



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Bridger-Teton
National Forest
Greys River District

125 Washington Street
PO Box 339
Afton, WY 83110

File Code: 1950/5150

Date: January 15, 2004

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Dear Interested Citizen,

Thank you for your interest and participation in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. We are beginning the formal planning process for the Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface Project and would like your ideas. This process of requesting your input is known as scoping. We have prepared an initial proposal formally known as a 'proposed action.' The proposed action is described in brief below and gives an indication of the kinds of work we would undertake.

Background Information:

The Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface project is proposed in response to elements of the National Fire Plan and the President's Healthy Forest Initiative which address hazardous fuels reduction and reduced risk from wildfire to people and property. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is working in conjunction with the State of Wyoming Forestry Department and the Local Emergency Planning Committee of North Lincoln County to provide appropriate forest fuel treatments that would help to reduce the risks to firefighter and public safety, as well as property and natural resources, that can result from wildfires along the Star Valley front. Desired Future Conditions (DFC) for the project as identified in the Forest Plan are DFC 4 and DFC 12. DFC 4 identifies emphasis areas for municipal water supply while DFC 12 emphasizes areas managed for high quality wildlife habitat and escape cover, big game hunting opportunities, and dispersed recreation activities. Historic conditions in the area had a more open forest with fewer large diameter conifer trees, and larger stands of aspen which helped to reduce catastrophic wildfire potential and severity.

Purpose and Need:

The Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface project has been identified as an opportunity to reduce fuel buildup on forest lands adjacent to private lands. Treatment in these areas would allow firefighters to more safely access and suppress wildfires under normal summer burning conditions. In order to best protect private lands and improvements, similar treatments are needed on adjacent private lands. An increase in bark beetle activity also indicates that conifer stands are in a stressed condition. This suggests that the existing stands are susceptible to future beetle activity, related mortality and increased fire behavior.

We have identified several objectives we would like to meet. Specifically, there is a need to:

- Reduce the risks to firefighter and public safety, as well as to property and natural resources
- Restore and maintain conditions that represent a properly functioning ecosystem
- Reduce risks of catastrophic wildfire and insect infestation on forest lands and adjacent private lands
- Reduce conifer encroachment on aspen stands, native grass and sagebrush meadows
- Reduce the density of understory conifers within forested stands

Proposed Action:

In order to achieve these objectives, we are proposing the following projects on National Forest System Lands in the Star Valley area (see attached maps):

1. Slashing (cutting down) of small diameter (.5-8 inches in diameter) conifer, aspen and understory brush.
2. Limbing (removal) of lower branches on large diameter trees
3. Cutting of dead trees found in the stands. The intent of the cutting is to remove conifer trees that have been killed by insect attack in order to decrease dead fuel loading that could effect fire behavior within the stand.
4. Thinning in stands to remove live trees that have been attacked by bark beetles and removal of up to 30% of the remaining trees in the stand in order to slow bark beetle spread and aid in reducing future fire severity, improving the overall stand health and resistance to future beetle damage.
5. Hand piling or removal of pre-existing dead wood and cut limbs and trees, followed by burning of hand piles. In some areas, hand piling of fine fuels (less than 4 inches in diameter) may occur.
6. Pile burning would be initiated when the piled fuels are dry and weather conditions provide for safe ignition.

The Star Valley Ranch project area includes 8 treatment units, totaling approximately 125 acres, within Township 35 North, Range 118 West, Sections 19, 29, 30, 32, 33. The treatment units follow the Forest boundary adjacent to privately owned property within the community of Star Valley Ranch. In some cases privately owned structures are within a few feet of the Forest boundary. A “shaded fuel break” treatment which removes or thins out smaller diameter trees and understory brush but leaves most of the larger diameter trees would be implemented in areas that fall within 200-300 feet of the Forest boundary.

Table 1. Star Valley Ranch

Unit Number	Unit Acres	Fuels Treatment (Slashing needed prior to Prescribed burning)
1	13	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
2	15	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Thinning of Conifer Trees 8-24" DBH, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
3	20	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
4	22	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
5	22	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
6	18	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
7	10	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
8	5	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
<i>Implementation of Treatment(s)</i>	—	Beginning year 2004
TOTAL TREATMENTS	8 Units	125 acres

The Bedford project area has 2 treatment units, totaling approximately 50 acres, within Township 34 North, Range 118 West, Sections 15, 16, and 27. Due to infestation by insects, a high percentage of dead and dying trees are present in the area. The majority of this treatment would take place within 200-300 feet of the Forest boundary; some areas beyond the 300 feet that contain insect damaged and killed trees would also be treated. Trees showing bark beetle damage would be cut and removed using mechanical methods. Removal of beetle damaged trees would be done using a small timber sale with individual trees marked. The forest remaining after treatments would include fewer trees than currently exist but should more closely resemble historic conditions. The healthiest trees of various species and size would be retained to provide for wildlife habitat and maintain existing diversity.

