

Taylor Park Vegetation Management Proposed Vegetation Treatment Details

Gunnison Ranger District
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Contents

Dwarf Mistletoe Edge Strip Cuts and Dwarf Mistletoe Clearcut	2
Group Selection in Engelmann spruce-dominated Stands	2
Overstory Removal	3
Shelterwood Seed Cut.....	3
Prescription Undetermined, Mixed-species Present	4
Salvage Clearcut	4
Commercial Thinning	4
Young Stand -- Precommercial Thinning, Sanitation, or No Treatment	4
Fuel Treatment	5

Dwarf Mistletoe Edge Strip Cuts and Dwarf Mistletoe Clearcut

This treatment prescription would be applied in lodgepole pine-dominated areas where dwarf mistletoe is present. In areas surrounding young lodgepole pine stands, infested edges will be harvested or felled within 100 to 300-feet of healthy, young trees. Where edges are healthy trees or trees other than lodgepole pine, harvest or treatment maybe deferred. Where edge clearcuts of the strips between former clearcuts would leave only a narrow strip of trees which would be vulnerable to windthrow, then the entire strip would be removed. Several non-edge strip stand clearcuts are proposed in areas of high infestation.

Individual dwarf mistletoe clearcuts will not exceed the 40-acre limitation identified in the Forest Plan.

All lodgepole pine other than wildlife trees would be removed or felled. Live lodgepole pine wildlife trees would be girdled to create wildlife snag retention and reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe. Other tree species may be left uncut if they are healthy and of low risk for windthrow. Mechanical site preparation may be used to promote seed germination and seedling survival. The mechanical site preparation would reduce fuel loading on the site through piling and burning. Snags and downed logs will be retained on site as prescribed in the Forest Plan and by the District Biologist.

The desired condition would be areas naturally regenerating to lodgepole pine and other tree species with minimal dwarf mistletoe infestation.

If a stand is determined to be in good condition with healthy trees it may not need treatment.

Group Selection in Engelmann spruce-dominated Stands

This treatment would harvest trees in groups to promote regeneration. Emphasis for group placement would focus on pockets of dead, diseased, damaged, or declining trees. About 25 percent of the stand area would be cut during this entry, with group size ranging from ¼-acre to two acres in size. Mechanical soil scarification, may be used to promote seed germination and seedling survival. A 40-year cutting cycle is normally prescribed in this part of the Forest.

Where spruce bark beetle is or has created spruce mortality, the prescription to be applied is salvage clearcut. The salvage clearcut may exceed two-acres in area. Following salvage harvesting, treatments to promote natural tree regeneration or to prepare for artificial reforestation (tree planting) would be implemented as dictated by site-specific conditions. Concentrations of heavy fuel loading may be piled and burned.

Lodgepole pine in these harvest units would be surveyed for dwarf mistletoe and treated to minimize disease presence and spread.

The desired condition of the group selection harvesting in the long-term is creation and maintenance of Engelmann spruce-dominated stands (and other tree species) with four age classes present, with trees of similar age concentrated in clumps or groups.

Overstory Removal

In most applications, the overstory removal is the final harvest of merchantable trees left from previous shelterwood preparatory and seed cutting. The stand is two-storied and two-aged, with an adequately stocked understory of healthy, young trees.

This harvest treatment will remove all mature overstory trees, which will allow the existing young trees to fully occupy the site, releasing an even-aged stand of trees growing in fully-open conditions. Regeneration will be protected to the extent possible to ensure adequate stocking of undamaged trees after the completion of operations. Open areas may be treated to foster additional natural tree recruitment. Cull residual trees too small or too defective for commercial utilization may be felled to reduce competition with desirable young trees. Lodgepole pine with dwarf mistletoe would be harvested or felled to reduce disease presence and spread.

In some stands, spruce bark beetle has created mortality of the Engelmann spruce overstory. The commercial harvest would remove the dead trees and allow the understory full access to sunlight.

If a stand identified for “Overstory Removal” is found to be heavily infested with dwarf mistletoe, then the prescription would be changed to that of “Dwarf Mistletoe Clearcut” as described above.

After Overstory Removal, the desired condition is a young, healthy, fully-stocked stand of trees which are free from competition from overtopping trees.

