

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

Lynch Gulch Timber Sale and Prescribed Burn

Coeur d'Alene Field Office

DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2015-0004-EA

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to reduce fuels and harvest timber on BLM-managed public lands in the vicinity of Lynch Gulch, which is located immediately south of Pinehurst, ID, in Shoshone County. Federal actions, such as this, must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will also use this public participation opportunity under the NEPA to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470(f)) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

Purpose and Need for Action

Need: The present composition of the forest stands near the community of Pinehurst are overstocked creating hazardous fuel loading and forest health problems. The combination of blister rust, mountain pine beetle, and root rot have and will continue to kill trees within these stands. These conditions increase the potential threat of catastrophic wild fires.

The project area is within the wildland-urban interface (WUI) area of Pinehurst. One of the goals identified in the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 2007), is to "Protect life and property while returning fire to its natural role in the ecosystem." The RMP further states that one of the specific objectives for achieving this goal is to "Reduce impact from wildland fire to WUI areas, municipal watersheds, and infrastructure. In addition, the Shoshone County, Idaho Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies the proposed project area as high priority for hazardous fuels treatments.

The RMP further states that "When applying treatments in the vicinity of old growth stands, ensure that these treatments will fully maintain or contribute toward the restoration of the structure and composition

of old growth stands according to the pre-fire suppression old growth conditions characteristic of the forest type, taking into account:

- Contribution of the stand to landscape fire adaptation and watershed health; and
- Retaining the large trees contributing to old growth structure in accordance with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

Purpose: The primary purpose of the proposed action is to comply with the above goal, objective, and implement the direction from the RMP. Specific objectives for the project are:

- Reduce the potential impact from wild land fire to WUI areas and infrastructure while returning fire to its natural role in the ecosystem within the Pinehurst area.
- Lessen the risks to people who put out wild fires by providing them a “foot hold” area ie. harvest units, shaded fuel breaks, where firefighters can anchor the fire line during fire suppression actions.
- Reduce the risk to old growth ponderosa trees of burning during a wildfire.
- Provide forest products and related economic benefits while protecting cultural and natural resources for the good of the public
- Improve Forest Health

Existing Condition

Forest stands are overstocked with dead and dying suppressed trees that have created heavy dead and down fuel loads. There are scattered large remnant ponderosa pine throughout the project area on the drier aspects that are threatened by the current conditions.

The project area lies almost entirely within Dry Conifer (491 acres), Wet Warm Conifer (282 acres) and Wet Cold Conifer (137 acres) Forest Vegetation Types. Portions of the project lie in the Perennial Grass (18 acres), Mid Elevation shrub steppe (101 acres), Riparian (8 acres) and aspen Conifer mix (7 acres).

Proposed Action

As depicted on the attached map, the BLM proposes to harvest about three million board feet of timber by thinning understory trees on 820 acres of forested public land and to create a shaded fuel break along Bobby Anderson ridge approximately 400 feet wide (120 acres). Following timber harvest, the BLM would underburn approximately 520 acres of forested land to reduce slash and natural fuels that threaten the large remnant ponderosa pine . To facilitate harvest operations, about one mile of new permanent road, and one and a half miles of temporary new road would be constructed. The new temporary road would be closed to public motorized travel to limit motorized vehicular disturbance to wildlife. Following harvest and fuel reduction actions the BLM would install gates or barriers to implement road closures.

The project would be implemented in multiple phases with two separate timber sale contracts. The BLM anticipates two three year timber sale contracts. The first would begin in July of 2016, and the second in July of 2017. Prescribed burning would take place when weather conditions allow for meeting objectives while mimizing smoke impacts.

Preliminary Issues

- Air Quality: Prescribed burning would produce smoke, adding particulate matter to the airshed in the Pinehurst area. Pinehurst is already a non-attainment area for National Ambient Air Quality Standards for PM-10, primarily due to residential wood smoke .
- Wildlife: Increased recreational use may result from project road construction and improvements, potentially disturbing wildlife, which may include elk, deer and bear habitat.
- Fish: Riparian and aquatic habitats could be damaged by project work.
- Sensitive Plants: Sensitive plants occur in the project area which could be damaged or their habitat degraded by the project.
- Large Old Trees: While the large old trees on some portions of the project area are currently at risk from fire due to stand density, increased recreational use and access that may result from project road construction and improvements could also result in damage.
- Historic Structures: Historic mining structures (adits, old mining structures and sites), could be damaged by project work.
- Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds: Disturbance to soils and vegetation, and removal or opening of the tree canopy could provide opportunities for the spread of invasive plants and noxious weeds.
- Water and Soil Resources: Disturbance to soils and vegetation could result in sedimentation runoff and erosion, increasing sediment loads in streams.
- Fire/Fuels: Current vegetative fuel loads would be affected by the project.

Preliminary Alternative Development

In addition to the proposed action the BLM will analyze a no action (no treatment) alternative. Other alternatives may be developed to address specific issues.

