Forest Service
Caring For the Land and Serving People

Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis
Project Update—Fall 2022

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 have been working 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 implementation process in the last year include:

- Identified a set of focus areas across the entire LaVA landscape and drafted a preliminary five-year plan to accomplish LaVA objectives across this landscape (more details on page 3).
- Held two formal meetings, as well as numerous project-specific meetings and field trips, with our partners.
- Hosted a public meeting and a monitoring field trip.
- Completed four new or updated pre-treatment checklists, beginning project identification in four focus areas.

LaVA Project Status – Fall 2022		
Appendix A Phase	**# Projects**	**Acres**
1: Focus Areas	7	n/a
2: Preliminary Design	5	8,012
3: Refine and Validate	13	35,843
4: Review and Implement	14	4,138
5: Monitor and Report	1	77

- Continued project identification in four focus areas started in 2021.
- Completed field validation for two projects in two focus areas; implementation checklists will be prepared this winter.
- Completed field validation and implementation checklists for eight projects in five focus areas.
- Started implementing 12 projects in eight focus areas using a variety of agreements, Good Neighbor Authority, service contracts, and timber sale contracts.
- Completed a wildlife habitat improvement project, initial monitoring, and public field trip (details on page 2).
- Identified seven potential new focus areas for planning in winter 2022-2023.

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?

This fall, the first LaVA monitoring field trip took place at the Troublesome project, where the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Mule Deer Foundation, and Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District, in cooperation with the U. S. Forest Service, recently completed 77 acres of shrub mowing to improve crucial big game winter range. The

Discussing treatment methods, Troublesome Shrub Mowing. Photo Credit: MGB, USFS.

Troublesome project is located on the northwest edge of the Snowy Range, about 12 miles east of Saratoga, Wyoming.

Initial monitoring and discussions on the field trip indicate that implementation went according to plan, that all SOPs and design features were correctly applied, and that project objectives were met. Monitoring will continue in 2023 and future years to confirm this is the case.

