



Stormy Project

Stormy Project Scoping Report

Salmon-Cobalt Ranger District

Salmon-Challis National Forest

Lemhi County, Idaho

Project Information

Project Initiation Date: 10/7/2020

Responsible Official: Ken Gebhardt

Anticipated Implementation: Summer 2022

Signing Authority: District Ranger

Project Website (accessible to the public):
<http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=58729>

General Location: The project area is approximately 23,483 acres and is located northeast of the community of Salmon, Idaho on the Salmon-Cobalt Ranger District. The project area borders the Sawmill Gulch Road (#60051) and the Diamond Creek Road (#60129) to the north, the Salmon-Challis boundary to the east, the U.P Lake Road (#65001) and Leesburg Stage Road (#65002) to the south, and Daly Creek, the

Upper Daly Creek Road (#60722), and the Racetrack Road (#60053) to the West.

Applicable Management Areas: Forest Plan Management Areas 5B, 8A, Includes approximately 1,798 acres of designated old growth and 173 acres of private land.

Legal Description: T23N, R21E, Sections 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35; T23N, R20E, Sections 13, 24, 36; T22N, R21E, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35; and T22N, R20E, Section 1

Watersheds: Dump Creek-Salmon River, Fenster Creek-Salmon River, Moose Creek, Wagonhammer Creek-Salmon River, Wallace Creek-Salmon River

Proposal

Purpose and Need & Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore ecosystem diversity across the landscape. Treatments would be designed to:

- Increase resilience to a variety of forest insect and disease agents
- Reduce the large accumulation of dead and dying hazardous fuels, especially those associated with recent epidemics of bark beetles, western spruce budworm, and endemic dwarf mistletoe
- Provide a mix of forest products to local and regional purchasers through personal-use and commercial permits and timber sale contracts
- Treat fuels adjacent to the Jesse Creek drainage to reduce the potential negative impacts of a large wildfire in the Salmon Municipal Watershed
- Create a defensible corridor to improve firefighter and public safety

This project has been developed in collaboration with the Lemhi Forest Restoration Group (LFRG). The Salmon-Challis will continue to collaborate with the LFRG and partners throughout implementation of this project and would also request input from interested Native American tribes, Lemhi County, City of Salmon, the Lemhi-Custer Grass Roots Advisory, Idaho Department of Lands, Rural Fire Departments, permittees, private land owners, the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State Historic Preservation Office, and other interested agencies, individuals, and groups. This collaborative process supports the Shared Stewardship concept and the “All Hands All Lands” approach to cross-boundary restoration.

Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the Salmon-Challis would conduct up to 3,000 acres of a variety of treatments in the 23,483-acre Stormy Peak Project Area. Manual and mechanical¹ treatments would be used to reduce stand densities to increase growing space and health for existing trees and decrease hazardous fuels. These treatments may be accomplished through contracts, agreements, or already permitted processes, and could be implemented by Federal and State agencies, contractors, cooperators, and other interested partners. Proposed treatments include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Harvest of Douglas-fir stands to decrease the occurrence of dwarf mistletoe and create stand conditions resilient to Douglas-fir bark beetle

¹ For example, chainsaws, axes, handsaws, rakes, and ground-based and skyline commercial harvest systems.

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2. Harvest lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce-dominated stands to promote resilience to a variety of insect and disease agents
3. Harvest within aspen and whitebark stands to promote stand size and health of these species when practicable
4. Thinning of understory trees post-harvest to promote stand health and achieve desired stand structure
5. Prescribed fire, including pile, jackpot, and tree well burning ² in all treatment units to remove the accumulation of hazardous fuels and slash buildup generated by treatment activities. See page

Designated old growth³ areas would be evaluated and not treated. Forest Service personnel would verify that previously identified old growth areas meet the standards defined by Hamilton in 1993.

Access to treatment units may occur on any⁴ road authorized for administrative use. Prior to and after use, temporary roads would be treated to address any resource concerns. When project activities are completed, temporary roads would be treated as described in the Preliminary Project Design Features. This project does not authorize permanent road reconstruction or construction. Additionally, the project proposes to construct one new temporary road.

² These types of burning are defined as follows: “pile” burning removes the piles of cut vegetation created by project workers; “Jackpot” burning maintains upland meadow characteristics by removing conifer encroachment within upland meadows through targeted ignition methods; and “tree well” burning removes the accumulation of needle cast buildup directly under and adjacent to tree canopies.

³ “Old growth” refers to a stand of trees that is past full maturity and showing decadence; the last stage in forest succession. Source: Forest Plan

⁴ This would include forest and unauthorized roads. Unauthorized roads used in conduct of this project would be considered temporary roads while in use and treated following project activities.