Shelterwood Seed Cut

This treatment would remove 40-45 percent of the overstory trees uniformly, or in groups of ¼-acre to two-acre size, across the stand to promote regeneration by allowing sunlight and nutrients to reach the forest floor. This would allow seeds from the residual trees to regenerate. The neighboring residual trees would provide for partial shading of seed beds and protection of young trees from drying winds.

The prescription is either the first step in a two-step shelterwood, or the second step of a three-step shelterwood. In twenty years, the final overstory removal would be completed to release the then established understory of young trees.

The treatment will for the short-term, create a two-aged, two-storied stand. In the longer-term, a relatively even-aged, single-storied stand would be allowed to grow into the future.

If a stand is found to be dominated by Engelmann spruce, and if the overstory is not overmature and deteriorating, then the prescription may be changed to “Group Selection” as described above.

If a stand is found to be dominated by lodgepole pine, and that lodgepole pine is infested with dwarf mistletoe, then the prescription may be changed to “Dwarf Mistletoe Clearcut”.

Prescription Undetermined, Mixed-species Present

Several stands were identified in the proposed action development where commercial timber harvest would be feasible, but the current condition and tree species composition is not fully known. In these identified stands, the management prescription would be determined after on-the-ground survey is completed. Any of the prescriptions described above might be applied.

Salvage Clearcut

This treatment would remove all dead, dying, or deteriorating trees prior to the wood becoming unmerchantable. If needed, mechanical site preparation would be used to promote seedling germination and survival. Residual trees would be protected to the maximum extent possible.

This prescription would be applied to stands where spruce bark beetle has created mortality in Engelmann spruce or mountain pine beetle mortality in lodgepole pine. This treatment might be applied in stands identified for management in the proposed action, or in other stands on suited lands in a proactive fashion to minimize additional tree mortality and utilize dead or dying trees. Individual salvage clearcuts in beetle-kill mortality are not limited to the 40-acre maximum size.

Commercial Thinning

Immature stands of pole-size tree may be commercially thinned to reduce competition between remaining trees. These would be stands where commercial wood products (mainly round wood) could be harvested. The remaining trees would be left in a relatively uniform arrangement. Typically stands suited for commercial thinning are in the 80 to 140 year age range. Trees infested with dwarf mistletoe would be targeted for removal. Obtaining a new cohort of trees is not desired.

In this proposed action, no specific sites are identified for commercial thinning at this time.

The resulting desired condition of commercial thinning is a relatively healthy, immature stand, with reduced between-tree competition and improve vigor.

Young Stand -- Precommercial Thinning, Sanitation, or No Treatment

This treatment would leave dominant, healthy trees at a spacing of 8-12 feet between stems depending on the size of the tree. Tree species other than lodgepole pine would be retained unless their removal is necessary for safety or operational purposes. The intent of this treatment is to maintain desirable growth rates and promote tree vigor. A dwarf mistletoe survey will be completed during the thinning operation, and any diseased trees felled to reduce disease presence and spread.

Slash from the thinning operation would normally be lopped and scattered to lay within two-feet of the ground. Lop and scatter retains the nutrient capital of felled trees on site for future utilization by the desired trees. Where precommercial thinning is undertaken in the wildland-urban interface, the thinning slash would be piled and burned to reduce fuel loadings.

Not all of the stands identified as “Young Stand – Precommercial Thin, Sanitation, or No Treatment” class will be thinned during the next ten years. Many stands are not yet ready for

thinning. Thinning too early or too wide spacing can be counterproductive. Consideration of snowshoe hare/Canada lynx habitat needs may determine whether a thinning of a particular site occurs, or is modified to maintain/improve habitat conditions for the term.

The general desired condition after treatment is a young, healthy, even-aged stand of trees, with reduced competition between trees that are free to grow.

Fuel Treatment

Fuel treatment would reduce stand density and break up canopy continuity to lower the probability of a crown fire. Larger trees would generally be favored for retention. Damaged, diseased, suppressed, and intermediate trees will be favored for removal. Open areas will be created to break-up stand continuity. Residual slash will be hand or machine piled and burned to reduce the intensity of a ground fire.

Visual quality of managed stands from neighboring areas is a consideration. Commercial harvest of merchantable trees may be used to remove wood from the area, and reduce the fuel loading in a cost effective way.

The desired condition would reduce fuel loading near private land, or other values, where wildfire suppression could be more effective and safe.