

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

McKays Bend Firewise Garden

Cottonwood Field Office

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to design and develop a Firewise Demonstration Garden and ¼ mile long nature trail on BLM managed land and adjoining Idaho Fish and Game managed land within the McKays Bend-Myrtle area.

The McKays Bend Firewise Garden project would be in accordance with the Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP) as approved on December 21, 2009. Federal actions 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

The BLM is responding to the need to educate local communities on the basic principles of Firewise Landscaping practices to aid in the reduction of fuel loads and creating defensible spaces that increase the ability to protect structures during wildfires. This need is defined in the Coeur d'Alene Fire Management Plan and as part of the Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group's 2007 National Fire Plan survey.

The primary goal for Firewise landscaping is to educate the public on techniques to limit the level of flammable vegetation and materials surrounding structures, demonstrate the use of fire resistant materials when building structures, and how through plant selection, a homeowner can increase the moisture content of the remaining vegetation surrounding their property thereby decreasing local fuel loads.

The ability to educate the public on Firewise principles and concepts can be accomplished by creating a Firewise Demonstration Garden and trail at McKays Bend, which is centrally located between the urban communities of Lewiston and Clarkston and the rural Clearwater River communities.

The proposed action will address the following goals of the Cottonwood RMP as approved on December 21, 2009 (BLM 2009):

Goal RC-1—Manage public lands and waters to provide a broad spectrum of recreation experiences and benefits. Provide high value recreation opportunities...

Action RC-1.2.3.4; Continue to implement the Clearwater River Activity Plan (BLM 1984).

Objective RC-1.4; Managed existing and develop new recreation facilities to attain recreation and other resource goals.

Goal SE-1—Provide varied social and economic opportunities through multiple use management.

Objective SE-1.1; Develop sustainable land uses and strategies that contribute to the social and economic well-being of... local communities...

Action SE - 1.1.2; Provide a variety of recreational and leisure opportunities for the public's enjoyment.

It is also consistent with the following decisions of the Coeur d'Alene District Fire Management Plan: to include Chapter 4 section 3.2- Fire Prevention and Community Education Activities; Prevention and education activities are patterned on the Firewise program and focus on increasing public awareness through public service announcements, public visibility of agency personnel, and an educational sign program.

Existing Condition

The project is located in and adjacent to McKay's Bend Campground at Myrtle Idaho (see Map 1) within Nez Perce County, Idaho 16 miles east of Lewiston, Idaho. The legal description of the project is T. 36 N., R. 3 W., B.M., Section 4.

Brushing and thinning of trees, shrubs and weeds was completed in 2015 around the barn, well house and old post office buildings to decrease the likelihood that a fire coming off the hills or Highway 12 would encroach on the campground facilities. Invasive weed clusters were identified and will be sprayed during the appropriate spraying schedule

Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to design and construct a Firewise garden, interpretive panels, benches, and trail on the east side of the McKay's Bend Campground between the tent sites and Highway 12 (see Map 2).

A Firewise garden would be developed in Zone 1 (see Map 2) using Firewise principles with a focus on native species and species established on site such as choke cherry, apple trees, yarrow and lupine. Project work would identify and remove hazardous trees and flammable brush within the 'ignition zone', around the three structures on the site, which is known as Zone 1.

The project would include the eradication of weeds such as poison hemlock, poison ivy and scotch thistle through the use of herbicide applications and manual removal. A trail approximately ¼ mile in length weaving through Zones 1, 2 and 3, would be built consisting of clearing up to 4 inches of soil up to 3 ½ feet wide of debris, plants and duff and hardening the trail using 5/8 crushed rock on approximately 1.3 acres. A limited amount of new or transplanted plants would be installed 4 to 6 inches deep within the garden area. Interpretive panels would be installed identifying plant species and Firewise concepts. Benches would be installed along the trail at two locations in Zone 1 and Zone 3 to provide resting and gathering places. Water would be supplied through a temporary drip system on a timer, anchored next to an existing water faucet that can be attached when needed. The trail location would be modified as necessary to avoid existing Firewise and other beneficial species and any cultural sites identified as the project progresses. The attached map includes the project area boundaries within which a detailed landscape plan would be completed by the Idaho Firewise Program in conjunction with the BLM prior to the start of the project.

The project would be completed over a period of two years by the Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Youth Conservation Corps, Idaho Firewise and volunteers with assistance from the Nez Perce Tribe fire and forestry program and other entities to be identified. In 2016 a two week window of work would consist of brushing and weeding, installing the drip system, hardscaping, building stairs to the trail, building garden beds and identifying the plant species that will be incorporated into the project area. In the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017, the garden would be planted, brushing and weeding would continue, and interpretive panels and benches would be built and installed. Yearly maintenance would be completed by various volunteers and partners.

Preliminary Issues

- Cultural Resources - The project area contains sensitive cultural archeological resources that could be damaged by the proposed action or alternatives.
- Recreation:- The proposed action or alternatives may affect recreation users in the project area by creating a short trail and Firewise Demonstration Garden that has not previously existed.
- Wildlife (including and migratory birds) - The project area contains numerous wildlife species migratory birds, and preferred habitats for these species that could be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed action or the alternatives.

