

# **Mullan Forest Health Collaboration Project**

## **Public Scoping Information**

### **May 2012**

**BLM Office:** Coeur d'Alene Field Office, 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815

**Contact:** Larry Kaiser, Supervisory Forester, 208-769-5023, [lkaiser@blm.gov](mailto:lkaiser@blm.gov)

**NEPA Register No.:** BLM-ID-C010-2011-0007-EA

**County:** Shoshone

**Location:** Silver Valley - Mullan, Idaho (see attached map)

**Legal Description:** T. 47 N., R. 5 E., Sec. 1 & 2; T. 48 N., R. 5 E., Sec. 25, 26, 27, 34 & 35

#### **Summary**

The BLM, Coeur d'Alene Field Office, is proposing to implement recommendations in the "Shoshone County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan" (2011 Revision) in response to requests by community leaders to reduce potential wildland fire threat to Mullan, Idaho and provide a short term economic stimulus. The proposed project is a joint action with the U.S. Forest Service. The BLM, Coeur d'Alene Field Office is the lead agency for preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) to describe and analyze the project, for implementation beginning in the fall of 2012. Comments received in response to this scoping invitation will be used to develop the proposed action and alternatives and address issues related to the proposal.

#### **Purpose and Need**

Action is needed to increase protection and decrease wildfire danger to Mullan, Idaho, a town in the wildland urban interface in Shoshone County. Hecla is the largest employer in the county, and the project includes measures to protect the powerline to the Lucky Friday Mine north of Mullan. The project is also being planned to protect the community drinking water supply. South of town, hazardous fuels pose a wildfire risk to property and natural resources, including forest stands. About 3 million board feet of timber would be harvested, and the proposed timber sale and service work would benefit the local economy.

#### **Proposed Action**

As shown on the attached map, the proposed action includes treatments on public lands administered by the BLM and the Forest Service in areas north and south of Mullan.

##### Lands North of Mullan

1. Commercially thin about 135 acres forest to eliminate the threat of crown fire.
2. Protect community water supply and emergency infrastructure, by eliminating hazardous fuels by hand, on about 25 acres of BLM land adjacent to the two municipal water supply tanks.
3. Replace two substandard creek crossings on the existing BLM road so that heavy trucks can use the road during fire suppression activities.
4. Reduce the wildfire threat to Hecla's Lucky Friday Mine powerline.

### BLM Lands South of Mullan

1. Commercially thin about 178 acres forest to eliminate the threat of crown fire.
2. Construct about 1¾ miles of new road south of town for fire suppression.
3. Construct a 9 acre shaded fuelbreak south of town that would connect to an existing fuel break on city land.
4. Treat hazardous fuels from about ten acres of a dead lodgepole pine forest,
5. Reduce hazardous fuels from the in-growth on about 142 acres of south facing mixed Ponderosa pine / Douglas-fir forest by prescribed burning.
6. Precommercially thin five acres of over stocked saplings that were planted in 1986.
7. Provide biomass to the local area.

### Lands South of Mullan

1. Commercially thin about 18 acres forest to eliminate the threat of crown fire.
2. Prescribe burn a 19 acre brush field/dead lodgepole pine forest.

### **Alternatives**

In addition to developing a Proposed Action alternative, the EA will analyze a No Action alternative that is defined as BLM and Forest Service not implementing this project. The analysis will characterize existing conditions, and identify consequences if no action is taken.

### **Issues**

BLM specialists have identified the following preliminary issues relating to forest health, scenic quality, water quality, scenic quality, access, wildlife, historic and cultural resources, and access to be addressed by development and analysis of alternatives in the EA.

1. Keep Mullan from burning by decreasing the fire hazard from wildland crown fires.
2. Restore forest health by thinning overstocked forests, treating hazardous fuels, and planting disease resistant western white pine seedlings and quaking aspen saplings.
3. Construct a permanent road south of Interstate 90 for fire suppression actions.
4. Decrease the fire hazard along Avista Utilities Lucky Friday Mine powerline.
5. Decrease the fire hazard adjacent to the two municipal water tanks located on public land.
6. Ensure prescribed burning does not cause smoke inversions to town and Interstate 90.
7. Provide habitats for a natural abundance and diversity of native and desirable non-native aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and plant species.
8. Maintain scenic vistas and improve visuals adjacent to private timber harvest by scalloping and feathering the edges.
9. Retain ATV loop trails, and reduce road densities wherever possible.
10. Satisfy requirements for historic and cultural resources under the National Historic Preservation Act.
11. Identify and address concerns of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.
12. Implement the project to provide a short term economic stimulus to Shoshone County.

## Public Input Requested

This project scoping information will be available for comment the Idaho BLM NEPA website at <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/nepa.html>.<sup>1</sup> At 7 pm on Monday **June 11, 2012**, the BLM will present information on this forest health collaborative project during the City Council meeting at the Mullan City Hall. The BLM requests receipt of written comments by **July 2, 2012**. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization or governmental agency. Comments should be directly relevant to the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives and identify concerns for analysis in the EA.

Comments may be mailed to the Coeur d'Alene Field Office, 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815, or submitted via e-mail to [lkaiser@blm.gov](mailto:lkaiser@blm.gov) with "**Mullan Forest Health Collaborative Project**" in the subject line. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> The link to information specific to the Mullan Project EA is <https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/projectSummary.do?methodName=renderDefaultProjectSummary&projectId=10663>.