

File Code: 1950
Date: December 18, 2018

Dear Interested Party,

The White River National Forest welcomes your comments on its proposal to implement a forest wide vegetation management project in Eagle, Garfield, Mesa, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, and Summit Counties. The proposal aims at improving forest health and perpetuating past management actions through:

- Continued management of live and dead fuels within previously created fuel breaks in the Wildland Urban Interface.
- Improving individual tree growth, vigor, and resiliency through reducing densities in naturally regenerating stands of young lodgepole pine.
- Reducing the extent of insects or diseases present in regenerating lodgepole pine stands.
- Continued diversity enhancement through maintaining and protecting young Engelmann spruce trees planted in areas affected by past spruce beetle outbreaks.

This landscape level project is unique because of its condition-based approach that intends to authorize flexible management of forest vegetation in a timely manner. It is a different kind of analysis which is based on rapidly changing environmental conditions and is responsive to actual on-the-ground conditions. Analysis will occur using existing data and a narrow range of options, as well as engagement with stakeholders and the public. The White River National Forest will seek public, stakeholder and local government input during the initial scoping and comment period for this project. Following an affirmative Decision on the project, the White River National Forest will outreach to local affected communities on a site-specific basis prior to implementation. This public outreach would be conducted to provide local communities with an opportunity to help shape the selection of treatment areas and other implementation details. The White River National Forest would maintain a contact list for ongoing public involvement throughout this project. If you, or your organization, would like to be included on this contact list please request the White River National Forest to add your contact information to this master list. In addition to maintaining a master list for ongoing correspondence and collaboration, the Forest would use other methods, such as news releases, social media, and public meetings to involve the local public, as appropriate for a given project. Following implementation, individual treatments would be monitored to determine responsiveness to resource objectives, effectiveness of project guidelines, and compliance with regulatory requirements. Annual monitoring results would be published on the forest's project webpage.



This comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to comment on the proposed action before the Responsible Official makes a decision.

It is anticipated that this project will use a Categorical Exclusion (CE). A CE is a category of actions established by either the Secretary (of Agriculture), the Chief, or by statute, and is excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This project is currently being considered under *36 CFR 220.6 (e)(6) - Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction.*

To make a fully informed decision it is important that I understand any issues you may have with this proposal and how you believe they could be addressed. Therefore, I am requesting feedback on the project during scoping to identify any potential issues that have not already been identified. The Proposed Action provides information on the project and details what actions are being proposed. The Proposed Action is available online at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55257>. In order for your input to be most useful, it should be specific to this proposal rather than generic to all projects of this type. Comments offered in support of the proposal are also welcome.

The following options are available for submitting comments:

Electronic comments including attachments can be submitted to:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=55257>

Hardcopy comments can be mailed, hand-delivered or faxed as follows:

Mail

White River National Forest
Attn: Shelby Limberis
PO Box 190
Minturn, CO 81645

Hand Deliver

White River National Forest Offices located in
Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Rifle, Meeker,
Minturn, and Silverthorne.

Faxed to (970) 827-9343.

Be sure to note on the cover page that comments are for the White River Forest Health and Fuels Management Project, Attn: Shelby Limberis.

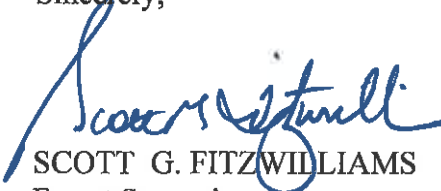
Comments will be accepted any time, but will be most helpful if submitted prior to January 31, 2019. Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act. Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation 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).

Additional information regarding this proposal can be obtained from: Shelby Limberis, PO Box 190, Minturn, Colorado, 81645; by phone: (970) 827-5161; or by email:

shelby.limberis@usda.gov.

Thank you for your interest and engagement in the management of your White River National Forest.

Sincerely,



SCOTT G. FITZWILLIAMS
Forest Supervisor

cc: Shelby Limberis

