

File Code: 1950

Date: February 24, 2021

Dear Partners:

Last spring, I asked for your input on the draft implementation plan for the Piquett Creek Project. This letter provides an update on the project and what has occurred with the project since that time. First, I want to sincerely thank you for the feedback and recommendations you provided on the draft implementation plan. Project staff and I completed a thorough review; making adjustments to units and proposed activities where there was opportunity to do so, ensuring project goals are still being met. A complete summary of the feedback received and how I incorporated it into the final plan is included in the attached Piquett Creek-Implementation Public Feedback Summary. Also included with this letter is the final implementation map and unit tables that will be used in combination with the project activity cards (Appendix C-Piquett Creek Activity Cards) to implement the treatments in each unit.

Additionally, I want to provide an implementation schedule update for the Piquett Creek Project. Last fall a contract was awarded to complete the graveling of the first mile of FR 49, place gravel at 6 stream crossings and improve the approaches/drainage on two bridges that cross over Piquett Creek. Work began in September 2020 but was suspended due to the early snowfall. I anticipate work to resume this spring as roads dry out and will be completed by July 2021. The remaining gravel work will be completed by the Bitterroot National Forest Road Crew this summer.

Last summer and fall, forest staff completed diagnosis, layout and marking on all units that I've decided to implement harvest prescriptions. The Piquett Timber Sale contract will be offered and awarded this spring with the intent to begin implementation this summer. There may need to be some short-term road closures during harvest operations along open roads that may limit access. I will do my best to minimize any disruptions to public access. I anticipate the timber sale will be completed by November 2022.

Lastly, I plan to begin implementing the non-commercial fuels reduction activities this spring and summer. I will utilize both the West Fork District Fire Crew and experienced thinning contractors to complete stand improvement and piling work beginning in the most critical units. Crews will also work to install fuelbreaks and firelines along the perimeters of units proposed for prescribed fire-low intensity in preparation of beginning implementation in the spring of 2022. Depending on burn windows and funding availability it may take 10-15 years to complete all the planned fuels work in the project.

Thank you again for your valuable involvement in this process. If you have any questions please reach out to myself seth.carbonari@usda.gov or David Fox david.fox@usda.gov by email or at 406-821-3269. As implementation progresses, I plan to host an annual open house to share information and provide project updates. I also anticipate future opportunities for field trips to review completed treatments and continue our collaboration to continue improving future projects on the West Fork Ranger District.

Sincerely,

Seth Carbonari

SETH A. CARBONARI
District Ranger

