



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise District Office

3948 Development Avenue

Boise, Idaho 83705

<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/lsrcd>



In Reply Refer To:
Little East Restoration Project
9211(ID-110)

June 25, 2012

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to take this opportunity to share information and solicit comments on a forest health proposal in the northern portion of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Four Rivers Field Office. The proposed action is intended to meet two objectives: 1) improve the health and vigor of mature trees, particularly the more large diameter ponderosa pine, so that they are more likely to withstand bark beetle attack; and 2) modify the stand structure by thinning the smaller to mid-sized trees, which would reduce the horizontal and vertical continuity of the fuels and increase the fire resilience of the stands.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Little East Restoration project area is approximately 4.5 miles southeast of New Meadows, Idaho, in Adams County (see vicinity map). Project activities would occur on 68 acres of BLM managed lands. The legal location is Township 19 North, Range 2 East, Section 33; and Township 18 North, Range 2 East, Sections 4 and 9. The project area is surrounded entirely by private land, except for one 40 acre parcel of Idaho state land on the northeast side.

BACKGROUND

The 1988 Cascade Resource Management Plan (RMP) identifies an objective for forest resource as “manage the suitable commercial forest land for timber management and harvest”. In addition, the RMP provides a guideline to cooperate with adjacent landowners to reduce fire hazards, including consultation on hazard reduction plans, development of cooperative agreements, and implementation of hazard reductions. The proposed action is in conformance with the objectives and guidelines for forest management in the RMP.

This project is intended to contribute to the reduction of hazardous fuels and restoration of fire adapted ecosystems in the New Meadows Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The National Fire Plan (NFP) was initially developed in August 2000, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future. The plan was further developed under a process known as “A

Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment” (August 2001 and May 2002). This set in motion an open, collaborative process among multiple levels of government with the principal goals of: 1) Improving Prevention and Suppression, 2) Reducing Hazardous Fuels, 3) Restoring Fire Adapted Ecosystems, and 4) Promoting Community Assistance. As their part in the collaborative process, counties prepared wildfire mitigation plans specific to their respective counties. The Adams County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan (January 2004) supported the NFP goals and delineated the WUI zones surrounding the urban wildland interface communities as identified in the Federal Register: January 4, 2001 (Volume 66, Number 3). New Meadows was one of the communities identified in the Federal Register. This project seeks to meet principal goals 2 and 3 in the New Meadows WUI.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose for this project is to restore stand health, vigor, and resilience to wildfire on 68 acres of BLM managed lands in Adams County, Idaho (see project area map). The need is demonstrated by the low vigor and stand structure that predisposes the stands to bark beetle infestation and reduces the resilience to wildfire. The stands are composed of entirely ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. The present stand density/structure is such that health, vigor and resilience to wildfire are diminishing. As stand density increases, tree health and vigor decrease which increases the potential for bark beetle infestation. The existing tree density and structure create a continuity of vertical and horizontal fuel that decreases the resilience to wildfire. The proposed activities would reverse this trend. The project does not include any riparian areas.

PROPOSED ACTION

Utilizing non-commercial and commercial thinning, the forest stands would be thinned from below. The focus would be to retain the large diameter trees, particularly ponderosa pines, which are most resilient to wildland fire. Ladder fuels (trees less than 10 inches in diameter at breast height) would be the principal harvest while commercial size trees (greater than 10 inches in diameter) would be thinned to reduce horizontal continuity of the canopy and to reduce competition around large diameter ponderosa pine (greater than 20 inches diameter). Commercial trees would be tractor yarded to landings as sawtimber. Non-commercial trees would be cut and piled on site, and burned in the late fall or winter when substantial rainfall or snow is present. No new roads would be constructed. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion would occur for a minimum of two years following initial treatment.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE AND SUBMIT COMMENTS

Local involvement is critical when planning projects. The public is encouraged to participate and help identify management issues that should be considered during the development of a project proposal. The BLM will refine the draft proposed action and/or develop mitigation measures based on the issues raised during the public scoping period.

When submitting comments please include your name, address, telephone number, and the organization you represent (if any); the title of the proposed project; and facts and reasons

specific to this proposal. Comments received on the proposed project including names and addresses will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. BLM will accept and consider comments submitted anonymously; however, people who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision (36 CFR 215). Any person may request that the BLM withhold submitted comments from the public record (pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d)) by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. However, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances such as to protect trade secrets. The BLM will inform the requestor of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality. If the request is denied, the BLM will return the submitted comments and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted, with or without name and address within a specified time.

