



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Wind River  
Ranger  
District

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File Code: 1950

Date: April 26, 2004

## Scoping Statement Mud Butte Fuels Reduction Project

USDA Forest Service  
Shoshone National Forest  
South Zone/Wind River Ranger District  
Fremont County, Wyoming

### Introduction

The Shoshone National Forest is proposing a fuels management project along Middle Fork Creek of the Long Creek drainage to address concerns identified by the District's interdisciplinary team (IDT) related to vegetative condition, fuel loading and potential wildfire severity. The project would include the use of prescribed fire treatment in approximately 600 acres of sagebrush/grass habitat.

The proposed action is located approximately 12 miles northwest of Dubois, along Middle Fork Creek, T43N, R108W, portions of Sections 29 and 30 and T43N, R109W, portions of Section 24 and 25. (See Maps 1 & 2)

### Proposed Action

The proposed action is designed to reintroduce fire into sagebrush/grass. The objective is a mosaic burn across the open sagebrush/grass areas, to include open pockets within the adjacent timber stands. Burning of actual timbered stands is not proposed. Potential benefits of the proposal include improved vegetative condition class and reduced sagebrush and other conifer fuels in the open areas. Additional benefits of the project would include improved range vegetation for cattle and wildlife grazing and reduced potential for erratic wildfire behavior. Implementation could be during any season.

The proposed action is considered consistent with the Shoshone Forest Plan, as amended. The action is located in the Dunoir and Doby Cliff Analysis Areas (pages J-273 thru 276) and in Management Direction Area 5A (Big Game Winter Range in Non-forested Areas, pages III-158 thru 162) and 7E (Wood-fiber Production and Utilization, pages III-173 thru 180).

### Purpose and Need

**Purpose for the Action.** The primary purpose for the proposed action is to reintroduce fire as a management tool into the ecosystem. An emphasis would be given to priority areas to reduce wildfire hazards to life and property, to firefighters, and to reduce fire suppression costs by means of vegetation and fuels treatments. All actions would be taken in an effort not to adversely affect other resources within or near the treatment areas.



**Need for the Action.** The Forest Plan, Chapter III, includes direction for management of the Forest. The need for action is derived from comparing relevant Forest Plan direction/desired conditions to the existing conditions in the analysis area. At this time, comparisons of existing and desired conditions show where a need or opportunity for action exists. Existing fuel level within the sagebrush/grass areas is severe and could lead to extensive ecosystem damage, increased suppression cost and reduced firefighter safety caused by intense wildfire effect and behavior. The proposed action was developed in response to that management need and opportunity.

