



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Gallatin National Forest

Hebgen Lake Ranger District
P.O. Box 520
West Yellowstone, MT 59758
Phone: 406-823-6961
Fax: 406-823-6990

File Code: 1950/2430/5100

Date: July 9, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

I am writing to 1) invite your comments on two hazardous fuels reduction projects; and 2) offer you the opportunity to receive mailings on future projects of interest to you.

HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS

The Hebgen Lake Ranger District of the Gallatin National Forest has identified the following opportunities to address forest health issues. Agency and handbook references are listed for each project proposal.

To assist our environmental analysis, this Scoping Document is intended for interested and affected persons, agencies, and organizations to identify concerns and provide comments on the project proposals.

Nine Quarter Fuels Reduction Project: This hazardous fuels reduction project is located in the area of the Nine Quarter Circle Ranch. The project area is located approximately 15 miles south of Big Sky, MT and 33 miles northwest of West Yellowstone, MT. The legal description is Sections 12 and 13, T9S, R3E P.M; and Sections 7 and 18, T9S, R4E, P.M. The primary objective is to create a safer environment for individuals and the surrounding communities by reducing the risk of high-intensity wildland fire. The Forest Service proposes to commercially and non-commercially thin lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Douglas-fir on approximately 50 acres. Fuels removal could utilize tractors, helicopters, and hand crews. No new road construction is needed. Project implementation may begin in the winter of 2004. (Interim Directive (ID) 1909.15-2003-2 to USDA Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category 10).

Elkhorn Fuels Reduction Project: This hazardous fuels reduction project is located in the area of the Elkhorn and Covered Wagon Ranches. This area is approximately 15 miles south of Big Sky, MT and 30 miles northwest of West Yellowstone, MT. The legal description is Sections 2, 11, 12, 13, and 14, T9S, R4E, P.M. The primary objective is to create a safer environment for individuals and the surrounding communities by reducing the risk of high-intensity wildland fire. The Forest Service proposes to commercially and non-commercially thin lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Douglas-fir on approximately 300 acres. Fuels removal could utilize tractors and hand crews. No new road construction is needed. Project implementation may begin in the winter of 2004. (Interim Directive (ID) 1909.15-2003-2 to USDA Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category 10).

To address forest health issues on federal lands, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of the Interior (DOI) have provided notice of revised procedures for implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. The revised procedures establish five new Categorical Exclusions (CEs) for a variety



of activities. Categorical exclusions are categories of actions, which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. Projects that are potentially eligible under these categories may be implemented after environmental review by a team of interdisciplinary specialists. If the associated environmental analysis concludes that the project meets the CE regulations, the project may proceed with a signed Decision Memo. Projects approved under these categories are not appealable under the 36 CFR 215 regulations.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Parts 215 or 217 (if applicable). Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 15 days.

Your comments are invited on these proposals. Please submit your concerns, comments, or desire to be kept informed by **August 2, 2004** in order that they may be considered in project analysis. Respondents will be added to the project mailing list and kept informed on the project status. Please address your comments to William R. Queen, District Ranger, Hebgen Lake Ranger District, Box 520, West Yellowstone, MT. 59758. Maps of the proposed project areas can be viewed at the Hebgen Lake Ranger Station in West Yellowstone or on the internet at www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin/. For further information please contact Kevin Laves, at the Hebgen Lake Ranger District at (406) 823-6969 or 823-6961.

PROJECTS MAILING LIST

In the past, you have requested that the Gallatin National Forest send you information on proposed projects on the Hebgen Lake Ranger District. Some of you have changed addresses or are interested in more or fewer project types. Therefore, we are sending you this project interest form for you to indicate the types of projects you would like to receive information about. Please indicate your interest on the enclosed form and return the form to the Hebgen Lake Ranger District, PO Box 520, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, Attention: Mailing List **08/04**.

If we do not receive the interest form from you, you will not receive future mailings. For further information please contact Vickie Barta, at the Hebgen Lake Ranger District at (406) 823-6964.

Sincerely,

/s/William R. Queen
WILLIAM R. QUEEN
District Ranger

**PROJECT INTEREST FORM
HEBGEN LAKE RANGER DISTRICT**

My contact information

_____	_____
First Name	Last Name

Box or Street Address	

_____	_____
City	State

_____	_____
Zip Code	Phone (optional)

I am interested in receiving information about these Forest activities on the Hebgen Lake Ranger District.

- Commercial Firewood Sales
 - Commercial Post and Pole Sales
 - Commercial Timber Sales
 - Fuels Management (commercial thinning and prescribed fire)
 - Range Management
 - Recreation Management
 - Road Management
 - Trail Management
 - Other _____
- ? I'm interested in receiving the Gallatin National Forest Proposed Project Quarterly