



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White River
National
Forest

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File Code: 1950-3
Date: October 5, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

During scoping, you indicated an interest in the Vail Valley Forest Health project or provided comments or input into the analysis. You requested to be informed of the availability of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and, in an effort to save paper, agreed to review it in a publicly available location. The Draft EIS for the Vail Valley Forest Health project is available for your review and comment on the White River National Forest website at: www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver, or at the following locations:

U.S. Forest Service
Holy Cross Ranger District
24747 US Hwy 24
Minturn, Colorado

U.S. Forest Service
Supervisor's Office
900 Grand Ave.
Glenwood Springs, CO

Vail Library
292 West Meadow Drive
Vail, CO

Minturn Public Library
302 Pine Street
Minturn, CO

Avon Public Library
200 Benchmark Road
Avon, CO

The proposed Vail Valley Forest Health Project area covers approximately 72,000 acres along the I-70 corridor between Vail Pass and Avon on the White River National Forest. Don Carroll, Acting Forest Supervisor for the White River National Forest, is the Responsible Official for this project.

Four alternatives were analyzed in the draft EIS, including the no action alternative. These alternatives are briefly described below.



ALTERNATIVE A - NO ACTION

Current conditions would change over time under the No Action alternative as natural processes continue to alter the Forest, however, no vegetation management activities would be used to change the current conditions. Ongoing activities such as recreation, fire suppression, and road maintenance would continue.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B consists of lodgepole pine treatment units, aspen treatment units, and fuels treatment units. In all, approximately 3,000 acres of National Forest administered lands would be treated. Forest Service decisions related to the proposed Vail Valley Forest Health Project are limited to National Forest administered lands.

- South of the I-70 corridor, treatments in lodgepole pine and aspen would affect about 1,400 acres. An estimated 700 acres of lodgepole pine near Minturn would be thinned, patch cut, sanitized, or salvaged. About 700 acres of aspen in several areas would be enhanced by patch cuts, perimeter treatments, and prescribed burning.
- North of the I-70 corridor, about 1,600 acres of shrublands, grasslands, and aspen would be managed to move them toward their historic range of variability. Mechanical vegetation treatments and prescribed fire would be used to create a mosaic of age and structural classes that would reduce the intensity and severity of wildland fires in the wildland urban interface.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C would emphasize the reduction of health and safety risks from smoke and the reduction of conflicts with recreation use on Stone Creek, Pitkin Creek, and Bighorn Creek trails while improving forest health and reducing hazardous fuels. In all, 2,500 acres of National Forest administered lands would be treated.

A cable logging system would be used to remove lodgepole pine from above in Units 101 and 102, so that the Stone Creek Trail (FDT 2349) would not be used to haul timber. No prescribed broadcast burning would occur under this alternative. Mechanical treatments and pile burning would be used in treatment units outside designated wilderness to reduce hazardous fuels. No fuels treatments would occur within the Eagles Nest Wilderness. Other components of Alternative C would be the same as Alternative B.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D would emphasize the reduction of visual effects on roadless area characteristics that are associated with the cutting of trees while improving forest health and reducing hazardous fuels. In all, 2,200 acres of National Forest administered lands would be treated.

Under Alternative D, no cutting of trees in inventoried roadless areas would occur beyond a 200-foot buffer along the boundary between National Forest administered lands

and private lands. Enhancement of aspen stands that provide natural fuelbreaks near the town of Vail would not be very extensive. Other components of Alternative D would be the same as Alternative B.

As the Responsible Official, I am considering selecting Alternative B based on the analysis presented in the Draft EIS. However, because of recreational concerns, I am also considering selecting the portion of Alternative C that would provide for a cable logging system to remove lodgepole pine in Units 101 and 102, so that the Stone Creek Trail (FDT 2349) would not be used to haul timber.

The Environmental Protection Agency is *planning* to publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Vail Valley Forest Health Draft EIS in the Federal Register on October 15, 2004. Written, facsimile, oral, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for forty-five (45) days following the date of publication. The publication date of the NOA in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for a proposed action documented in a draft EIS. Those wishing to comment should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

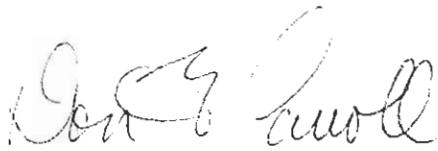
Written comments must be submitted to: Don Carroll, Acting Forest Supervisor, c/o Peech Keller, US Forest Service, P O Box 620, Silverthorne, CO 80498. Hand-delivered comments may be submitted at the Forest Supervisor's Office or the Holy Cross Ranger District between the hours of 8:00-5:00, Mon-Fri, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided during normal business hours via telephone (970) 468-5400, or in person, or at an official agency function that is designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to: comments-rocky-mountain-white-river-holy-cross@fs.fed.us. For appeal eligibility, comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide substantive comments during this period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations 36 CFR 215. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

1. Name and address
2. Title of the proposed action
3. Specific substantive comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision.
4. Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments is necessary for appeal eligibility.
5. For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
6. Individual members of organizations must submit their own substantive comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual; comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

To reduce printing and mailing costs, please let us know if you want a copy of the Final EIS or Record of Decision by filling out the enclosed form and returning it to Peech Keller, US Forest Service, PO Box 620, Silverthorne, CO 80498. Copies of the Final EIS and ROD will be available for review at public libraries in Eagle County, at the White River Forest Supervisor's Office and at the Holy Cross Ranger District Office. They will also be available on the Forest Service Internet at: www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don G. Carroll". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

DON G. CARROLL
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

CK/ck

VAIL VALLEY FOREST HEALTH PROJECT

Name _____

Address _____

____ Please send me a hard copy of the entire Vail Valley Forest Health Project Final EIS (anticipated to be approximately 400 pages) and Record of Decision (ROD) (anticipated to be approximately 50 pages)

____ Please send me the Vail Valley Forest Health Project Final EIS and ROD on a CD (pdf)

____ I would like to be informed of the availability of the Vail Valley Forest Health Project Record of Decision and Final EIS and, in an effort to save paper and mailing costs, agree to review it in a publicly available location or on the Internet.

____ I wish to be removed from your mailing list.

Enclosure