



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Black Hills
National
Forest

Mystic Ranger District
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File Code: 1950 Prairie Project Area

Date: November 6, 2003

Greetings from your Black Hills National Forest:

Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) personnel recently completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Prairie Project Area. The project area includes approximately 29,000 acres of National Forest System lands in the lower Rapid Creek area located immediately west of Rapid City, in an area referred to as wildland-urban interface.

The project area is dominated by dense stands of ponderosa pine trees intermixed with private (mostly developed) lands. The area has a high potential for large-scale wildfire. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) presented several alternative approaches for reducing the potential of catastrophic crown fires within this populated area.

I have enclosed a copy of the Prairie Project Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD). Public comments on the DEIS did not generate the need for reanalysis or require major substantive changes in the document. Therefore, it was determined that the DEIS need not be rewritten. Instead the FEIS has been prepared to update, correct, and clarify information in the DEIS. The FEIS incorporates the DEIS in accordance with 40 CFR 1500.4(m) and 40 CFR 1503.4(c). The DEIS and FEIS are collectively considered the Prairie Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The FEIS contains a section of errata changes to the DEIS, a listing of public comments on the DEIS with associated agency responses, and Appendices containing an updated index, and a summary of the Prairie Project Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation (BA/BE).

The Record of Decision (ROD) documents the decision and rationale for the decision. The ROD modifies Alternative C, as initially described in the DEIS, to address certain concerns relating to vegetation treatment and travel management. Modifications to the selected Alternative C are relatively minor in scope, and fall within the range of alternatives analyzed and associated effects disclosed in the EIS.

Copies of the DEIS, FEIS and ROD can be obtained at the Mystic Ranger District Office in Rapid City, South Dakota or the Black Hills National Forest Office in Custer, South Dakota. The documents are also available on the BHNF web site at www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.14. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, South Dakota. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.



For further information contact myself, Phill Grumstrup or Katie Van Alstyne of my staff at the Mystic Ranger District Office in Rapid City, South Dakota at 605-342-3132.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert J. Thompson

ROBERT J. THOMPSON
District Ranger

Enclosure:
Prairie Project Area (Lower Rapid Creek Area) FEIS and ROD