Decision Notice
for
Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Project

USDA Forest Service
Ashton/Island Park Ranger District
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Fremont County, Idaho

Introduction

In June of 2017, an Interdisciplinary Team of Forest Service employees completed the Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment. The environmental assessment was developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations.

The following decision notice provides information about the project, describes my decision and my rationale for my decision.

The Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment and supporting resource reports are incorporated by reference in this document. The environmental assessment, resource reports, and this decision are all available for download from the Caribou-Targhee National Forest website at **http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ctnf/landmanagement/projects** under the Yale Creek Fuels Reduction listing.

Project Area and Existing Condition

The project area is located on the Ashton/Island Park Ranger District adjacent to the Yale Creek and Old West Ranches subdivisions. The southern boundary of the project area is the national forest boundary. The project is located in T13N, R41E, Sec. 2; T13N, R42E, Sec. 2–6; T13N, R43E, Sec. 6; T14N, R41E, Sec. 35–36; T14N, R42E, Sec. 27, 28, 31, 33–36; T14N, R43E, Sec. 31, Boise Meridian, in Fremont County, Idaho (Figure 1). Figure 1 also displays a summary of the proposed treatment units.

Five units are being proposed for treatment (Figure 1). The environmental assessment, pages 5-7 describes in detail the existing condition of each unit. In summary, vegetation structural stages in some units include young, middle aged, and mature forest; with both open and moderately closed canopy, dominated by multiple stories. In certain areas, habitat types are dominated by subalpine fir and are successfully regenerating. Other areas may be dominated by a Douglas-fir overstory and is subalpine fir/grouse whortleberry habitat type. Species found in these stands include aspen, five needle pines, and Douglas-fir. Subalpine fir is probably present in small quantities. Where aspen trees are present, it is being shaded out by competition from conifer trees in some units, while in other areas larger patches of aspen exist along linear openings. The majority of fuels consist of a very high load of dry climate timber-shrub, timber-grass shrub mix and small downed logs. Pockets of heavier down and dead woody surface fuel with a significant shrub and/or small tree understory are found throughout the project area. The watershed and streams are in relatively good condition. Most streams in the project area are in fair condition with Yale Creek and the upper portions of Hotel Creek in good condition. The Willow Creek sub-watershed is currently 76 percent hydrologically disturbed, exceeding the desired condition of not more than 30 percent hydrologically disturbed. The primary reason is due to

the recent Willow Fire. The other principal watersheds (Island Park Reservoir, Hotel Creek, and Coffee Pot-Henrys Fork) are under the desired threshold.

