



## Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA) Project

### Project Update—Spring / Summer 2023

#### Fall Public Monitoring Field Trip Announcement

The Medicine Bow National Forest will host its second annual monitoring field trip for the LaVA project. Monitoring and reporting are the final phase of the LaVA implementation process. 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 year's monitoring field trip will look at the 2022 Site Preparation / 2023 Planting Project in the Badger Focus Area, which is located on the southern end of the Snowy Range, about 35 miles southwest of Laramie, in Albany County, Wyoming. For this project, the Forest completed about 300 acres of tree planting in the 2018 Badger Creek fire area. Before planting, the Forest completed about 200 acres of site preparation (crushing, mastication, and similar activities) to address accumulations of dead and down trees and prepare the area for planting.

The monitoring field trip is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 13, 2023**. Meeting time and location are to be determined. We ask that everyone interested in participating in the field trip RSVP so that we can let you know when and where we will meet, in case of inclement weather, or other complications. To RSVP or if you have any questions, please contact Matt Schweich, LaVA Implementation Coordinator at [matthew.schweich@usda.gov](mailto:matthew.schweich@usda.gov) or (307) 745-2422.

#### 2022 Monitoring Report Released

The first biennial monitoring report was recently completed and posted on the LaVA Implementation web page (link on page 3).

The first LaVA monitoring field trip took place in September 2022 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, completed 77 acres of shrub mowing to improve forage conditions on crucial big game winter range.

Some monitoring items are best reviewed one growing season post-treatment and other items require more than year of monitoring. The monitoring report provides an initial review of the Troublesome project, and the LaVA project as a whole. Additional monitoring results will be added to future reports.

Initial monitoring and discussions on the field trip in the fall of 2022 indicated that implementation went according to plan, that all SOPs and design features were correctly applied, and that project objectives were met.



#### 2022 Monitoring Report Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA) Project



Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland

In Cooperation with Wyoming State, County, and Local Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Other Federal Agencies

## 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 few months include:

- Held two formal meetings with our Cooperator group and new potential partners to discuss project planning and implementation.
- Explored conservation finance as a tool to increase the pace and scale of implementation.
- Held our Spring LaVA Public Meeting (see summary below).
- Initiated planning in one new focus area.
- Identified 12 projects in 10 focus areas for initial planning. Preliminary treatment areas will be identified for these projects beginning this summer and continuing next winter.
- Completed four new or updated pre-treatment checklists, beginning project identification in four focus areas.
- Prioritized 11 projects in seven focus areas for field validation during the summer of 2023.
- Completed the first monitoring report for the LaVA project (see page 1 for summary and link).

LaVA Project Status – Spring / Summer 2022		
Appendix A Phase	# Projects	Acres
1: Focus Areas	6	n/a
2: Preliminary Design	5	n/a
3: Refine and Validate	26	49,290
4: Review and Implement	14	4,114
5: Monitor and Report	1	77

## 2023 Spring Public Meeting

The 2023 spring public meeting for the LaVA project was held on May 9, 2023. Total attendance was 33 individuals, including the public, partners, and Forest Service staff. We received feedback on several focus areas and individual projects, as well as several requests for additional information or project-specific meetings. Our next public event will be the fall monitoring field trip (see page 1).

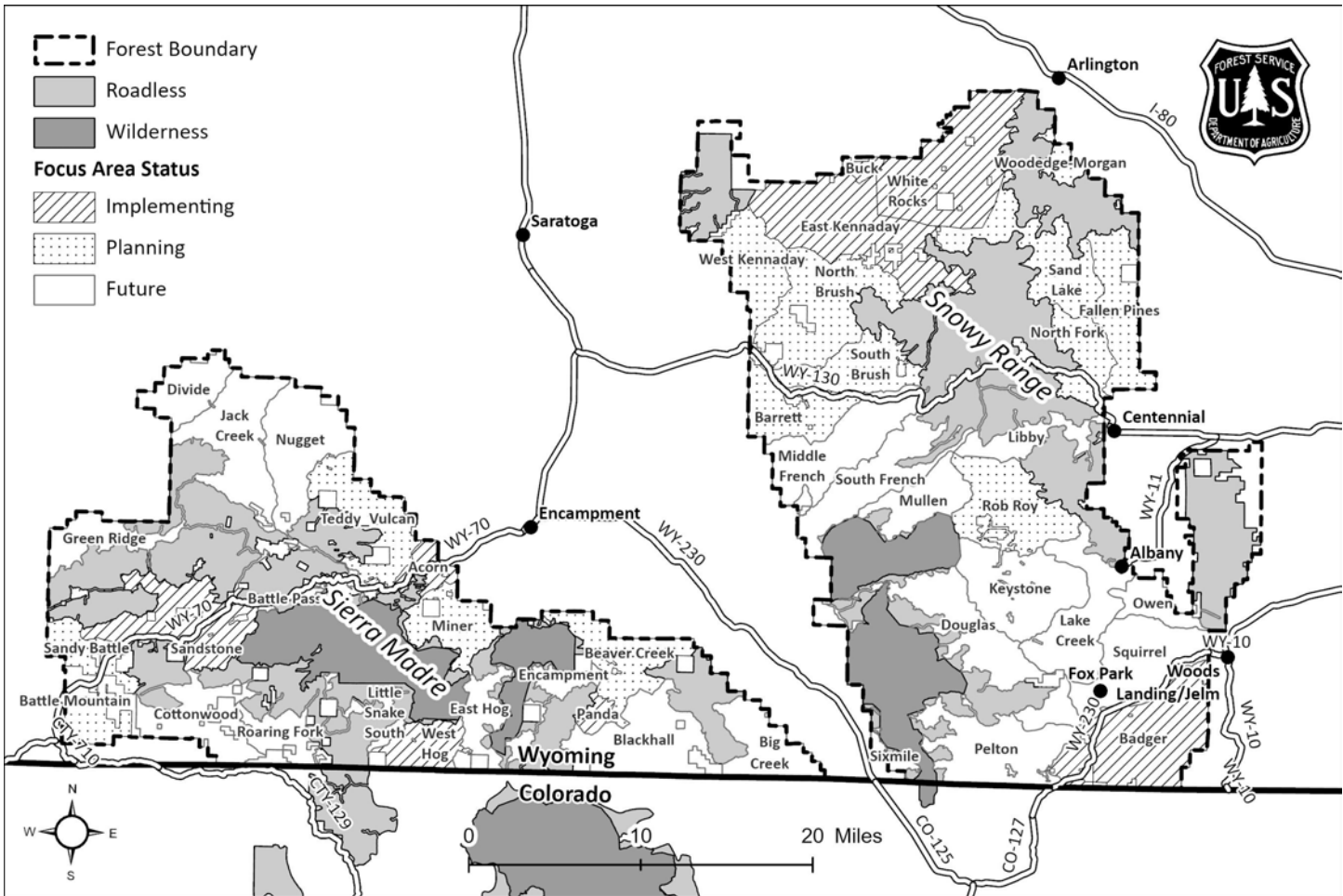
## What is the LaVA Project?

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.

## Implementation Plan

The implementation process outlined in Appendix A contains five phases, eighteen activities, and takes three or more years to complete. The Forest Service, working with our partners, developed a draft plan to provide our partners and the public with 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 objectives of the LaVA project across the landscape. As our collaborative work on each focus area proceeds, we will update the plan to reflect current conditions and priorities in the area. The map below displays the current status of focus areas across the LaVA landscape.



## 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.
- 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](mailto:matthew.schweich@usda.gov) (preferred) or (307) 745-2422 (limited voicemail monitoring).