



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Pinedale Ranger
District

29 Fremont Lake Rd.
P.O. Box 220
Pinedale, Wy. 82941

File Code: 1950

Date: October 12, 2004

Dear Interested Public:

The Pinedale Ranger District, of the Bridger-Teton National Forest, is proposing to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement that analyses the effects of a number of actions within the Moose-Gypsum Project Area. Details about the proposed actions are included in the enclosed Scoping Document.

This document is the first stage of the environmental analysis process. The objective of this part of the process is to encourage the public to participate in the process by submitting comments. These comments will assist in the identification of issues and concerns, and ultimately, will contribute to the formulation of alternatives that will be described and used in the environmental analysis process.

Details of how and when to submit comments are included in the enclosed Scoping Document. If you have questions about the proposal please contact Craig Trulock at the Pinedale Ranger District Office 307-367-4326.

Sincerely,

CRAIG TRULOCK
District Ranger



Caring for the Land and Serving People

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Scoping Notice Moose-Gypsum Project

PUBLIC SCOPING NOTICE

MOOSE-GYPSUM PROJECT AN INTEGRATED RESOURCE PROJECT WITHIN THE UPPER GREEN RIVER WATERSHED

PINEDALE RANGER DISTRICT BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST

INTRODUCTION

The Upper Green River Watershed is approximately 25 miles north of Pinedale, Wyoming, in the Green River drainage, on the west slope of the Wind River Range. The project area within the Upper Green River Watershed is approximately 110,397 acres of National Forest System lands administered by the Pinedale Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The watershed is comprised of the tributary creeks of the Upper Green River. These creeks include: Moose Creek, Gypsum Creek, Roaring Fork, Boulder Creek and Wagon Creek. The sub-watersheds of two of these creeks, Moose Creek and Gypsum Creek, are defined as the project area to be analyzed in this environmental impact statement. The legal description of the project area includes portions of T37N, R109W; T38N, R109/110W; T39N, R108/109/110W; T40N, R108/109/110W. (See Map A.)

The variety of projects proposed for analysis in this environmental process, represent the Pinedale Ranger District's prescriptive efforts to approach or attain the Desired Future Conditions for the natural resources described in the Bridger-Teton National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan and the Upper Green River Landscape Assessment.

PROPOSED ACTION

A Proposed Action is defined early in the planning process. It serves as a starting point for the Interdisciplinary Team and gives the public and agencies specific information on which to focus comments. The Proposed Action presented here will be updated using the comments received and field information gathered for these projects, and refined by preliminary analyses prior the the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Proposed Action is to complete a variety of projects within the project area to meet desired future conditions, goals and objectives identified for various resources. Vegetation treatments within the project area will move the vegetation to more historic species and age class compositions. These vegetation treatments will take place over an extend time period of up to 10 years.

The following are descriptions of the types of projects proposed for consideration:

1. **Conifer Vegetation Treatments.** Conifer treatments are to thin overstocked conifer forests while maintaining a forested appearance. The objective is to leave the healthiest trees

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of diverse species while reducing losses caused by insects and disease, and salvaging some wood products. These treatments will take place in older stands where tree growth is greatly reduced or where mortality of trees exceeds growth. The remaining trees will better utilize the nutritional resources available on the site and will provide habitat for forest-dependent species.

Additional treatments provide for regeneration of the declining Lodgepole pine, Whitebark pine and mixed conifer forests, and are designed to enhance age class diversity across the landscape. This treatment entails removing most merchantable trees through a commercial timber sale. Regeneration of healthy new stands will be ensured by planting with Lodgepole pine or Englemann spruce, or providing for natural regeneration. Individual and groups of healthy seed trees, snags, and groups of healthy non-merchantable trees will be left for seed, habitat, and diversity, where they are available. The age class diversity is important to reduce losses caused by insects and disease, and will reflect historically occurring conditions.

Treatments to be used include:

Shelterwood harvest. A treatment method where a portion of the overstory timber and all of the understory timber is left to provide protection for younger trees.

Overstory removal harvest. A treatment method where all mature trees (the “overstory”) are removed to allow younger trees to grow.

Clearcut harvest. A treatment method where all mature, immature and understory trees are removed at one time to provide for effective regeneration of lodgepole pine.

