



File Code: 1950; 2430

Date: August 19, 2020

Friends of the Ashley National Forest:

Attached is the final decision notice for the Mill Park Forest Restoration Project. We released the draft decision notice in May, following the March environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact. We received one objection to the draft decision notice. Objection issues were focused largely on inventoried roadless and potential wilderness. The objection reviewing officer has provided a response to the objector addressing each of their issues in detail.

We seek to clarify and expound on several items in this final decision notice, including compliance with the 2001 Roadless Rule and effects on potential wilderness characteristics.

In the final 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. **No temporary road segments will occur in inventoried roadless areas.**
- 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 project 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 final decision notice for the site-specific amendment.



As per 36 CFR 218.12, if no objection was received within the legal objection period, the final decision could have been signed and implemented on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the objection filing period. Since an objection was filed, an objection review team convened and the reviewing officer responded to the objector in writing prior to the issuance of this final decision. The project may now be implemented immediately.

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](mailto:lesley.tullis@usda.gov); 435-781-5103) or James McRae, Timber Management Officer ([james.mcrae@usda.gov](mailto:james.mcrae@usda.gov); 435-781-5123).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan Eickhoff", is written over a solid black horizontal line.

SUSAN EICKHOFF  
Forest Supervisor  
Ashley National Forest