



File Code: 1950  
Date: June 28, 2018

Dear Interested Party,

I am pleased to inform you I have signed a decision for the Limestone-Silver project authorizing vegetation and fuel treatments on approximately 2,995 acres, as well as road maintenance and management activities and watershed improvement activities. The Decision Memo documenting the activities and my rationale can be found on the forest's website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49502>.

Thank you for your interest in this project. We initiated a collaborative process to develop this project late in 2016 with field visits and collaborative meetings. As you know, when we initially looked at this project it was three to four years out and we considered a nearly 53,600 acre project area in Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties. However, initial analysis of the project area revealed the majority of it was within an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Management of IRA's, in general, prohibits new road construction and reconstruction as well as the cutting, sale, and removal of timber. A second issue with treating the larger area was acquiring access across non-federal lands. Forest Service policy, when acquiring easements, is to gain permanent, full, easement.

Vegetation within the project area is experiencing a general decline in resiliency and forest health due to current insect and disease outbreaks. Based on the National Insect and Disease Risk Map (Section 602 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act) this area is at risk of experiencing a substantial increase in tree mortality over the next fifteen years. Section 8204 of the Agriculture Act of 2014 ("Farm Bill", Public Law 113-79) established a categorical exclusion for qualifying insect and disease projects in designated areas on National Forest System lands.

The use of the 2014 Farm Bill Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion authority for this project was supported by 1) preliminary analysis indicated declining health caused by insect and disease, 2) a limited treatment area, and 3) the presence of an existing collaborative group. Your patience as we worked through the details of using this 'new' authority was greatly appreciated, as was your continued interest in and dedication to developing this project. Based on feedback from members of the interdisciplinary team and the collaborative group working on this project, I genuinely believe the efforts to collaboratively develop this project led to a more informed decision that better addresses the needs and concerns you helped identify.

I anticipate project implementation to begin this summer. If you have any questions about the project please direct them to Katharine Napier, Project Leader, at 509-447-7375 or [knapiere@fs.fed.us](mailto:knapiere@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,

GAYNE SEARS  
District Ranger