Group selection harvest. A treatment method where smaller openings are created within the timber stand to allow tree-regeneration, while maintaining substantial protection for the surrounding stand.

Salvage harvest. A treatment method to remove dead and down material from a timber stand. In some instances trees that are clearly dying may be included for removal to prevent further spread of insects or disease.

The tables below display the types of treatments that are proposed for each timber stand and the total acres of each type of treatment.

2. **Aspen Treatments.** A combination of mechanical treatments (which may include harvesting, pushing over, or other regeneration methods) and burning (broadcast and pile) of aspen and encroaching conifer to rejuvenate aspen growth and spread.
3. **Sage and Grass Treatments.** Primarily burning with some possible use of sagebrush herbicides. The objectives are wildlife habitat improvement, rangeland improvement, stopping the sage encroachment on the aspen, and reestablishment of diverse age

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structures for all vegetation species.

4. **Fuels Reduction Treatments.** A combination of mechanical treatments and burning (broadcast and pile) will be utilized to reduce fuel loadings around private lands. Down wood will be removed, understory ladder fuels will be pruned, and thinning of dense understory from below will open the understory to reduce the risk from crown fires.
5. **Watershed Improvements.** Forest roads will be improved to minimize existing sedimentation into adjacent streams, improve drainage, and reduce continual maintenance needs. This proposal will include culvert replacement and maintenance as part of timber harvest operations. Existing roads provide access to the treatment areas. Some additional skid roads may be needed to reach into the stands. After treatments are completed, these skid roads would be closed and obliterated and allowed to regenerate naturally or seeded, depending on the site.
6. **Travel Plan Updates.** A proposed travel plan update has been developed to address changing use patterns, maintenance concerns, and wilderness trespass and closure violations. This update opens roads previously closed, closes roads previously open, changes the end points on some existing road closures, and creates new OHV trail opportunities.
7. **Recreation Planning.** A dispersed recreation camping site plan has been developed to establish new campsites while closing some camp sites that are in sensitive areas, such as next to stream and river banks.

PINYON RIDGE PRESCRIBED BURN

Acres	Name	Treatment	Objectives
2466	Wilderness Unit	Burn	Fuels
5010	Mud Lake West	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife,Range
6133	Mud Lake East	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife,Range
7611	Roaring Fork	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife,Range

ASPEN TREATMENTS

Acres	Name	Treatment	Objectives
1960	Wagon Creek	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife
708	West Dollar Lake	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife
206	Red Cliff	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife
1014	Gypsum Creek	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife
629	Jim Creek	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife
1651	Pot Creek	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels,Wildlife

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FUELS / WILDLIFE TREATMENTS

Acres	Name	Treatment	Objectives
753	Kendall Warm Sp.	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels, Wildlife
573	E.Kendall G.Sta.	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels, Wildlife
1743	Dollar Lake	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels, Wildlife
2608	Little Sheep	Burn/Mechanical	Fuels, Wildlife

The treatments listed in the table above generally have objectives of 30 – 70% treatment within the units.

TREATMENT #	TYPE OF TREATMENT	STAND ACRES	TREATMENT ACRES
1	thinning	27	27
2	clearcut	7	7
3	thinning	30	30
4	thinning	31	31
5	fuel reduction	84	84
6	fuel reduction	29	29
7	fuel reduction	103	103
8	fuel reduction	111	111
9	clearcut/shelterwood	90	90
10	clearcut/shelterwood	16	16
11	clearcut/shelterwood	17	17
12	clearcut/shelterwood	34	34
13	fuel reduction	19	19
14	clearcut	24	20
15	clearcut	25	20
16	clearcut	32	20
17	clearcut/shelterwood	83	83
18	overstory removal	30	30
19	shelterwood	68	68
20	salvage	77	77
21	clearcut/shelterwood	42	42
22	overstory removal	18	18
23	shelterwood	86	86
24	thinning	88	88
25	overstory removal	17	17
26	shelterwood/overstory removal	115	115
27	shelterwood	32	32
28	shelterwood	31	31
29	clearcut	34	20
30	shelterwood/overstory	90	90

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	removal		
31	clearcut	16	16
32	shelterwood	23	23
33	salvage	34	34
34	salvage	88	88
35	salvage	9	9
36	clearcut/shelterwood	47	47
37	salvage	8	8
38	salvage	10	10
39	salvage	9	9
40	clearcut/shelterwood	79	79