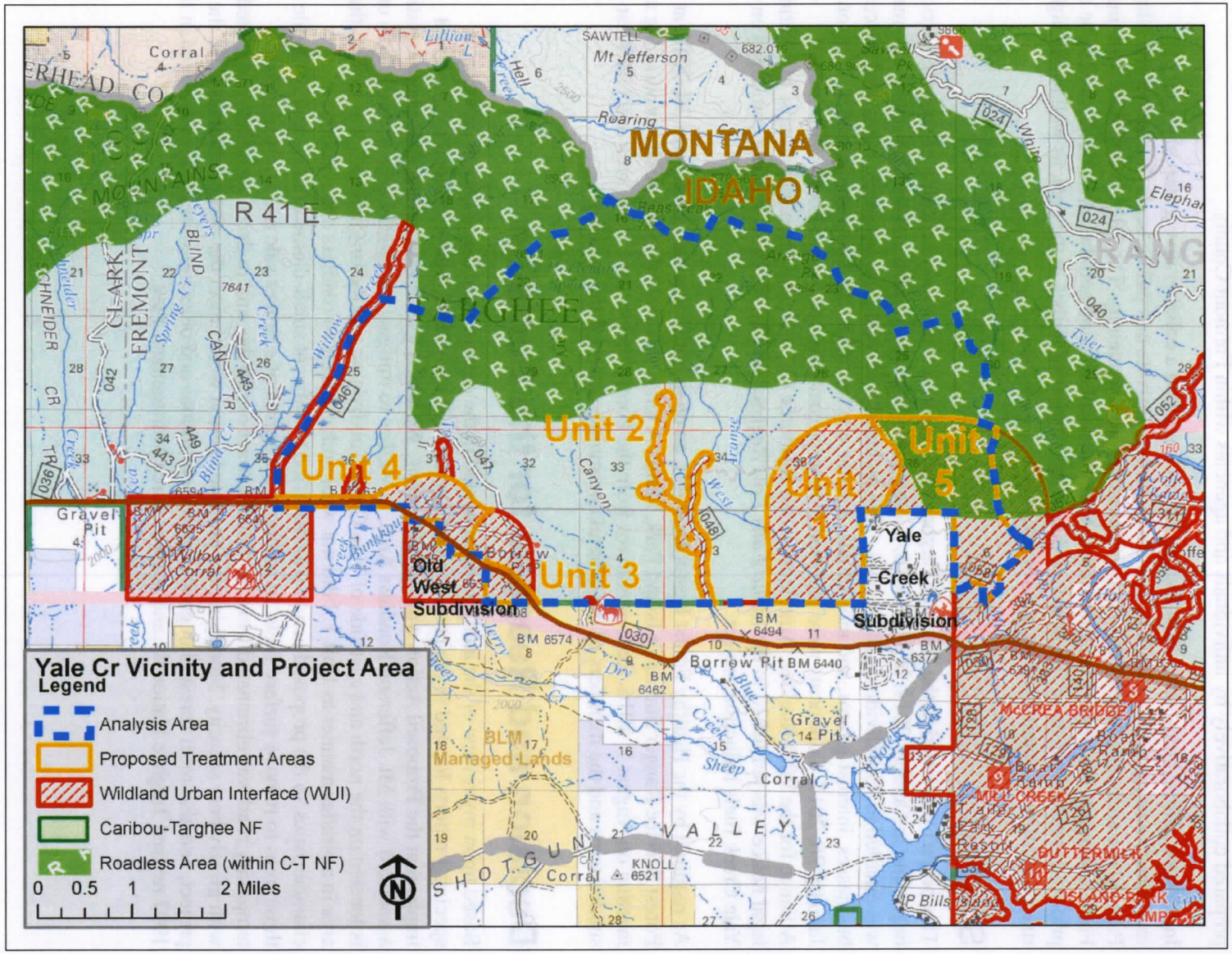

Figure 1. Yale Creek Vicinity Map and Treatment Units

Public Involvement

Collaboration

This project lies within an identified wildland-urban interface, as outlined in the Fremont County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Plan was created in 2004, and revised in 2016 and was prepared collaboratively by individuals and agencies within Fremont County.

In addition, the Ashton-Island Park Ranger District initiated a collaborative group made up of individuals and agencies to work on fuels reduction on private and public lands throughout the Island Park, Idaho area called the Island Park Sustainable Fire Community. The 2016 Island Park Sustainable Fire Community Strategic Plan determined Yale Creek subdivision and the surrounding area to be a priority for modification of fire behavior due to the number of homes in the area, as well as the high risk of wildfire as determined by several fire behavior exercises.

Scoping

This project was listed in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest quarterly schedule of proposed actions beginning in October 2014. In May 2016, a letter providing information and seeking public comment was emailed to 93 individuals and groups. This included local and State agencies, municipal offices, businesses, interest groups, and individuals. A letter was mailed to the Shoshone Bannock Tribe on January 26, 2017. Comments were received from representatives of Native Ecosystem Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, American Forest Resource Council, and three individuals. In addition a legal notice was published in the *Idaho Falls Post Register* on May 7, 2016, seeking comments on the Yale Creek fuels reduction project.

As required by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, an open house was held on August 30, 2016, at the Forest Service Ranger Station in Island Park, Idaho. A letter was mailed to the public announcing a meeting on August 2, 2016. Representatives from the Forest Service and Yale Creek and Old West subdivisions and the members of the general community attended the meeting.

