



File Code: 1950; 2430

Date: May 19, 2020

Friends of the Ashley National Forest:

Attached is the draft decision notice for the Mill Park Forest Restoration Project. We released the environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact for comment in March.

In the draft decision, I select the proposed action as analyzed in the EA. This action will 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 will 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 will consist of:

- Commercial timber treatments across a combined total of 2,646 acres. This will 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 will 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 will include stream and meadow restoration and vegetative maintenance around a snow telemetry site.

The proposed action includes a site-specific, non-significant 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 USC 1604[g][3][F]). However, because our current Forest Plan specifies maximum clearing sizes of 40 acres for the management areas this project occurs in, we need to do a project-specific amendment to allow for larger opening sizes. See Appendix B to the draft decision notice for the site-specific 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). Only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submitted timely and specific written comments (also as defined by §218.2) regarding this proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted comments unless based on new information that arose after the



designated opportunities to comment.

Written objections (email, mail, fax) on this draft decision must be filed within 45 days (§218.26) of the publication date of the legal notice of opportunity to comment in the *Vernal Express*. We expect this notice will publish Tuesday, May 26th, 2020. However, the actual publication date is the exclusive means to determine the 45-day timeframe. The reviewing officer is the Intermountain Regional Forester. Send objections to: Objection Reviewing Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401; or fax to 801-625-5277; or email to: objections-intermtn-regional-office@usda.gov. Please include the name of the forest and project in the subject line (e.g., Ashley National Forest Mill Park Project). It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (§218.9).

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,

REBECCA HOTZE
Acting Forest Supervisor
Ashley National Forest