



Forest Service

Caring For the Land and Serving People



Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis

Project Update—Winter 2024

Spring Public Open House Announcement

The Medicine Bow National Forest will host a public open house to discuss ongoing implementation of the Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA) project on Wednesday May 22, 2024, from 6 to 8 p.m.

The open house will be held in-person at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's office, 1212 S. Adams St, Laramie, WY 82070. A virtual option for attendance will be provided via Microsoft Teams. Anyone who wishes to attend virtually should email Matt Schweich, LaVA Implementation Coordinator, at matthew.schweich@usda.gov.

This open house is one of the public engagement opportunities for the LaVA project. It is designed for the public to learn about the current status of the project and provide input and feedback on several checkpoints in the implementation process.

During the open house, representatives from the U. S. Forest Service and Cooperating Agencies will:

- Provide an update on the status of project planning and implementation across the LaVA landscape
- Identify new focus areas where the Forest Service and Cooperating Agencies will begin to develop preliminary treatments in the next year (Phase 1: Focus Areas)
- Solicit input on the new focus areas to identify potential activities and any site-specific resources of concern.
- Describe preliminary treatment areas identified in various focus areas in the past year by the Forest Service and Cooperating Agencies
- Solicit public input on preliminary treatment areas to identify potential modifications
- Summarize current monitoring results and upcoming (2024) monitoring plans
- Describe any new scientific information or changed conditions that may require analysis in a Supplemental Information Report
- Identify any anticipated changes in the implementation and monitoring process

Following the open house, a two-week feedback period will be provided for additional input on new focus areas and preliminary treatment areas.

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 few months include:

- Re-aligned several focus areas in the south-central Snowy Range to support implementation of the recently completed Middle Douglas Watershed Restoration Action Plan (WRAP). A new Middle Douglas focus area was created from the prior Keystone focus area and parts of the Douglas, Lake Creek, and Owen focus areas. Remaining parts of the Lake Creek and Owen focus areas were combined into the new Lake Owen focus area.
- Re-aligned the North Fork and Libby focus area boundary along the 338 road to place all of the Centennial Fuels project in the North Fork focus area.
- The map on page 3 reflects these changes.
- Held two formal meetings with our Cooperator group to discuss project planning and implementation.
- Initiated planning in one new focus areas and placed new work in six focus areas on hold to better align with Forest Service and partner capacity and funding.
- Completed six implementation checklists, clearing these projects for implementation beginning during the summer of 2024.
- Completed three new or updated pre-treatment checklists, beginning project identification in two focus areas.
- Prioritized 13 projects in 10 focus areas for field validation during the summer of 2024. Additional projects may be validated if personnel are available.

LaVA Project Status – Winter 2024		
Appendix A Phase	# Projects	Acres
1: Focus Areas	6	n/a
2: Preliminary Design	2	n/a
3: Refine and Validate – Low Priority	23	21,191
3: Refine and Validate – High Priority	15	9,414
4: Review and Implement	19	6,018
5: Monitor and Report	3	909

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:

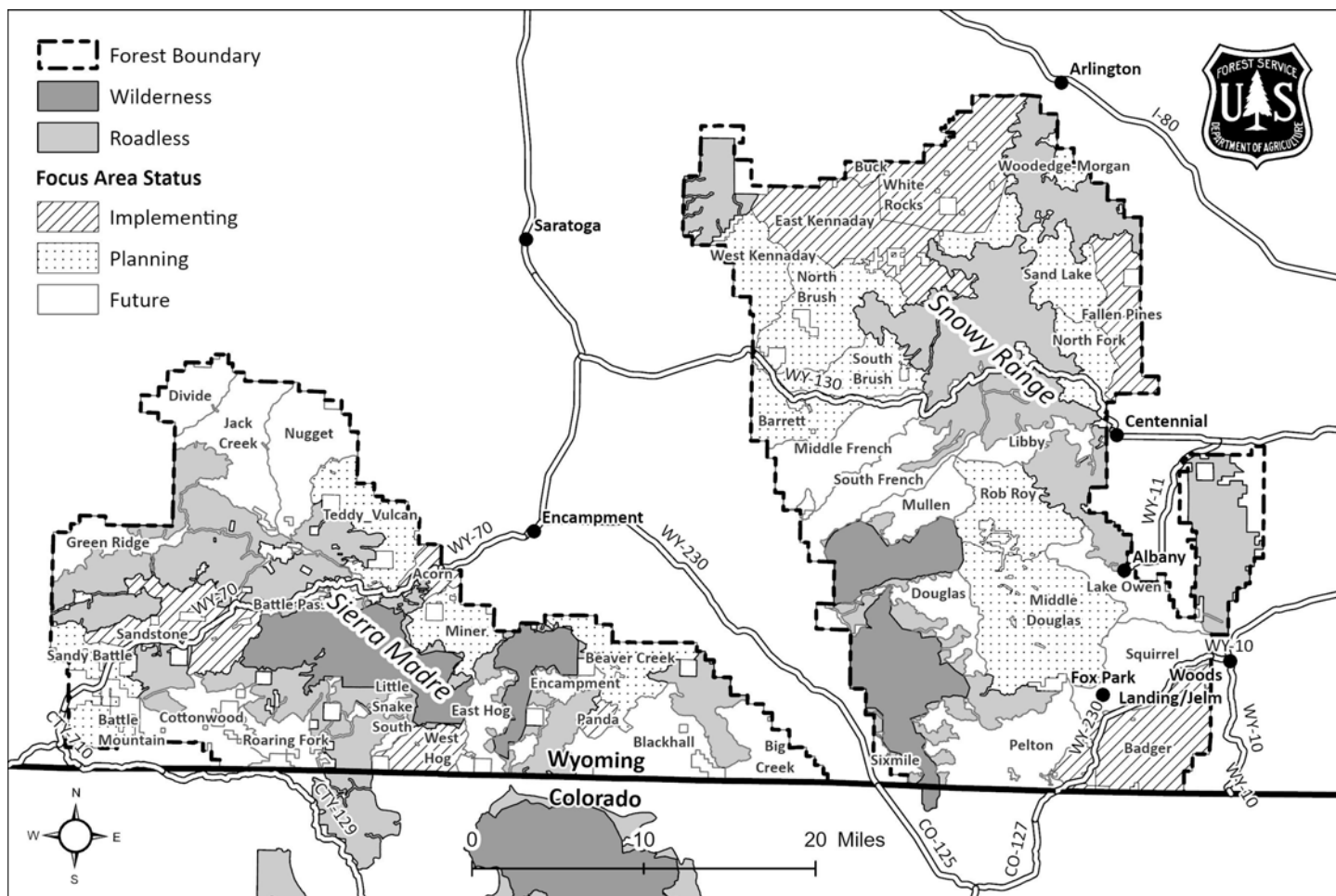
- Did we do what we said we were going to do?
- Did we get the expected outcomes?
- Do we need to adjust future treatments?

Monitoring and discussions at our second annual field trip in the fall of 2023 indicate that implementation continues according to plan, that all SOPs and design features are being correctly applied, and that project objectives are being met.

We are currently developing the first biennial monitoring report, which we expect to release in late spring or early summer of 2024.

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 or (307) 745-2422 (limited voicemail monitoring).