## **Scoping and Public Involvement**

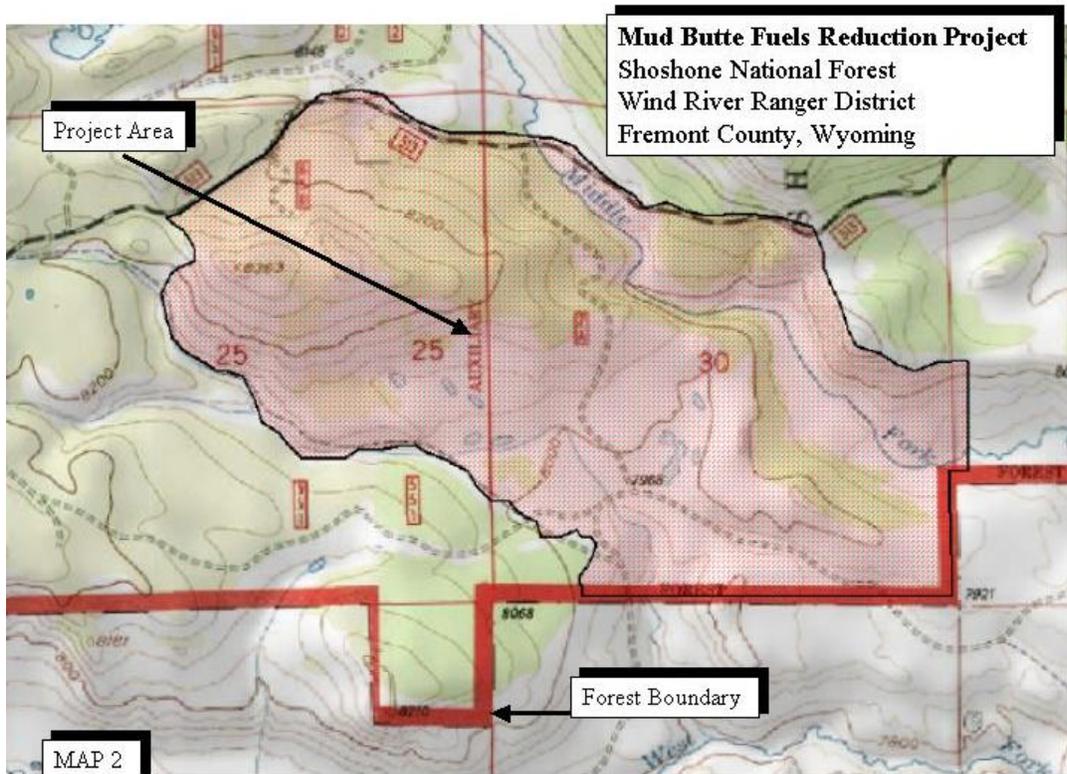
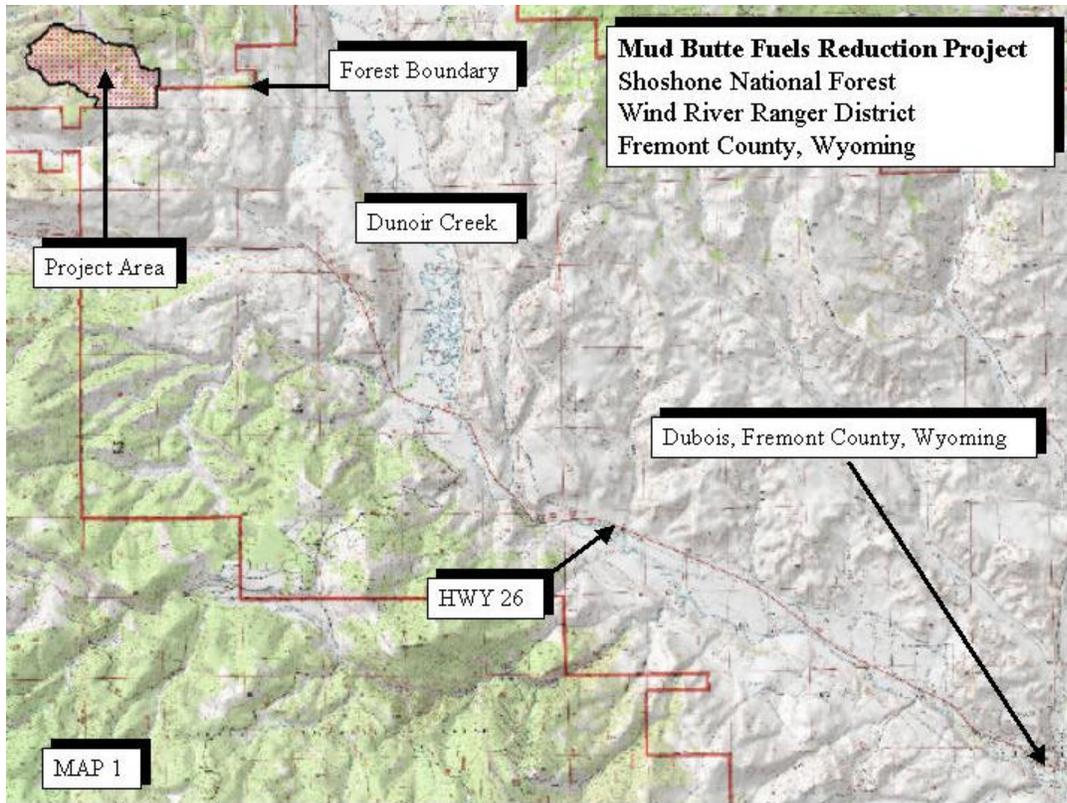
This Scoping Notice is provided to encourage public participation in the development of this proposed action. Scoping is to determine the scope of the issues to be addressed and to identify issues and concerns relative to the proposed action. This is an opportunity for your involvement early in the planning process; your comments and suggestions are needed and encouraged. Alternatives to the proposed action will be determined and environmental consequences analyzed during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process initiated by this Scoping Notice. We are asking for comments, alternatives to the proposed action and any information you may want us to consider during planning and analysis. Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal, and will be available for public inspection.

The IDT, consisting of resource specialists conducted an initial review of the proposal and identified that the project's scope is such that the project could be evaluated pursuant to Categorical Exclusion 31.2(6) (Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56). Based on comments from the public, state and/or Federal agencies, the IDT may include possible project design/mitigation measures, consider other alternatives to the proposed action and will reassess the appropriate level of documentation needed under the National Environmental Policy Act.

## **Contact**

The public is provided this opportunity to identify and submit issues and concerns they feel the Forest Service should address related to this project. If you feel you have information pertinent and specifically related to the proposed action, we welcome your participation during this 30-day public comment period. Questions related to the proposed action should be directed to Sean Johnson, Acting Fire Management Officer, telephone (307) 455-2466, or email at [sdjohnson01@fs.fed.us](mailto:sdjohnson01@fs.fed.us). Your comments will be most helpful if received in writing **no later than May 30, 2004**. Written comments can be mailed to: Mark King, NEPA Coordinator, South Zone/Washakie Ranger District, 333 E. Main Street, Lander, WY 82520, email at [comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-windriver@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-windriver@fs.fed.us) (format as; .rtf, .pdf or .doc), or faxed to (307) 578-1204 ATTN: Mark King. Please reference "Mud Butte Project" in the subject line of your response.

/s/ Rick Metzger  
Rick Metzger  
District Ranger  
Wind River Ranger District



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