



DECISION MEMO
SCATTERED OLD HOUSE
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
SANDPOINT RANGER DISTRICT
IDAHO PANHANDLE NATIONAL FORESTS
BONNER COUNTY, IDAHO

BACKGROUND

The Sandpoint Ranger District is proposing fuel treatments on two Forest Service system land parcels. The project area is located in Township 54 North, Range 03, West section 26 and Township 54 north, Range 02 West, section 30 - approximately four miles north east of Athol, Idaho. These stands are currently comprised of a mixture of lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, grand fir, western larch, and ponderosa pine. The trees have been damaged by snow, wind, and bark beetle infestation. These unhealthy stand condition are contributing to accumulations of hazardous fuels and will continue to do so without treatment. These parcels are located within the wildland-urban interface (WUI), and several private residences are adjacent to these parcels.

DECISION

I have decided to authorize the thinning of approximately 215 acres (55 acre parcel and 160 acre parcel) of sapling and pole sized stands that were established through planting and natural reforestation. These stands are densely stocked with mixtures of lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, grand fir, western larch, and ponderosa pine trees. Currently, these stands are losing vigor because they have been damaged by snow, wind and bark beetle infestation. This is contributing to accumulations of hazardous fuels and will continue to do so without treatment. The thinning would leave the healthiest trees of the desired species composition, spaced 14 to 20 feet apart, increasing the overall health and vigor of the stands and reducing hazardous fuels. Additionally, the species composition would result in forest stands that are more stable in the face of potential disturbances because they would be stocked with longer-lived tree species, and less susceptible to stand-replacement wildfires. The project area is shown in Figure 1.

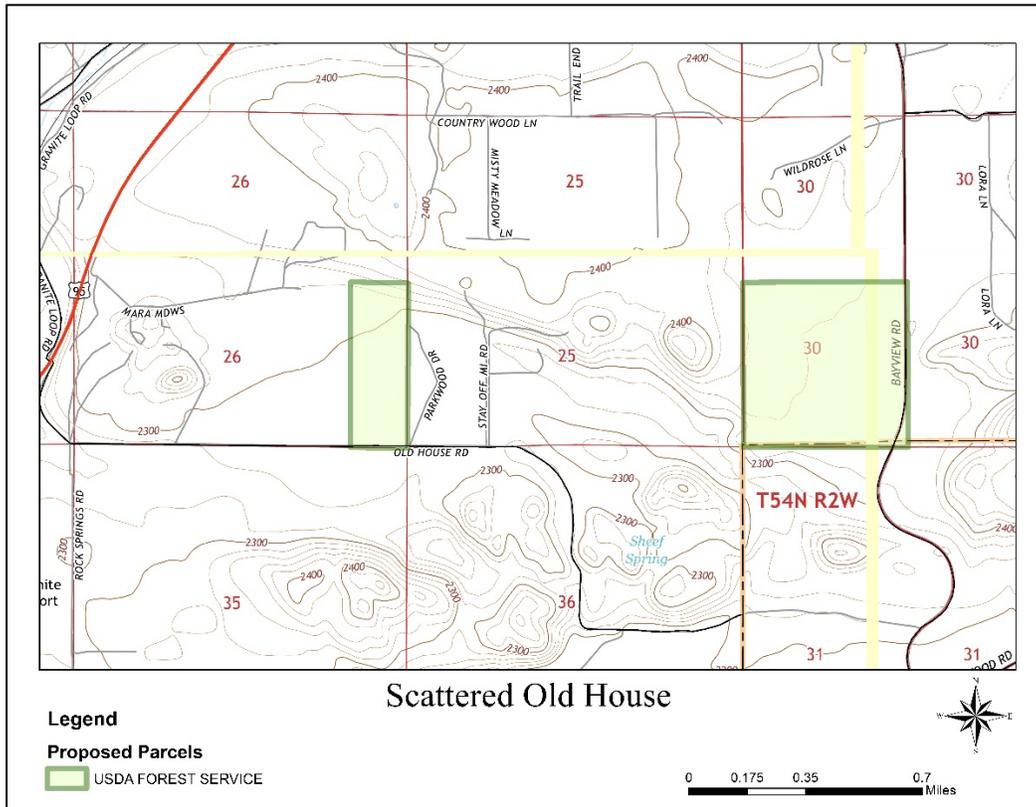


Figure 1: Location of Scattered Old House project area

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as Category 6 – Timber Stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) as described in FSH 1909.15 Sec. 31.2. This category of action is applicable because the project purpose and need is to use prescribed burning to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor, it does not require road construction.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – There are no federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The project area is not in a flood plain, wetland, or municipal watershed.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national

recreation areas – There are no wilderness, wilderness study areas or National Recreation Areas within the project area.

- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – There are no inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas within the project area.
- Research natural areas – There are no research natural areas within the project area.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – The project area has been reviewed for cultural sites and none were found.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – The project area has been reviewed for archeological and historic areas and none were found.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Schedule of Proposed Actions on July 1, 2018.

The Scattered Old House scoping notice was mailed to local landowners and individuals that showed interest in the project.

The scoping period notice was sent out on July 24, 2019. Responses to scoping were requested within 14 calendar days (by August 7, 2019). Comments were received from four parties.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Plan (revised, January 2015) which establishes management direction for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. This management direction is achieved through the establishment of Forest Plan goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and Management Area (MA) goals and accompanying standards and guidelines. This project is consistent with all applicable Forest Plan forest-wide standards. The resource reports in the project file provide further discussion regarding consistency with applicable desired conditions, standards and guidelines.

Refer to Specialist's Reports and Biological Evaluations/Biological Assessments in the project file for a detailed discussion of consistency with all applicable regulatory requirements.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The project is expected to begin implementation in the fall of 2019.

CONTACT

Additional information concerning this project can be found on the project webpage at:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54223>.

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Sara Sink, Project Team Leader,
Priest Lake Ranger District, 32203 Highway 57 Priest River ID 83856, 208-443-6834.



JESSIE BERNER
Sandpoint District Ranger

September 30, 2019

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