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Potential Treatments

Commercial Harvest

The objective of commercial harvest is to remove trees that have a commercial value when this activity helps to meet future desired conditions of the stand. Commercial harvest activities may include both ground-based and skyline commercial harvest systems, with ground-based harvest occurring in treatment units that have an average slope of 35 percent or less. Work crews would use harvest methods designed to protect residual trees from damage. Treatments would allow for whole-tree yarding⁵ to designated landings where work crews would process trees and pile and burn residual slash.

A variety of silvicultural⁶ treatments would be used to meet desired timber stand conditions through the use of commercial harvest. Treatments include but are not limited to: individual tree selection harvest, shelter wood harvest⁷, seed tree harvest, and clear-cut harvest per the *Salmon National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan) direction in management area 5B⁸ and in keeping with common silvicultural practices. The appropriate silvicultural system would be determined based on individual timber stand conditions including stocking levels, species distribution, and occurrence of insect and disease agents.

Timber Stand Improvement Thinning

The objective of this treatment is to improve growth, vigor, species composition and promote overall stand health and structure.

Timber stand improvement thinning would occur after harvest is complete. Thinning would occur after harvest to remove un-merchantable trees that were not removed during harvest in order to meet desired conditions for the stand. Primarily, this would be done to decrease the occurrence of dwarf mistletoe in under-story Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine; reduce the competition for sunlight, water, and nutrients; and decrease ladder fuels. Slash from thinning activities could either be lopped and scattered or piled, depending on stand structure and hazardous fuels levels in the unit. Tools to complete these activities could include:

- Chainsaws or other mechanical hand tools

⁵ “Yarding” refers to the initial hauling of a log from the stump to a collection point. Whole-tree yarding means hauling the entire tree, excluding the stump.

⁶ “Silviculture” refers to a system for the growing and cultivation of trees.

⁷ “Shelter wood” refers to mature trees that are left standing to provide shelter in which saplings can grow.

⁸ The Forest Plan divides the Salmon National Forest into various management areas, each with its own management direction. In Management Area 5B, the management “emphasis direction is on producing long-term timber outputs through a moderate level of investment in regeneration and thinning (USDA Forest Service 1988).

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- Mechanized equipment mounted with the following:
 - Mastication heads to thin vegetation on slopes ranging from 0-20%
 - Grapples to drag wood
 - Felling and processing heads to thin vegetation on slopes ranging from 0-20%
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Prescribed Fire

The objective of this treatment is to decrease hazardous fuels through the use of pile burning, jackpot burning, or broadcast burning within treatment unit boundaries.

Slash piles created through harvest and thinning activities would be burned. Piles would be spaced away from residual trees to reduce the risk of mortality during burning operations. Pile spacing would depend on slope and residual tree densities. Fire would be allowed to creep from the piles but would be restricted to the treatment unit boundary.

Jackpot burning would target accumulations of hazardous fuels in instances where harvest or timber stand improvement thinning could not effectively do so. Jackpot burning would reduce fuel loading in a patchy mosaic pattern. Fire would be allowed to creep from heavy fuel concentrations but would be restricted to the treatment unit boundary.

Project Coordination

Coordination with the appropriate Forest Service personnel would occur before and during project implementation to ensure that all project work would be compliant with the standards, guidelines, and other practices that are current at the time of implementation. Examples of coordination meeting topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Implementation design and schedule (for example, timing of treatments to minimize bark beetle buildup or to protect migratory birds during breeding season)
 2. Post-treatment Monitoring
 3. Applicable Best Management Practices, Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, and other direction
 4. Any newly acquired information regarding sensitive species or pollinators.
 5. Appropriate pile sizes for minimizing impacts on soil
 6. Required protective measures for cultural sites
 7. Treatment options for stored roads and trails after implementation
 8. Location of operational sites such as camps, helicopter landing sites, staging areas, safety zones, and fueling and servicing sites
 9. Options for seeding, seed mix selections, and erosion control products
 10. Selection of water drafting sites
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Project Design Features by Resource

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Air Quality

1. Coordinate prescribed burns with the Idaho-Montana Airshed group and ensure all prescribed burns meet the Idaho-Montana Airshed Group operational plan.
2. Follow the burn plan notification process for all prescribed fire activities.

