

## Public Interaction Document

### TELEPHONE HOLLOW TIMBER SALE

**Uinta National Forest  
Heber Ranger District**

#### AREA DESCRIPTION

Drainage: Strawberry River, Daniels Canyon  
County: Wasatch  
Legal Description: R6E, T6S, SLM, Sections 10, 15;  
R12W, T25S, UBSM, Sections 9, 15, 16, 21, 22  
USGS Quad(s): Co-op Creek & Twin Peaks  
Total Acreage of Analysis Area: Approximately 1,925 acres  
Proposed Treatment Acreage: Approximately 220 acres  
Target NEPA Completion Date: June 2004  
Proposed Implementation Date: 4th Quarter FY 2004



#### LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES (Forest and Management Area Direction)

The project area falls within two Management Areas: The Deer Creek Reservoir and the Strawberry Reservoir Management Areas. The management prescription from the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the area is identified as 5.2 Forested Ecosystems – Vegetation Management.

#### BACKGROUND

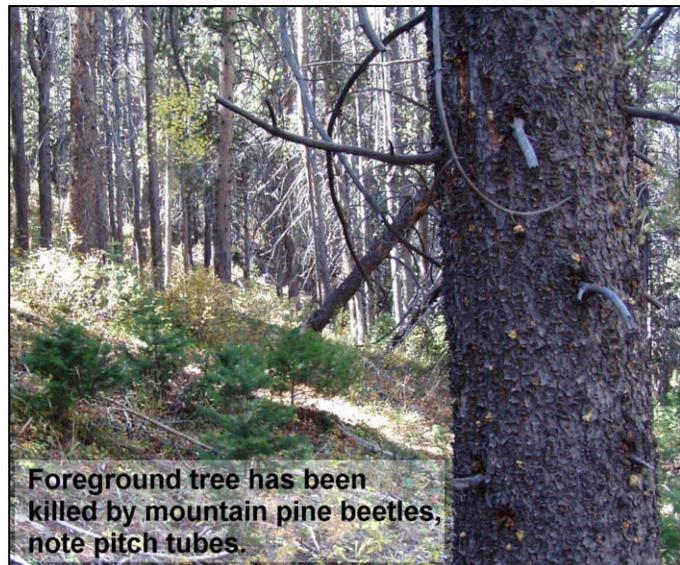
This area is the most western and southern extent of the native range of lodgepole pine in Utah and represents an early seral stage of stand development on occupied sites. Lodgepole pine stands in this area are located on north-facing slopes and are small and nested in landscapes dominated by aspen. In such landscapes, lodgepole pine offers a diversity of habitat.

Within the analysis area, associated



conifer species are Douglas-fir, white fir, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce, all of which are more shade-tolerant (later seral) species than lodgepole pine. Subalpine fir regeneration is common in the understories of these lodgepole pine stands and, without a disturbance event, would eventually replace lodgepole in dominance of the site.

The lodgepole pine stands within the analysis area are mature stands with average size and stand densities that make them susceptible to the mountain pine beetle. The mountain pine beetle is currently present in the stands at low (endemic) population levels and is causing some individual tree mortality annually. Mountain pine beetle populations are at outbreak levels in stands of similar age and density on the Wasatch National Forest approximately 15 miles to the north of stands in the Telephone Hollow area.



The Daniels Summit home development lies immediately adjacent to one of the proposed lodgepole pine treatment stands. Dead fuels and live ladder fuels (subalpine fir saplings) are such that these lodgepole pine stands could be subject to a stand-replacing crown fire should an ignition occur. Such a fire could threaten the homes at Daniels Summit.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the proposed action is: to maintain mature lodgepole pine stands in the affected landscape, to reverse the successional trend toward conversion from lodgepole pine dominated stands to subalpine fir dominated stands, to reduce stand susceptibility to mountain pine beetles, and to reduce the risk of stand replacing crown fires in the treated stands.

