

Response to H-4:

Clarify and provide additional details on how the SNF came to 2,130 acres of pre-commercial thinning and enhance the planning record with further explanations regarding affected species such as lodgepole pine, thinning in wildland urban interface to reduce the basal area of the stand to reduce risk of wildfire.

The Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment to the Shoshone National Forest plan in 2007 (Lynx Amendment) identified a limited range of fuel or timber management projects and limited precommercial thinning projects for resource benefits all conducted within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). These projects are exempted from vegetation standards VEG S1, S2, S5 and S6 listed in the Lynx Amendment.

During the amendment process, the SNF requested the exemption on an additional 2,130 acres where pre-commercial thinning would be allowed in lodgepole pine stands for timber purposes. The 2,130 acres were not included in the Lynx Amendment preferred alternative.

As part of the forest plan revision process the continued need for these 2,130 acres of precommercial thinning in lynx habitat was identified and these acres were included in the preferred alternative for the revised plan. Therefore Section 7 consultation and the resulting biological opinion covered pre-commercial thinning on 2,130 acres in lodgepole pine in lynx habitat within the WUI for purposes other than fuels reduction. These acres are not in addition to the 6% limit of 35,820 acres.

For clarification, a footnote was added to the LMP, Appendix 1, VEG S5 and a paragraph to Vegetation, Management approach, stating, "Management of lodgepole pine includes precommercial thinning of up to 2,130 acres in lynx habitat within the Wildland Urban Interface, under projects not designed for fuels reduction as an objective."

Where the SNF is able to pre-commercially thin, the growth of lodgepole pine will accelerate compared to un-thinned stands resulting in a shorter rotation age, increased volume, and better quality timber. Thinning stands in the WUI also reduces the risk of catastrophic fire. However, the SNF has limited funding for pre-commercial thinning and how much of the 2,130 acres are actually thinned in the next decade will depend on future funding levels.