Fire and Fuels

3. When practicable, locate all piles at least 30 feet from any cone-producing whitebark pine.

Fisheries

4. When drafting, do not remove more than 25% of the stream flow to reduce the possibility of stranding fish. These drafting sites would be in streams so as not to disturb spawning fish and their redds.
5. Use only pump intake screens with openings that do not exceed 3/32 inches in diameter and that have a surface area proportionate to the pump intake capacity. Maintain a velocity of no more than 0.2 feet per second at the surface of the intake screen to avoid - trapping small fish.
6. Submerge intake screens to a depth of at least one screen radius per United States Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service regulations (1996).

Heritage Resources

7. Stop work and notify appropriate Forest Service personnel within 24 hours if previously unknown heritage resources are discovered during project implementation.

Invasive Species

8. Retain native vegetation in the project area, consistent with project objectives, to prevent weed establishment, growth, and spread, and to maintain suitable habitat for sensitive plant species.

Range

9. Contain all individual prescribed fire units within individual grazing allotment units to allow for coordination of grazing rotations with grazing permittees prior to implementation.
10. Avoid damaging range improvements. If project activities cause damage to any range improvements, repair the damage.

Recreation

11. If present, restore or rehabilitate any trails affected by project activities to their original condition and profile.

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12. Place signs in key locations to inform recreationists of project objectives. When practicable, do not use developed recreation sites, including campgrounds and trailheads, for landings or staging areas, and coordinate any other use with the appropriate Forest Service personnel.

Sensitive Plants

13. Avoid sensitive plant occurrences when laying out fire line, temporary roads and other ground-disturbing activities when practicable.

Soils and Water

Rehabilitation Activities

14. Rehabilitate all fire lines and skid trails by water barring and pulling in debris and topsoil as available.
15. Rehabilitate harvest landings. Practices may include topsoil redistribution, contouring, and decompaction.

Treatment of Fuel

16. In order to prevent petroleum products from entering the stream channel, place pumps and their fuel containers on an impermeable liner capable of containing 1.5 times the total volume of fuel, oil, or other hazardous liquids.
17. Refuel equipment (excluding pumps) outside of RHCAs.

Location of Operational Sites

18. Locate camp sites, helicopter landing sites, staging areas, and refueling sites outside of RHCAs, wetlands, and sensitive soil areas.
19. When practicable, retain 15 tons of down woody material per acre, but strive for no less than five tons of down woody material per acre.

Roads and Transportation

20. Conduct project activities when site conditions are conducive to minimizing impacts on soil and water resources. Do not conduct activities when roads and activity areas are very wet to prevent excessive rutting (greater than four inches) and soil compaction.
21. Maintain standard clearing widths and sight distances on open roads and remove any trees on or above the cut slope that have been destabilized. Minimize general clearing widths on temporary roads to the limits of the cut and fill to help screen the road while removing unstable or hazardous trees.
22. Apply dust abatement measures as needed during haul periods following standard operating procedures and any measures identified in the appropriate biological assessments.

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23. Adhere to the following road maintenance practices (at a minimum) to minimize the erosion and damage inherent in winter logging:
- Ensure that roads to be used for winter operations have adequate surface and cross drainage installed prior to winter operations.
 - Drain winter roads by installing rolling dips, drivable cross ditches, open top culverts, outsloping, or by other suitable means.
 - During winter operations, maintain roads as needed to keep the road surface drained during thaws or break up. This may include active maintenance of existing drainage structures, opening of drainage holes in snow berms and installation of additional cross drainage on road surfaces by ripping, placement of native material, or other suitable means.
24. The need for road maintenance would be determined through monitoring of visual indicators including wheel depressions and rutting.
25. Fully restore newly constructed temporary roads following vegetation treatments. The Forest may authorize firewood gathering following harvest in select locations if trees are available and if use of the temporary road would not cause soil or water resource damage. In such an event, restoration would occur after the authorized period for firewood gathering ends. Restoration treatments would vary along each route and may include one or more of the following: blocking access, recontouring, decompaction and ripping, re-vegetation, culvert removal, seeding, mulching, and re-establishment of natural drainage.
26. Place stored roads used to access treatment units back into storage following vegetation treatments and any subsequent allowance for temporary firewood gathering. Storage treatments would vary along each road and may include one or more of the following: blocking access, scarification, water bar installation, revegetation, seeding, mulching, and culvert removal (replaced with a rolling ford) if the structure may fail over an extended period. The intent of the storage treatments would be to stabilize the road to prevent soil and water resource damage while considering needs for future administrative and emergency access.
27. Following project implementation and any subsequent allowance for firewood gathering where appropriate, return temporary roads used to access units to their pre-project condition. Treatments on temporary roads would vary and may include activities such as one or more of the following: light scarification; seeding; mulching; water bars; scattering woody debris; and re-establishment of natural drainage. The intent of the temporary road treatments following use is to stabilize the roads to prevent soil and water resource damage while considering needs for authorized firewood gathering, camping, and recreation. During post-activity maintenance, remove traffic-related defects, restore drainage and traffic control features that were modified to accommodate project traffic, and comply with the established road management

