



File Code: 1950; 2430

Date: March 5, 2020

Friends of the Ashley National Forest:

Attached for your review and comment is the environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the Mill Park Forest Restoration Project. We are sending the EA and FONSI to those who provided input following our scoping efforts, those who have self-subscribed to this project online, and other potentially interested parties.

The proposed action would involve approximately 3,225 acres of vegetative treatments and stream and meadow restoration activities at the head of Hells Canyon on the Roosevelt-Duchesne Ranger District of the Ashley National Forest. The work would occur in an area of heavy mountain pine beetle mortality (mostly in lodgepole pine) and additional ongoing heavy spruce beetle mortality (in Engelmann spruce).

The purpose of this project is to improve public safety, to increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of lodgepole pine and spruce-fir stands in the project area, to reduce hazardous fuel loading, to capture the economic value of beetle-killed and infested trees, to improve streams and meadows, and to ensure the integrity of an existing backcountry weather station in the area.

The project would consist of:

- Commercial timber treatments across a combined total of 2,646 acres. This would include sanitation-salvage, overstory removal, clearcut, and shelterwood harvest. Approximately 8 miles of temporary road segments may need to be constructed to access landing areas in some areas proposed for commercial harvest. All temporary road segments would be closed and rehabilitated upon project completion.
- Post-harvest planting across 1,045 acres as well as planting across an additional 125 unharvested acres.
- Pre-commercial thinning on 379 acres.
- Additional restoration activities in various areas of the above acreage as well as across an additional 75 acres. These activities would include stream and meadow restoration and vegetative maintenance around a snow telemetry site.

The proposed action would include a site-specific amendment to our current (1986) Forest Plan to allow some regeneration cut patches (clearcut, overstory removal, or shelterwood harvest polygons) to be larger than 40 acres. Maximum size limits for even-aged regeneration do not apply to areas harvested due to insect and disease attack (16 U.S.C. 1604[g][3][F]). However, because our current Forest Plan specifies maximum clearing sizes of 40 acres for the management areas this project would occur in, we would need to do a project-specific amendment to allow for larger opening sizes. See Appendix B to the EA for the proposed amendment.

This project is subject to a pre-decisional administrative review process, also known as the objection process (36 CFR 218, subparts A and B).

Your site-specific written comments for this project will afford you the right to object to the



upcoming draft decision on this project. Only individuals or entities (as defined in 36 CFR 218.2) who submit timely and specific written comments (also as defined in 36 CFR 218.2) regarding this proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment established by the responsible official will be eligible to file an objection. Comments must meet the requirements in 36 CFR 218.25(3). Any comments received on this proposal are part of the public record and, therefore, are available for public review upon request. Submitting your input during this 30-day comment period will ensure that you remain on the mailing list for this project.

We will accept comments on this proposed project for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice of opportunity to comment in the newspaper of record (the *Vernal Express*). We expect this notice will publish Tuesday, March 10th, 2020. The actual publication date is the exclusive means to calculate the 30-day timeframe, however.

You may email your comments to: comments-intermtn-ashley@usda.gov (please put Mill Park in the subject line). Alternatively, you may mail your comments to: Forest Supervisor, Ashley National Forest, 355 N. Vernal Ave., Vernal, UT 84078. Office hours, for those who wish to hand deliver comments, are 0800 to 1630, Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays). You may also submit comments by facsimile at 435-781-5142.

More information about this project is available on the Forest's website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ashley/landmanagement/projects>. If you need additional information, please contact Lesley Tullis, Vegetation Management Group Environmental Coordinator (lesley.tullis@usda.gov; 435-781-5103) or James McRae, Timber Management Officer (james.mcrae@usda.gov; 435-781-5123).

We appreciate your interest and involvement in the management of National Forest System lands. Have a great day.

Sincerely,



BRANT PETERSEN
Acting Forest Supervisor
Ashley National Forest