Table 2. Bedford

Unit Number	Unit Acres	Fuels Treatment (Slashing needed prior to Prescribed burning)
9	25	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Thinning of Conifer Trees 8-24" DBH, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
10	25	Slashing, Limbing, Cutting of Dead Trees, Thinning of Conifer Trees 8-24" DBH, Hand Piling, Pile Burning
<i>Implementation of Treatment(s)</i>	—	Beginning year 2004
TOTAL TREATMENTS	2 Units	50 acres

Initial Issues:

The Forest Service has identified the following issues. Your comments are especially valuable because they help us determine which of these issues need detailed analysis and if additional issues exist related to the proposed action.

- Effect this project may have on air quality and smoke related health issues in neighboring communities
- Effect this project may have on elk winter range
- Effect this project may have on soil and watershed resources related to the municipal water supply
- Effect this project may have on visual quality during pile burning activities

Decision to be Made :

As the Greys River District Ranger, I will decide whether or not to implement the proposed action or another alternative developed by the Forest Service in response to specific resource issues. I may choose one of the alternatives or may select components from among the proposed action and alternatives. I may also select the No Action alternative, resulting in continuation of current management practices. Acreage and the hazardous fuel reduction aspects of this project make it probable that the project would meet the criteria for a category 10 Categorical Exclusion under NEPA requirements. Category 10 is referenced in USDA Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2 and has a goal to better protect lives, communities, and ecosystems from the risk of high-intensity wildland fire.

How to Get Involved:

I would like your ideas about the fuel treatment projects, specifically those ideas that would help in decision making. Your comments would be most effective if I receive them no later than **February 16, 2004**. There will be additional opportunities to be involved throughout the planning process and we are available for group meetings and presentations. The process we follow is best implemented when your

ideas tell us what your best solution might be and when you help us develop issues that our resource specialists will analyze. Contact information is at the end of this letter.

Beginning **Wednesday January 15th, 2004** you can view maps of the proposed actions at the Greys River and Kemmerer Ranger District Offices of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Maps and this scoping letter will also be available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/btnf/projects/>. Getting your comments to us early helps us to incorporate your ideas.

Please send your written input to:

Email – mailroom_r4_bridger_teton@fs.fed.us –subject: **Star Valley WUI**

Mail - Kemmerer Ranger District
PO Box 31 **ATTN: Star Valley WUI**
Kemmerer, WY 83101