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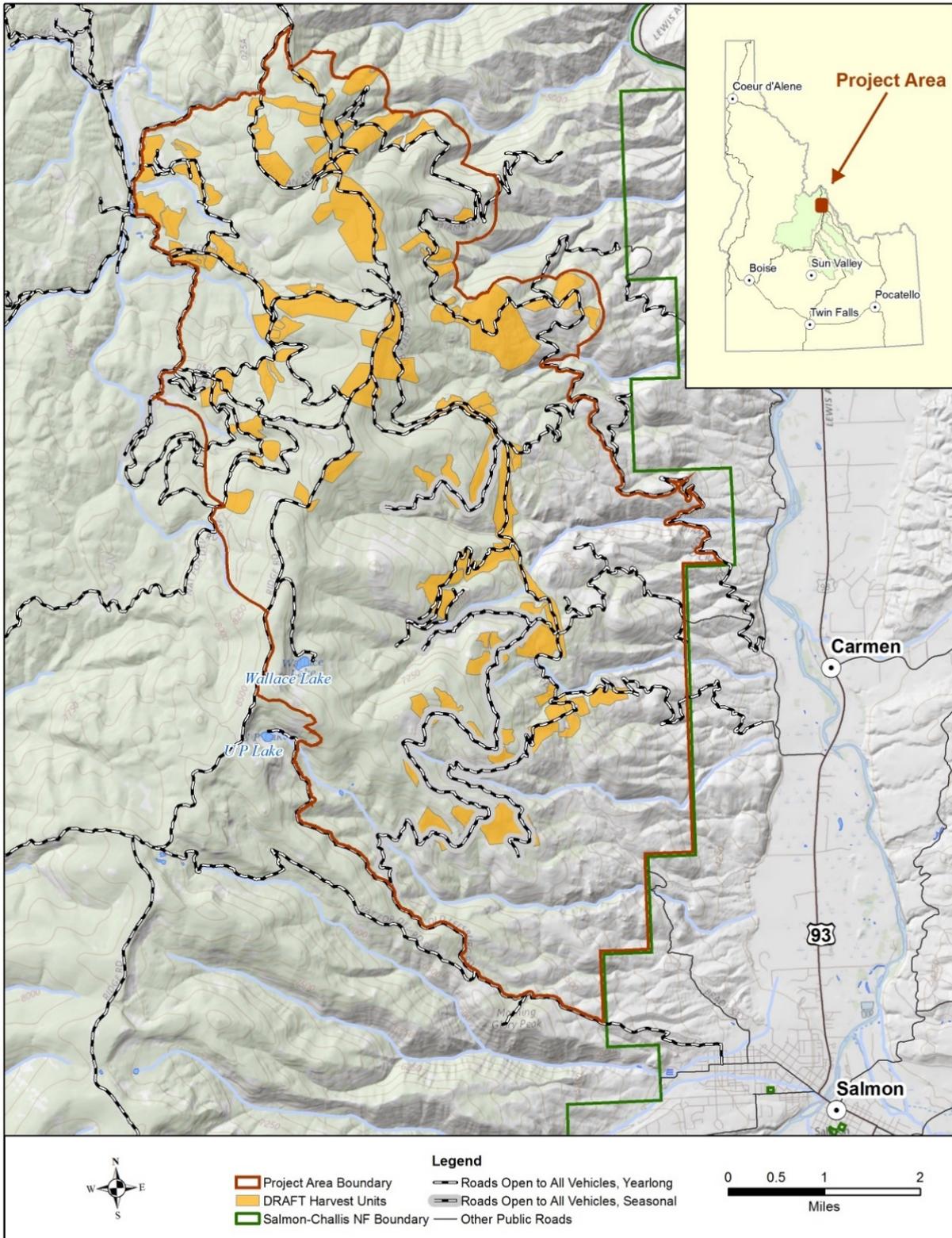
objectives. Close roads opened for project-related timber hauling and correct any problems such as ruts, wheel depressions, or damaged structures.

Wildlife

28. Inform the appropriate Forest Service personnel of the discovery of any previously unknown occurrences of species listed under the Endangered Species Act, or that are on the Region 4 list of Sensitive Species. The Forest Service would determine appropriate measures at that time.

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Map



Map 1: Project Area