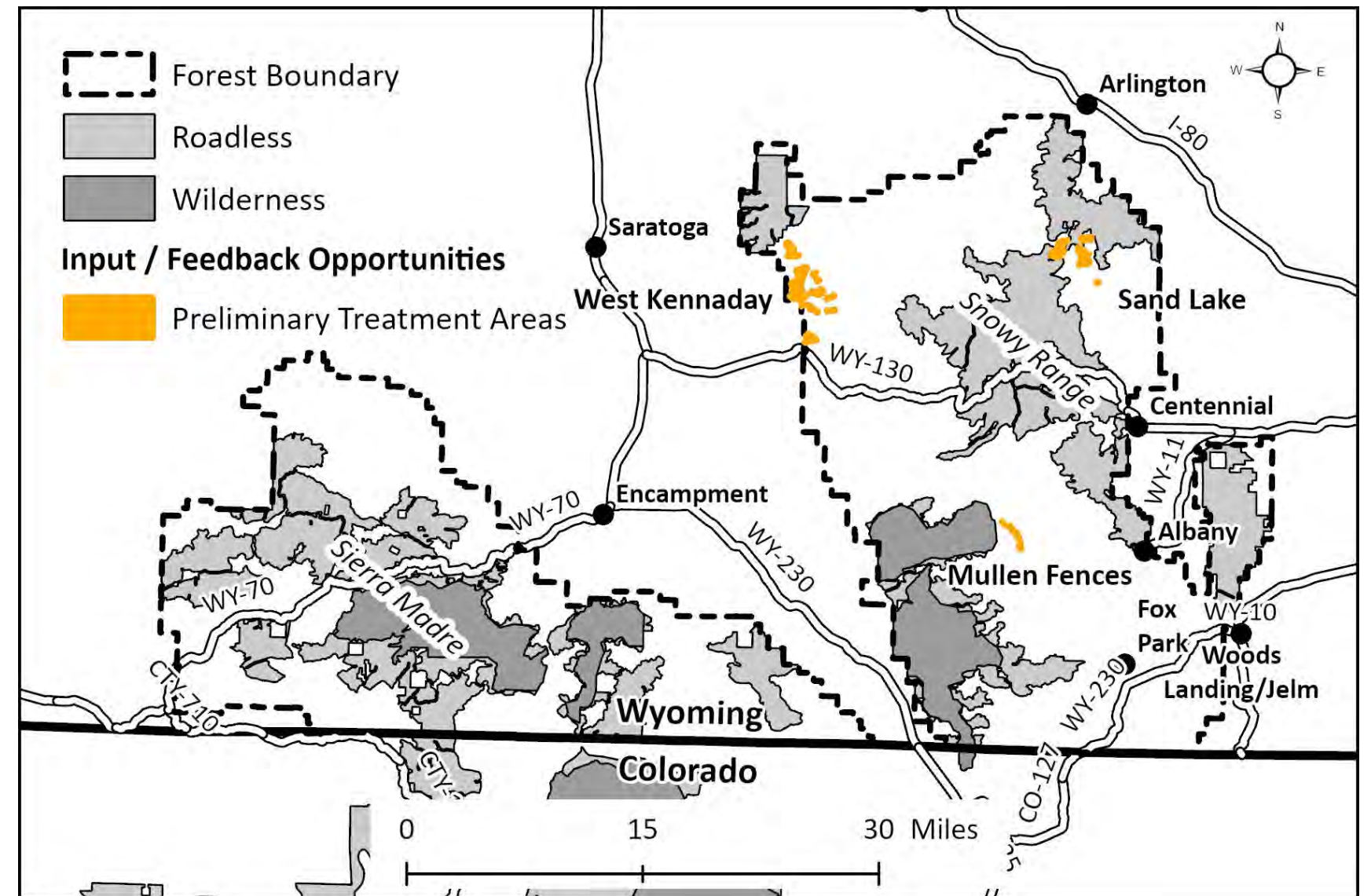
* Check marks indicate preliminary objectives for potential projects in each focus area. Objectives may change as projects and preliminary treatment areas are developed.

Questions to Think About

- Do you have information about the focus areas that the U.S. Forest Service and its partners should consider?
- For example, any special knowledge of unique resources that we should account for as we develop the preliminary treatment areas?
- Do you have any suggestions for projects that will help us meet the objectives of LaVA in these focus areas?
- Or any specific concerns that we could address?
- How should we use the information you provide to improve treatment design?
- Do you have other comments related to the focus areas that the U. S. Forest Service should consider?

Phase 2: Individual Treatments

- Six new preliminary projects in three focus areas are listed in the table below and shown on the map to the right.
- The U. S. Forest Service and its partners completed Pre-Treatment Checklists for these three focus areas.
- The U. S. Forest Service and its partners identified preliminary treatment areas for these projects, but treatment units have not been field validated.
- We are currently soliciting public input and feedback on these preliminary treatment areas. See Questions to Think About below.
- Implementation of projects in these focus areas will begin in 2026 and continue at least through 2027.
- The table below shows which LaVA objectives we think can be met with each set of preliminary treatments.
- Your input and feedback will be most helpful if received by July 1, 2025.
- Your input and feedback will be reflected in Implementation Checklists for individual projects that will be prepared during Winter 2025-2026.
- Next Step: Phase 3: Field Validation—the U.S. Forest Service and its partners will complete treatment unit layout and resource surveys.



Focus Area	LaVA Objectives	Preliminary Treatment Areas*	Preliminary Implementation Plans*	Notes
Mullen Fences	#1, #4, #6, #7	Clearing: 46 acres Fence Construction: 3.2 miles	2026: Clearing and Fence Construction	Part of Mullen Fire disaster recovery Clearing and fence construction will be one project
Sand Lake	#1, #2, #3, #4, #6, #7	Forest Products: 500+ acres	2026: Forest Products #1 2027: Forest Products #2	One timber sale in 2026: 226 acres One timber sale in 2027: estimated 300 to 350 acres
West Kennaday	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7	Forest Products: 800 acres Fuels / Wildlife: 445 acres	2027: Forest Products #1 2027: Forest Products #2 2027-2028: Fuels / Wildlife	Two timber sales in 2027: estimated 800 acres total Cross-boundary fuels / wildlife being explored by partners

* Estimated and subject to change

Questions to Think About

- Do you have information about the preliminary treatment areas that the U. S. Forest Service and its partners should consider?
- For example, any special knowledge of unique resources that we should account for as we validate and finalize the treatment units?
- Do you have any suggestions for projects that will help us meet the objectives of LaVA in this focus area?
- Or any specific concerns that we could address?
- How should we use the information you provide to improve treatment design?
- Do you have any other comments related to the preliminary treatments that the U. S. Forest Service should consider?