For more information concerning the Little East Restoration Project, you may contact Frank Marsh at (208) 384-3389. Please send your written comments by July 31, 2012 to the Bureau of Land Management, Boise District, Four Rivers Field Office, 3948 Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83705. You may also provide comments via the internet by emailing comments to BLM_ID_BD_Forestry@blm.gov. Thank you for your attention on this project.

Sincerely,

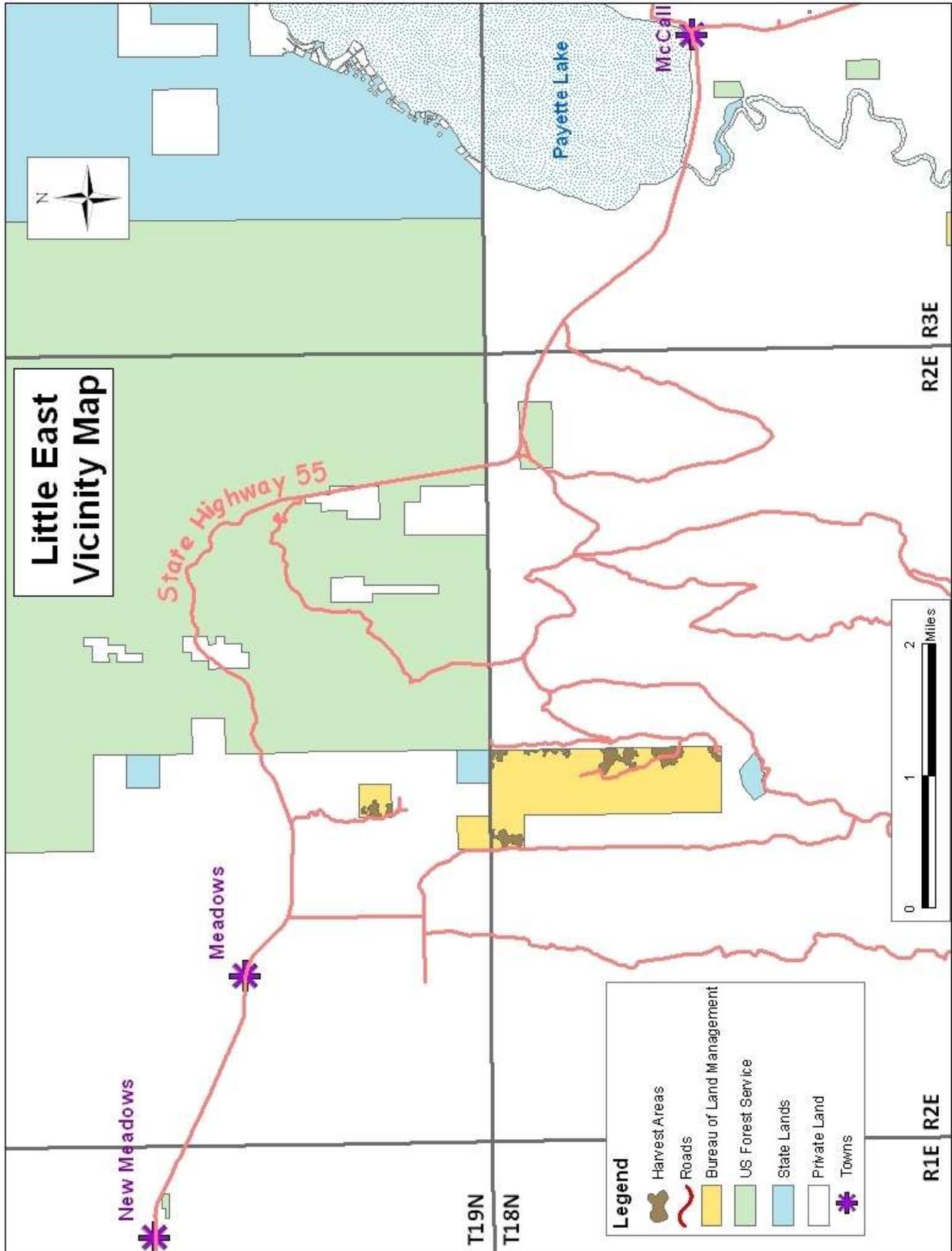
/s/ Terry A. Humphrey

Terry A. Humphrey
Four Rivers Field Manager

2-Enclosures

- 1- Little East Vicinity Map
- 2- Little East Project Area Map

Little East Vicinity Map



Little East Project Area Map

