LEGAL NOTICE
OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON MEDICINE BOW LANDSCAPE VEGETATION ANALYSIS (LaVA) PROJECT
USDA Forest Service
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland
Laramie and Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger Districts
Laramie and Saratoga, Wyoming

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA) Project is available for public review and comment. The DEIS discloses the environmental effects of a landscape-scale vegetative management proposal on the Laramie and Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger Districts of the Medicine Bow National Forest in Albany and Carbon Counties, Wyoming. The DEIS and supporting information are available at: www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=51255.

The LaVA Proposed Action includes vegetation management activities on up to 360,000 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands, including portions of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs), on the Snowy Range and Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges of the forest. Vegetation treatments would include stand initiating or even-aged treatments that would not exceed 95,000 acres; uneven-aged or intermediate treatments that would not exceed 165,000 acres; and other vegetation treatments (prescribed fire, mastication, and hand thinning) that would not exceed 100,000 acres. Treatment activities would occur only in pre-established treatment opportunity areas (TOAs).

Other proposed activities include: prescribed and maintenance burning; hazard tree clearing adjacent to critical structures and linear features; constructing up to 600 miles of temporary roads to access treatment opportunities; completion of mandatory pre-treatment field reviews, including selection of appropriate project design features prior to authorization of individual treatments; and completion of an annual adaptive implementation and monitoring framework. Treatments would be authorized for a 15-year period beginning in 2019 and would be completed within approximately 20 years of the project decision.

The LaVA Project is a plan for action that responds to unprecedented, landscape-level tree mortality from bark beetles and other forest health issues across the Medicine Bow National Forest. It is a large-scale, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis designed to produce one decision to authorize vegetation management on the Sierra Madre and Snowy Range Mountain Ranges of the forest for the next 15-20 years. Project purposes include: enhancing forest and rangeland resiliency to future insect and disease infestations; providing for recovery of forest products; providing for human safety; providing for protection of infrastructure, municipal water supplies, and restoration of wildlife habitat; mitigating hazardous fuel loading; providing for recreation access; and providing management adaptability and flexibility in the face of uncertainty and rapidly changing forest and rangeland conditions.

The environmental analysis for the LaVA Project was completed according to Section 104 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Therefore, the project is subject to the U.S. Forest Services project-level, pre-decisional administrative review process (36 CFR 218, Subparts A and C). Russell Bacon, Forest Supervisor, is the responsible official.

The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the DEIS in the Federal Register on July 6, 2018. The opportunity to comment will end 45 days following the date of publication of the NOA. The forest will host public engagement sessions during the 45-day comment period. Please visit the project webpage at the link provided above for dates, locations, and times.

When commenting, please include (1) commenters name and address; (2) title of the proposed project; (3) specific comments on the proposal, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision. Only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submit specific and timely written comments on the proposal during the comment period established by the responsible official will be eligible to file an objection to the project. For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely written comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Comments, names, and contact information of those who comment will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, the Forest Service will not be able to provide subsequent project information to anonymous respondents.

Written comments may be hand delivered or submitted by hardcopy mail, facsimile, or email.

Mailing Address: Medicine Bow National Forest, c/o Medicine Bow LaVA Project; 2468 Jackson Street; Laramie, WY 82070.
Facsimile: 307-745-2398

Email: comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-routt@fs.fed.us (Acceptable formats for electronic comments are .rtf, .pdf, .doc, or .docx).

For additional information, contact Melissa Martin, Project Manager, at mmmartin@fs.fed.us or 307-745-2371.

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