

Annual Report on the Use of Categorical Exclusions Under Section 605, Wildfire Resilience Projects (P.L. 115–141)

April 9, 2019

Introduction

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (2018 Omnibus Act) (P.L. 115–141) amended the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) by adding Section 605, which established a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for authorized hazardous fuels reduction projects as defined in HFRA Title I. Use of the CE is limited to areas designated under Section 602 of HFRA as of enactment of the 2018 Omnibus Bill, on March 23, 2018, and treatment can occur on up to 3,000 acres.

The 2018 Omnibus Act directs the Secretary to prepare an annual report on the use of CEs under Section 605 that includes a description of all acres, or other appropriate unit, treated through projects carried out under this section: *“Wildfire Resilience Projects (Sec. 202).—The Secretary shall prepare an annual report on the use of categorical exclusions under this section that includes a description of all acres (or other appropriate unit) treated through projects carried out under this section. Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this section, and each year thereafter, the Secretary shall submit the reports required under paragraph (1) to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate; the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate; the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives; the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and the Government Accountability Office.”* (2018 Omnibus Act).

Scoping and Criteria for Project Selection

An authorized hazardous fuels reduction project is defined by Title I of HFRA. Projects being developed utilizing the Section 605 CE must meet the established definition and parameters in Title I as well as other limiting factors specifically identified in HFRA Section 605. All authorized hazardous fuels reduction projects being analyzed through the Section 605 CE shall:

- be limited to 3,000 acres of treatment and be located with an area designated under HFRA Section 602; and
- be prioritized within the wildland-urban interface, or if outside of the wildland-urban interface, must be limited to areas within Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III that contain very high wildfire hazard potential.

A project using the Section 605 CE is a project to carry out forest restoration treatments that:

- maximize the retention of old-growth and large trees, as appropriate for the forest type, to the extent that the trees promote stands that are resilient to insects and disease and reduce the risk, or extent of, or increase the resilience to wildfires;
- considers the best available scientific information to maintain or restore the ecological integrity, including maintaining or restoring structure, function, composition, and connectivity; and
- is developed and implemented through a collaborative process.

Use of the Section 605 Categorical Exclusion

All of the projects in Tables A and B below were selected because they met the Title I criteria. Six of nine Forest Service regions are using the Section 605 CE for authorized hazardous fuels reduction projects. As of March 27, 2019:

- Three projects have signed a decision memo.
- Thirteen projects are currently in-progress on their environmental analysis.
- The 16 completed/in-progress projects span 6 regions and 7 states.

Table A: Section 605 Categorical Exclusions Completed

Decision Memo Issued (as of March 27, 2019)			
FS Region	Forest/State	Project Title	Proposed Treatments in Decision Memo
1	Lolo/MT	Pattee Canyon Maintenance Project	Hand thinning, girdling, hand piling, pile burning, underburning on 1,725 acres
1	Nez Perce-Clearwater/ID	Red Moose Divide Salvage Project	Regeneration harvest 890 acres; roadside salvage 773 acres; site prep and reforestation 1,266 acres
5	Eldorado/CA	General Sherman Wildfire Resilience Project	Fuels reduction treatments on approximately 400 acres through mastication and hand thinning

Table B: Section 605 Categorical Exclusions In-Progress

Projects In-Progress (as of March 27, 2019)			
FS Region	Forest/State	Project Title	Proposed Treatments in Scoping Document
1	Kootenai/MT	Hoodoo Vegetation Management Project	684 acres of commercial thin, 37 acres clearcutting, 1,209 acres precommercial thin
1	Nez Perce-Clearwater/ID	Parachute Fuels	Create mosaic of fuel breaks through intermediate and regeneration harvest, hand thinning, hand and mechanical piling, underburning, and pile burning on 90 acres
1	Nez Perce-Clearwater/ID	Florence Fuels Project	970 acres hazardous fuels reduction and fuel breaks, commercial harvest, prescribed burning, hand thinning
2	Arapaho and Roosevelt/CO	Jacks Gulch	Broadcast burning and vegetation treatments
2	Pike and San	Methodist	Conifer and Pinyon-Juniper