Fax - (307) 828-5135 **ATTN: Star Valley WUI**

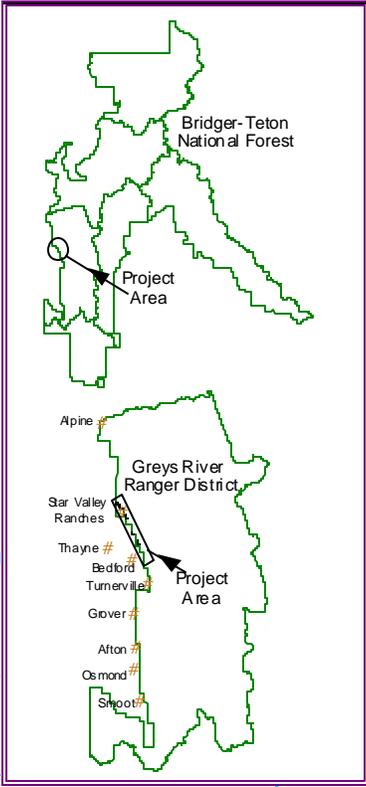
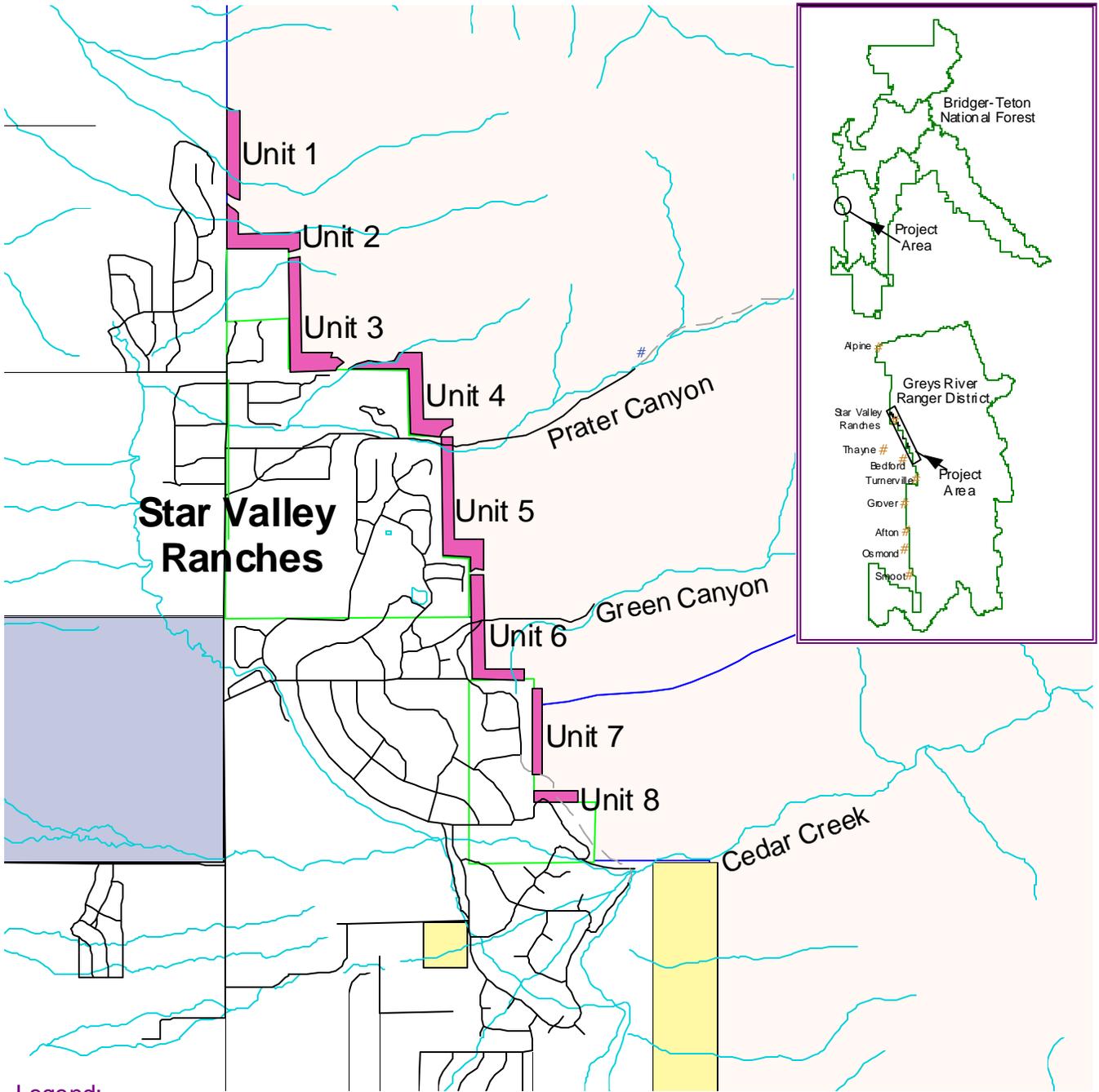
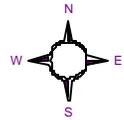
Your comments, including your name and address, will be considered part of the public record on the proposed actions and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered regarding these projects. If you need more information on submitting comments anonymously, please contact us or refer to 36 CFR 215 and 7 CFR 1.27(d).

If you would like to be included on a Star Valley WUI project mailing list, please let us know. Persons not responding to this mailing will not receive further information regarding this particular project. If you wish to participate in this environmental analysis or to be kept informed of the process but are unable to respond to this scoping document, please contact us at the address above. If you have an email where you can be reached, we prefer to use that format whenever possible. For any other questions, contact Fire Management Personnel at 307-877-4415.

Sincerely,

CHARLENE BUCHA GENTRY
Greys River District Ranger

Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface



Legend:

