

	United States Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Flathead National Forest	650 Wolf Pack Way Kalispell, MT 59901 (406) 758-5200 Fax (406) 758-5363
---	--	---------------------------	-------------------------------------	--

File Code:	1950
Date:	August 22, 2012

Dear Interested Party:

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Glacier Loon Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Project has been completed and is available for public review and comment. You are receiving this EA because you have previously expressed an interest in this project.

On September 16, 2011, information on the Glacier Loon Project was mailed to approximately 100 individuals, agencies, and groups. This mailing provided information about a management proposal for the Glacier Loon Project Area, which identified opportunities to:

- **Reduce the associated risk of high-severity landscape wildfire risk within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) as identified in the Seeley Swan Fire Plan;**
- **Improve and/or maintain the general health, resiliency, and sustainability of forested stands; and**
- **Provide wood products for local economies.**

A Request for Comments was published in *The Daily Inter Lake*, the Newspaper of Record, on September 16, 2011. Additionally the Swan Lake Ranger District conducted two public Field Trips to the project area in September and October of 2011; a total of seventeen people from the public attended. In addition, we received 47 comments, either in the form of letters or e-mails, on the project.

The Glacier Loon Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Project Area lies within the boundaries of the Glacier Loon and Buck Holland Grizzly Bear Subunits. It extends south and west of Condon, MT on the west side of MT Highway 83 to the south end of Lindbergh Lake. The project area is located in Missoula County in Sections 2-6 T18N, R17W, Sections 1-3, 5-9, and 16-17 T18N, R18W; Sections 01-4, 7-23, 26-35 T19N, R17W; Sections 2-4, 9-15, 22-27, and 33-36 T19N, R18W; Sections 18-19 and 29-32 T20N R16W; and Sections 1-2, 11-5, 22-37, and 33-36 T20N R17W; Swan Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest.

Since the initiation of this project, the Swan Lake District Planning Team comprised of Specialists from natural resource disciplines reviewed public feedback; developed alternatives to the initial proposal based on public comment and field knowledge of the areas, and analyzed potential effects from the proposed activities.

Three action alternatives are analyzed in detail and were developed to meet the Purpose and Need and respond to the major issues. Alternative B is the original proposed action that was presented to the public in September 2011. Alternative C was developed to respond to concerns relative to scenic values and water quality. Alternative D was developed to address concerns about wildlife security.

The Proposed Action (Alternative B) proposes to reduce fuels and restore forest health on 2102 acres using a combination of commercial and non-commercial harvest treatments, remove approximately 10.5 million board feet of forest products, reforest harvest units by planting trees on 400 acres, construct 11.5 miles of temporary road to access treatment units, and application of Best Management Practices on 37.7



miles of existing specified road. Harvest activities would be implemented using hand and tractor logging systems during the summer and winter seasons.

Alternative C proposes to reduce fuels and restore forest health on 1909 acres, remove approximately 9.0 million board feet of forest products, reforest harvest units by planting trees on 340 acres, construct 7.4 miles of temporary road, and application of Best Management Practices on 34.7 miles of existing specified road. Harvest activities would be implemented using hand and tractor logging systems during the summer and winter seasons.

Alternative D was developed to address concerns about wildlife security. Alternative D proposes to reduce fuels and restore forest health on 1150 acres, remove approximately 6.70 million board feet of forest products, reforest harvest units by planting trees on 290 acres, construct 5.8 miles of temporary road, and application of Best Management Practices on 29.1 miles of existing specified road. Harvest activities would be implemented using hand and tractor logging systems during the summer and winter seasons.

In addition to these alternatives, a No Action Alternative (Alternative A) was also analyzed.

Chapter 2 of the enclosed EA describes the alternatives considered for the Glacier Loon Project in more detail. This chapter also includes maps of the alternatives, activities common to all alternatives, and a comparison of these alternatives focusing on the significant issues. The effects analysis of these alternatives, as well as the No Action Alternative (Alternative A), is presented in Chapter 3.

We invite you to comment on this EA by 11:59 pm on **September 23, 2012** to help us formulate a Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). We anticipate the DN and FONSI will be completed later this fall. The Responsible Official for this project is Forest Supervisor Chip Weber.

Comments may be submitted in writing through the Postal Service or through electronic means. In accordance with 36 CFR 215.5, as published in the Federal Register, Volume 68 no. 107, June 4, 2003; in order to retain your administrative appeal rights, you must provide timely comments during this 30-day comment period. Comments must be specific to the proposed activities and area being analyzed. They should include: (1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any; (2) title of the document on which the comment is being submitted; (3) specific facts and supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider; and (4) signatures.

Electronic comments may be submitted to comments-northern-flathead-swan-lake@fs.fed.us. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format. For electronically-mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Send written comments to:

Rich Kehr, District Ranger
Glacier Loon Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Project
Swan Lake Ranger District
200 Ranger Station Road
Bigfork, MT 59911

(Office hours are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays if submitting hand delivered or oral comments. Comments can be faxed to 406-837-7503)

I appreciate your time and interest as well as any comments you have already provided on the Glacier Loon Project. If you have any questions concerning this project, please feel free to contact me or Joleen Dunham at the Swan Lake Ranger District, or by calling (406) 837-7500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard H. Kehr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

RICHARD H. KEHR
District Ranger

Enclosure: Glacier Loon Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Environmental Assessment