Preliminary Alternative Development

The Limited Action alternative would be to design and construct a Firewise Demonstration Garden and trail in Zone 1 and install a Firewise interpretive panel. The trail in Zone 2 and 3 would not be built and benches and interpretive signs describing beneficial plants outside of Zone 1 would not be installed.

In addition, the BLM would analyze a No Action Alternative, under which no improvements would occur.

Decision to be Made

The BLM Cottonwood Field Manager will decide whether to authorize the proposed action, the alternative action or take no action.

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 October 15, 2015 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area and identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions and design of the proposed action and alternatives, or the analysis of effects to be presented in the EA.

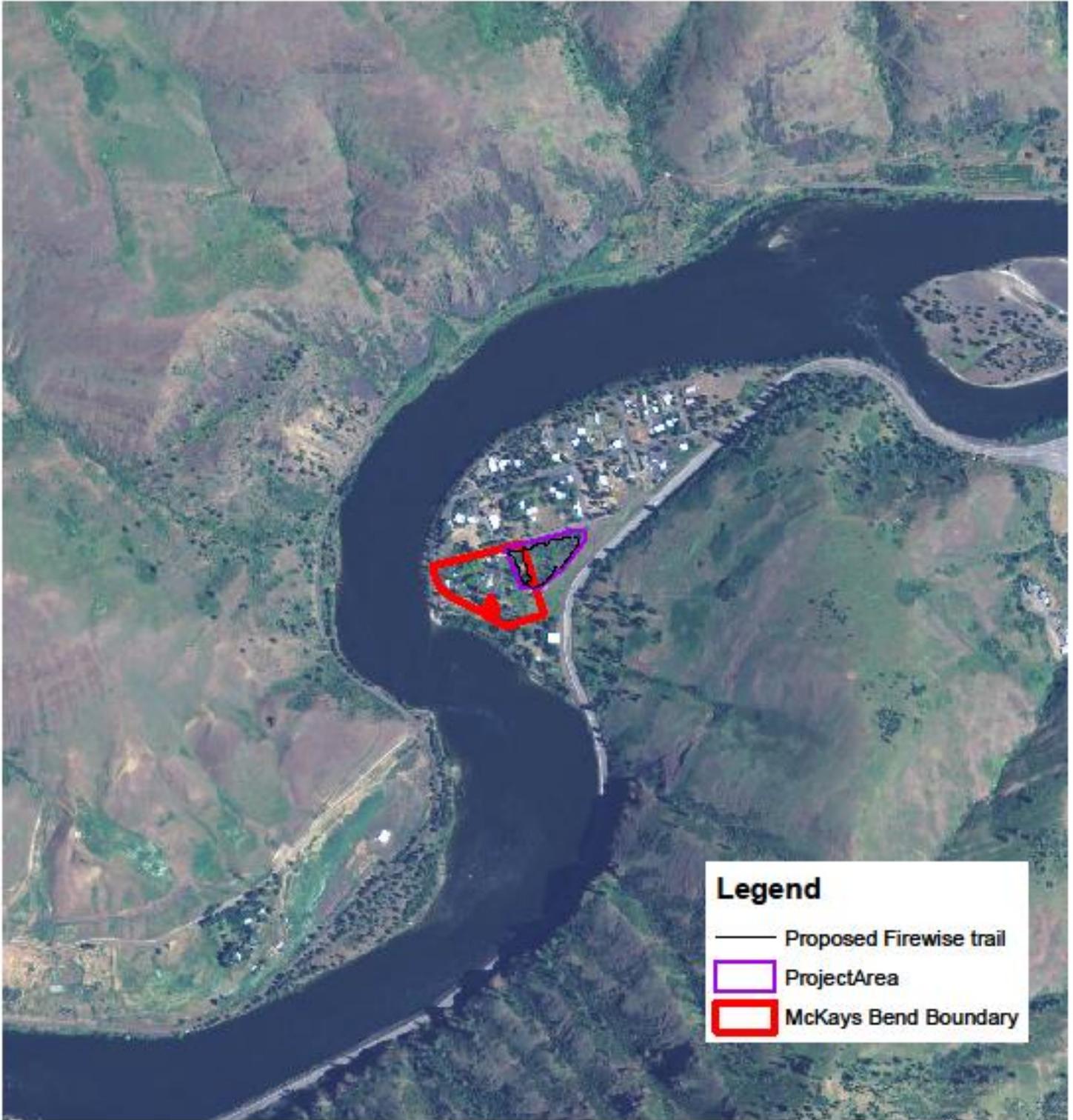
The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Comments sent electronically should be sent to blm_id_mckaysfirewiseea@blm.gov with the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

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.

Written comments must be submitted to Judy Culver, Cottonwood BLM Field Office, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood, Idaho 83522. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 a.m. through 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

If you have questions regarding this proposal please contact Judy Culver, Outdoor Recreation Planner, at (208) 962-3796. Thank you for your interest in this project proposal. We look forward to hearing from you.

McKay's Bend Firewise Garden Map 1



Map Created: 9/1/2015

The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

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Data displayed in UTM Zone 11N, NAD83



McKay's Bend Firewise Garden Map 2





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Map Created: 5/11/2012

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