	Isabel and Cimarron and Comanche/CO	Mountain Vegetation Treatment	Thinning; Conifer Removal; Shrub Enhancement
3	Cibola/NM	Capilla Fuels Reduction and Forest Restoration Project	Thinning, hazard tree removal, prescribed fire
3	Apache-Sitgreaves/AZ	Okky Flat Farm Bill Insect and Disease	Up to 3,000 acres mechanical thinning
4	Boise/ID	Boise Ridge Forest Health Project	Up to 3,000 acres of treatment including intermediate and regeneration harvest, non-commercial thinning, prescribed burning, and reforestation
4	Boise/ID	Sinker Creek Project	Up to 3,000 acres of treatment including intermediate and regeneration harvest, non-commercial thinning, prescribed burning, and reforestation
4	Boise/ID	West Side Divide – Cottonwood	Treatment on 1,864 acres – commercial, non-commercial, mixed, and other products
4	Boise/ID	West Side Divide – Ola Summit	Treatment on 2,640 acres – commercial, non-commercial, and mixed
4	Boise/ID	West Side Divide – Tripod	Treatment on 2,189 acres – commercial, non-commercial, and other products
8	NFs in Alabama/AL	Byler Road Hazard Tree Mitigation Project	Removal of snags created by Southern Pine Beetle. Cut and mulch snags identified to reduce hazardous fuels and promote safety

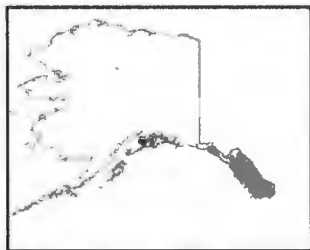
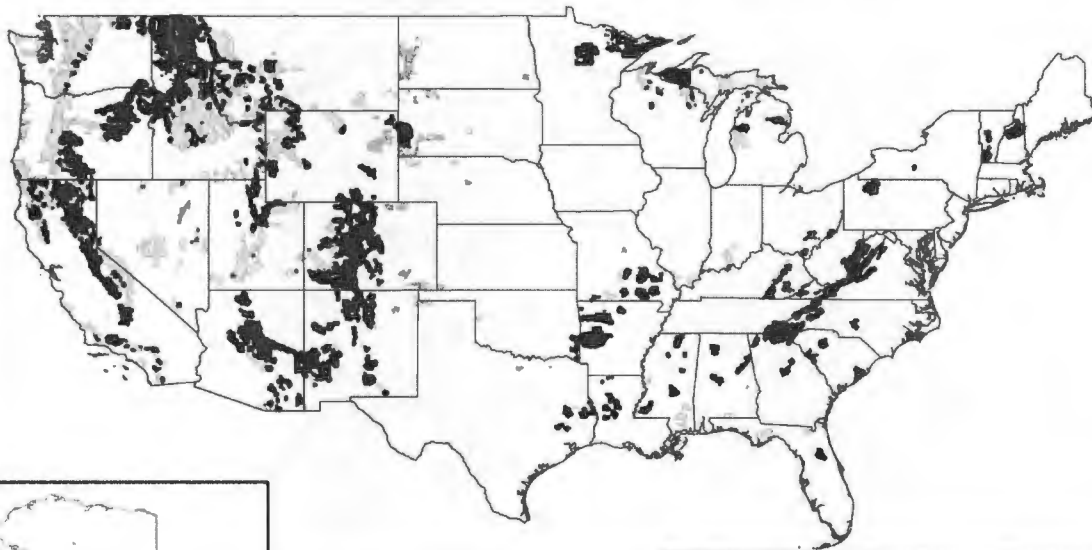
Future Projects

New projects will be included in future reports to Congress once they are identified as initiated and accepted. We anticipate use of the CE to increase over time, similar to when the Agency was first provided the Section 603 CE under the HRFA.

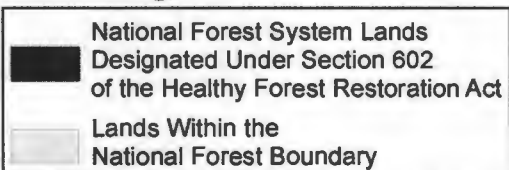
The following map identifies those areas designated under Section 602 prior to March 23, 2018. The Section 605 CE may be used in any of these designated areas:



National Forest System Lands Designated Under Section 602 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act



Data displayed are for informational purposes only and depict designations made under section 602 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. Please contact Sunny Ng for details: sunnywng@fs.fed.us



Data valid February 1, 2018.

Map created by USFS Geospatial Technology and Applications Center on: 2/21/2018