Decision to be Made

The BLM Coeur d'Alene Field Manager will issue a decision regarding implementation of this project in accordance with Federal Regulations at 43 CFR 5000.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by **June 12, 2015**, and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns

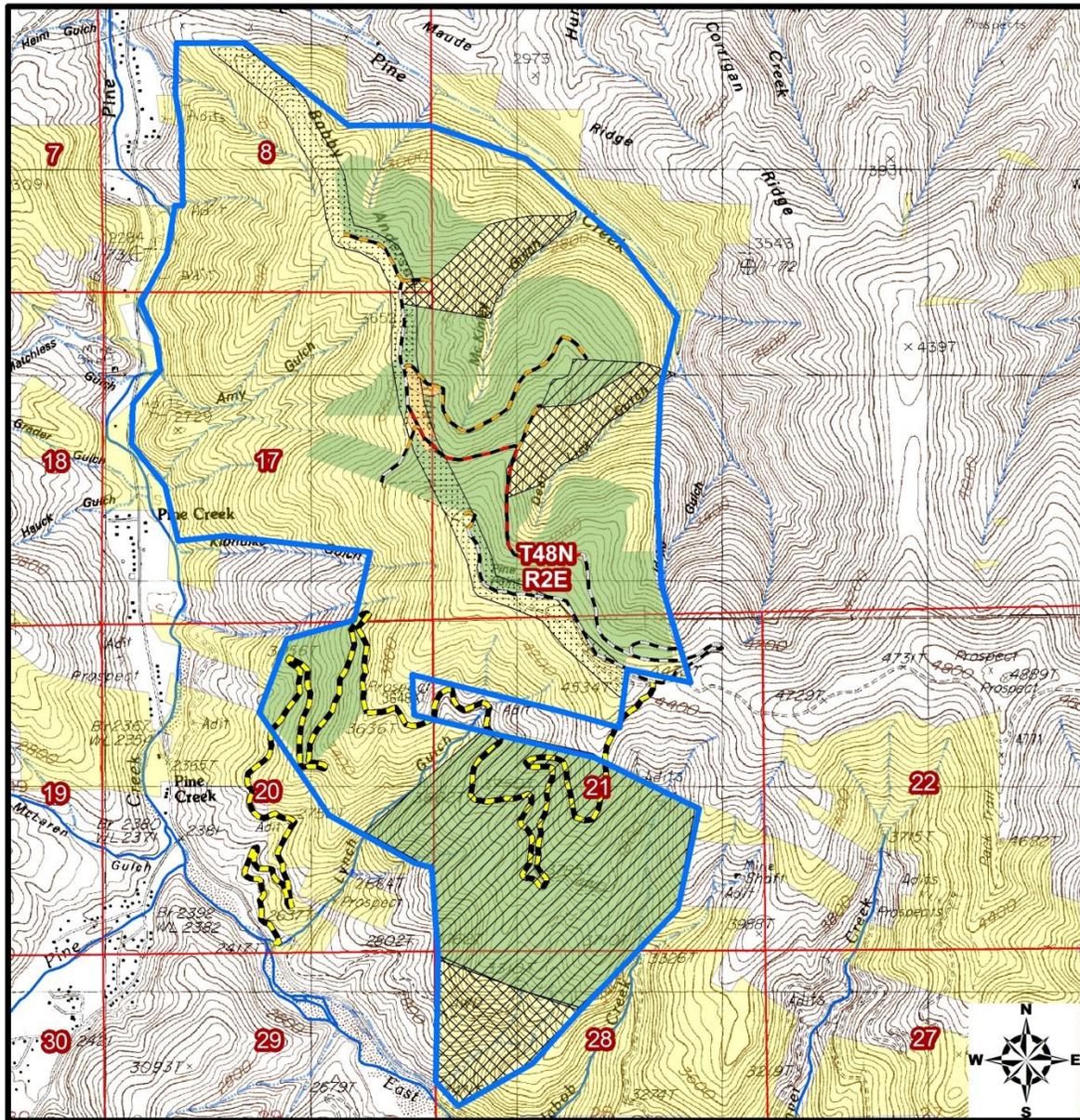
that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Email comments to **blm_id_lynchgulchvegetationtr@blm.gov**. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised 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 from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Jered Bowman, Forester, 3815 Schreiber Way Coeur d'Alene, ID. 83815, phone: (208) 769-5019.

Attachment:

Map



**Lynch Gulch Timber Sale and Prescribed Burn Project Proposal
T48N, R2E, Sec.17, 20, 21**



Pinehurst

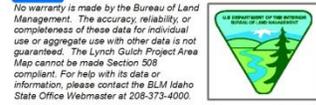
- Broadcast burn in sale area
- Broadcast burn
- Shaded fuel break

- Skyline Logging
- Tractor Logging
- Pine Point Access Road
- Construct Main Haul Road
- Construct Spur Road
- Renovate Road

Legend

- BLM Ownership
- Private Ownership
- Project Area

Map Scale 1:26,000
0 2,800 5,600 Feet



This map was created by J. Bowman 3/18/15