## **NEED**

The need of this proposed action is to address the issues of vegetation successional trend, insect populations and lodgepole pine mortality, and hazardous fuels. The need to treat hazardous fuel conditions is exacerbated by the proximity of residential and summer homes to treatment units. Issues are identified below in greater detail.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

An intermediate stand treatment (commercial thinning from below) is proposed to reduce stand densities and allow residual trees more resources (space, light, water, etc.) in approximately 220 acres of lodgepole pine stands. Stands would be thinned using the low thinning method, which removes trees from the smaller crown classes first, retaining the larger healthier trees on the site. In conjunction with the commercial thinning, the invading understory subalpine fir would be mechanically removed to reduce ladder fuels and prevent the site from converting from lodgepole pine dominance to subalpine fir dominance. Activity fuels (logging slash) would be treated by various means to reduce post-harvest fire potential. This may include removal, chipping, crushing, and/or piling and burning.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the treatments discussed above, there are several small areas (each generally 5 acres or less in size) of commercial-grade aspen adjacent to several of these lodgepole pine stands. In the bulk of these aspen areas, subalpine fir is “encroaching” into the aspen and may (without disturbance) eventually replace the aspen. This project would provide the opportunity to remove the subalpine fir and regenerate the aspen in these areas using commercial timber harvest (patch clearcuts for aspen regeneration).

## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to the proposed action include the following:

- ♣ No action: continue current management without implementation of this project proposal.
- ♣ Commercial thin only, no non-commercial fuels treatments: treat the proposed lodgepole stands with a traditional commercial thinning. No understory treatments would be implemented. Only the activity fuels created by commercial logging activities would be treated for fuels reduction.
- ♣ Prescribed fire: use management-ignited fire to replace and/or thin stands.



## POTENTIAL ISSUES

### Vegetation / Insects

Without treatment or a natural disturbance event, the lodgepole pine stands in this area would continue in their current successional trend toward stands dominated by subalpine fir, and the potential for mountain pine beetle would continue to increase.

### Fire

Without treatment the potential for a stand-replacing crown fire would continue to increase as understory fuel ladders and fuel loading increase. Mechanical treatments would need to be designed to reduce post-thinning activity fuels in order to mitigate the proposed activities.

### Wildlife

Wildlife habitat can be affected both negatively and positively by treatment or by non-treatment. Project design and mitigation would need to take in to account wildlife habitat needs.

### Range

Portions of the analysis area that are not part of the Strawberry Project Lands are grazed by livestock. The lodgepole pine treatments are not proposed as regeneration treatments and thus would not necessitate post-harvest deferral of grazing. Any aspen regeneration treatments would need protection from livestock grazing for at least 5 years post treatment to allow the new aspen suckers to develop sufficient height to withstand grazing / browsing pressure from livestock.

**Water Quality / Fisheries/Riparian Habitat**

The upper Strawberry River lies to the immediate east of several proposed treatment stands. Project design and roading access to the proposed treatment units will need to be designed with mitigation for riparian habitat in mind.

**Social / Economic/Public Safety**

Without treatment, the fire risk posed to the Daniel's Summit homes will not be modified and may increase over time as the potential for stand-replacing wildfire increases. Some noise and disturbance may occur during project operations, especially when the operations are active in the stand immediately adjacent to the private lands. Use of the National Forest access road through the home development would be prohibited to help mitigate disturbance and public safety concerns.

**Access / Roading**

Roads are generally in place. The main roads are currently open specified roads. Secondary roads that will be needed are closed non-system roads. Short sections of road (totaling less than ½ mile) will need to be built. Temporary roads and non-system roads can be closed and/or obliterated upon completion of operations.

**Heritage Resources**

A large historical site is adjacent to the project area. Heritage resource surveys will need to be completed prior to final project design and implementation. Mitigation and/or avoidance of sites may be necessary.

**DECISION TO BE MADE**

Through the environmental analysis process, the Forest Service will decide what type of treatments and activities, if any, will be implemented within the analysis area.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

This proposal is being considered for a Categorical Exclusion from appeal. Thus, it is imperative that public comment be received during the public comment period.

**WHAT IS NEEDED FROM YOU**

The Forest Service uses public input to aid the project-design and decision-making processes. The Forest Service needs to know what the public thinks about the proposal and whether there are additional issues or alternatives that need to be considered.

**WHEN ARE YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED**

Public comments can best be incorporated into project planning if submitted early in the process.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Contact Julie King (District Ranger) or Doug Page (Interdisciplinary Team Leader) at 435-654-0470 if additional information is needed.

**COMMENT SUBMISSION**

Comments should be submitted in writing to:

Julie King, District Ranger  
2460 South Highway 40  
P.O. Box 190  
Heber City, UT 84032

Please submit your comments by March 31, 2004.