Over the winter, we will develop the first biennial monitoring report, which we expect to release in spring 2023. A site-specific plan and checklist were developed to document compliance with monitoring requirements for the Troublesome project. In addition to the LaVA monitoring requirements, our partners are conducting detailed quantitative monitoring of the project to validate treatment methods. Their results will be incorporated in the report.
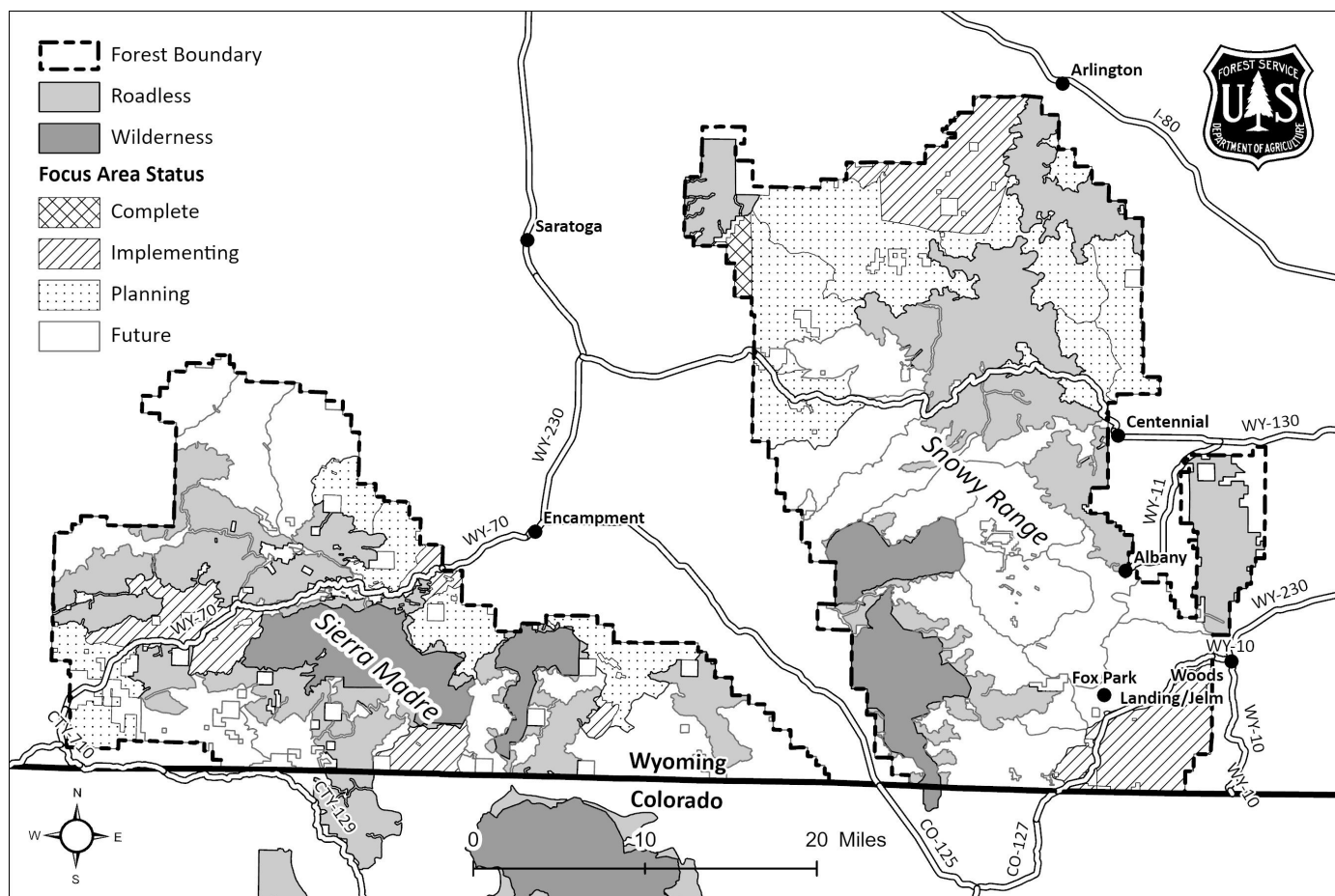

Discussing treatment objectives, Troublesome Shrub Mowing.

Photo Credit: MGB, USFS

Five-year Plan

The implementation process outlined in Appendix A contains five phases (pages 9-17), eighteen activities (pages 20-21), and takes two to three years to complete the first four phases. The Forest Service, working with our partners, developed a preliminary plan for the first five years of LaVA treatment implementation. The purpose of this plan is to provide our partners and the public with an understanding of the schedule for providing meaningful input on focus areas and preliminary treatments, as well as allowing us to work together to prioritize workloads, secure funding, and meet all of the objectives of the LaVA project across the landscape. The map below depicts the current status of focus areas across the landscape. As our collaborative work on each focus area proceeds, we expect to update the plan to reflect current conditions and priorities in the area.

Additional Information and How to Get/Stay Involved

- The LaVA Implementation web page links to extensive information on the NEPA decision and supporting analysis, implementation process, LaVA StoryMap and feedback tool, pre-treatment and implementation checklists, treatment tracking, and monitoring. It is updated regularly as new information becomes available.

- The LaVA StoryMap is an interactive tool for spatially representing LaVA focus areas and treatments on the landscape. The StoryMap allows users to view future, ongoing, and completed treatments and to provide online feedback specific to focus areas and treatments. Updated November 2022.

- We encourage you to join the LaVA mailing list through GovDelivery, which is our primary means of directly contacting the public. To use the GovDelivery online application, enter your email address, then scroll down the list of available subscriptions to the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, which has a dropdown menu of current projects including the LaVA project.

- The Forest Service hosts a LaVA public workshop each spring and a monitoring field trip every fall. Workshops and field trips will be advertised through a press release, the LaVA mailing list (via GovDelivery), and on the implementation web page.

- For additional information on the LaVA project, please contact Matt Schweich, LaVA Implementation Coordinator at matthew.schweich@usda.gov or (307) 745-2422.