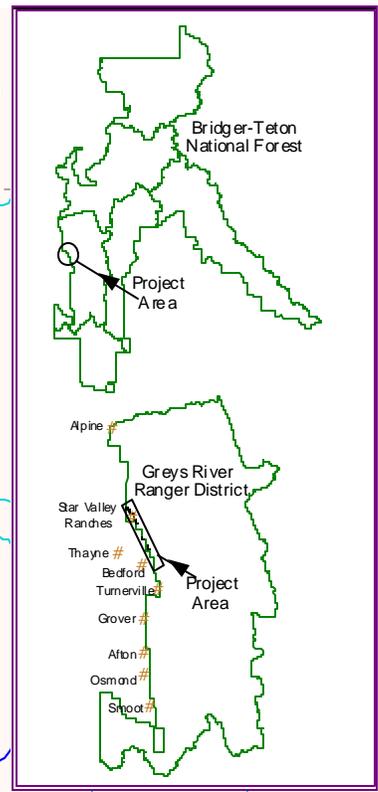
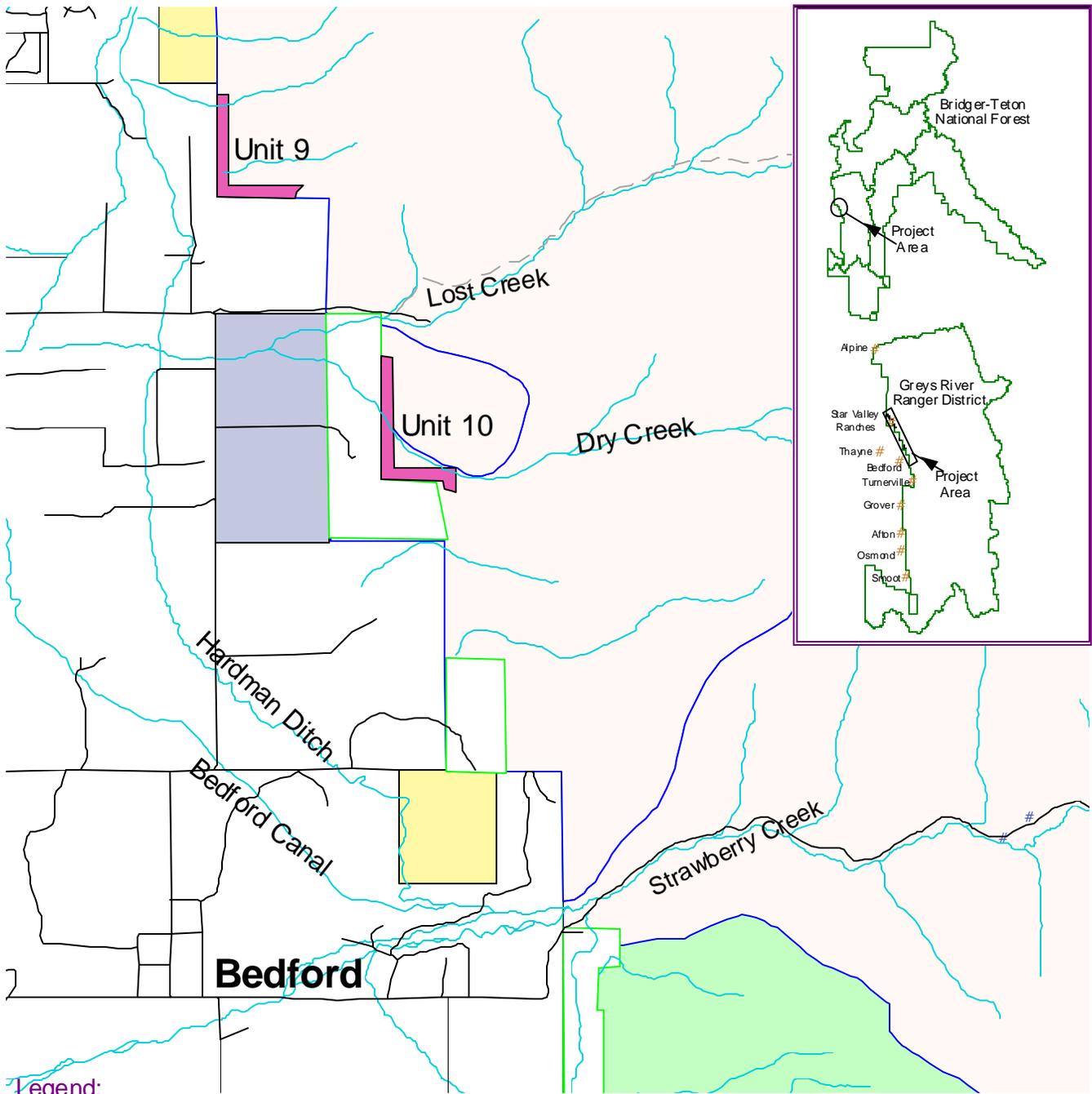
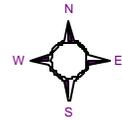
- Road Systems
 - ROAD
 - TRAIL
- Water Courses
- Wyndd_habitat
- Proposed Treatment Areas
- Privately Owned Land
- State Public Use Land
- Bureau of Land Management Land
- Desired Future Condition 4
- Desired Future Condition 12
- Bridger-Teton National Forest



Township 35 North
Range 118 West

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Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface



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