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Moose-Gypsum Project is proposed at this time to respond to the goals and objectives of the Bridger-Teton Forest Plan, and to help move the project area toward the Desired Future Conditions described in that plan. The 1999 Upper Green Landscape Assessment (LSA) analyzed the integrated resource conditions in the project area. The LSA identified Desired Future Conditions for a variety of resources. In 2004, the Gypsum Watershed Analysis was completed, further clarifying the Desired Future Conditions for some resources. The Purpose and Need for this project has a number of components related to current resource conditions in need of improvement, and these include:

- Reintroduction of fire into the project area as a natural disturbance tool. Fire will be used to achieve a number of objectives ranging from habitat improvement, rangeland improvement, fuels reduction, and treatment of Aspen forests that are in predominantly old age classes; are being encroached upon by conifers; and are in declining growth and health. Fire will also be reintroduced into Wilderness settings to reinitiate natural disturbance patterns and establish a defensible boundary that will allow wildland fire use events to occur in the future.
- Improve the overall health of the watersheds within the project area through road surface improvement, culvert replacement, and watershed restoration activities.
- Modify the compositions of some vegetative species through a variety of vegetation treatments. These treatments will move the project area toward historic species composition to meet the Desired Future Conditions for the area. A majority of the conifer stands in the project area are in older age classes with declining growth and health, heavy fuel loads, and high tree densities for site conditions. Desired conditions would maintain a percentage of stands in seedling/sapling stages, maintain forest structure in snags, down logs and tree clumps, maintain lower tree densities in many areas, and promote natural regeneration.

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- Reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire by reducing hazardous fuel loading around private lands through vegetation management.
- Manage the timber resource for production of saw timber and other wood products from suitable timber lands made available for timber harvest, on an even-flow, long term, sustained yield basis, and in an economically efficient manner.
- Provide a diversity of opportunities for resource uses that contribute to the local and regional economies of northwest Wyoming.
- Recreation improvements and campsite rehabilitation project including development of a dispersed camping plan for the project area to protect sensitive areas such as stream and river banks, and updating the 1996 Pinedale Ranger District's Travel Management Plan to address Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) issues such as Wilderness trespass, closure violations, and insure that the choices for open and closed roads are appropriate.

The vegetation site objectives and management opportunities to improve resource conditions in the area identified in the LSA, the Gypsum Watershed Analysis and internal scoping are the basis for the projects contained in this proposal. For the Moose-Gypsum proposal, the objectives and project design identified in the planning efforts above have been updated and refined during the initial environmental analysis, using issues from initial public scoping, interdisciplinary team input, and updated resource information.

DECISION TO BE MADE

The decision to be made is whether or not to approve all or part of the proposed projects, and what mitigation measures may be appropriate.

BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST LAND AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN (LRMP)

The project area under consideration is currently classified as Desired Future Conditions 10, ("Simultaneous development of resources, opportunities for human experiences and support for big game and a wide variety of wildlife species.") 12, ("Backcountry big game hunting, dispersed recreation and wildlife security areas.) and 3, ("River recreation.") in the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. All projects included within this proposal are in compliance with the Desired Future Conditions described in the Land and Resource Management Plan.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This is the first stage of the environmental analysis process to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of the scoping process is to identify potential issues, environmental effects, and possible alternatives to the proposed action.

We invite you to participate in the process by submitting comments letting us know your issues or concerns regarding the proposal(s). You may submit your comments by letter, e-mail, or by phone. Your comments will become part of our permanent project file and will be addressed in the environmental analysis. Please submit your comments by November 19, 2004 to help us complete our analysis in a timely manner.

Pursuant to Federal Regulation 7 CFR, Part 1, Subpart B, Section 1.27, all written submissions in response to this notice shall be made available for public inspection including the submitter's name, unless the submitter specifically requests confidentiality. All written submissions from business entities and organizations, submitted on official letterhead, in response to this notice shall be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

If you would like more information please contact Craig Trulock, at the Pinedale Ranger District Office at 307-367-4326.

Comments may be submitted electronically to; comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-pinedale@fs.fed.us. Comments can be mailed to the Responsible Official:

District Ranger
Pinedale Ranger District
P.O. Box 220
Pinedale, Wyoming 82941