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Based upon my review of the analysis documented in the environmental assessment, associated specialist reports located in the project record, and public comments, I have decided to select and implement the Proposed Action with modifications. We added Unit 5 to accommodate characteristics associated with Mt. Jefferson Roadless Area, as well as to mitigate for grizzly bear security. This unit is located on the north and east side of Yale Creek Subdivision and the original idea was to treat that area in a similar manner as Unit 1. I did not want undue affects to roadless and wilderness characteristics so the proposed action was modified to only cut small-diameter trees, and hand pile those trees to remove surface fuels. In addition, the option of a timber sale and construction of a temporary road was eliminated from the treatment actions in this unit to decrease effects associated with grizzly bear security. Modifying the proposed action would meet the purpose and need for the project, and also meet forest plan goals, desired conditions and objectives for the area as stated in the 1997 revised Targhee National Land and Resource Management Plan.

Details of the Proposed Action

Unit 1 *(Adjacent to the Yale Creek Subdivision)*

The proposed treatment for this unit is prescribed as a commercial thin from below combined with coppice with reserve where quaking aspens are present. In this project, coppice with reserve would be implemented where all conifers within a distance of two and one half aspen tree heights of all quaking aspens greater than four feet tall would be removed to enhance aspen regeneration.

A commercial thin would reduce stand density to approximately 54 trees per acre and 80 square feet of basal area. This treatment would reduce the hazard of Douglas-fir beetle, and create a stand structure much less conducive to western spruce budworm infestations. Thinning would raise canopy base height, thus increasing torching index and reducing the potential for crown-fire initiation. Canopy bulk density would be reduced thus reducing the chance of a sustained crown fire (Helmbrecht et al. 2016). Quaking aspen, as a deterrent to fire, would be regenerated and enhanced where possible. Aspen would function as a less volatile fuel reducing both surface and crown fire potential.

The following implementation mechanisms would be:

- Trees would be removed with mechanized equipment for wood fiber use and other forest product purposes. Trees removed would be small diameter, primarily less than 10 inches in diameter, mainly lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and small-diameter Douglas-fir. The focus for tree removal would be from the lower and mid canopy to decrease ladder fuels.
- All subalpine fir trees would be removed.
- Approximately 4 miles of temporary roads would be opened or constructed to facilitate logging of this unit. A portion of this temporary road would be located on a road prism that was previously reclaimed and obliterated.
- Once all treatments within this unit are complete, the temporary roads would be effectively closed to motorized use. At a minimum, large-diameter downed trees and rocks would be strategically placed along the closed road so these prisms could not be used by off-highway vehicles.
- Whole trees would be removed to a landing to limit down woody material left in the treatment unit. Tops and limbs would be chipped and removed or piled and burned at the landing.
- Slash remaining in the unit would either be masticated within the unit or burned with a low-intensity, understory burn. The understory burn would be patchy across the treated areas and burned in the fall season. The objective of the understory burn is to remove some of the finer fuels such as needles, litter, and leaves.
- All remaining trees within 350 feet of the Forest boundary would have limbs pruned up to 6 to 8 feet from the ground.

Unit 2 (*Along the Blue Creek and West Blue Creek Roads*)

The proposed treatment for this unit is prescribed as a commercial thin from below. Where aspen are present, all conifers within two-and-one-half aspen-tree heights of all aspen greater than 4-feet tall would be removed to enhance aspen regeneration.

The following implementation mechanisms would be:

- Trees would be cut and removed with mechanized equipment. Trees slated for removal would be designated. Trees removed would be small diameter, primarily less than 10 inches in diameter,

mainly lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and small-diameter Douglas-fir. Tree removal would be from the lower and mid canopy to decrease ladder fuels.

- Remove all subalpine fir.
- Within the treatment unit west of Blue Creek Road, limbs from the remaining trees would be pruned up to 6 to 8 feet from the ground and subalpine fir less than 7 inches in diameter would be cut.
- Large wood would be placed in Blue Creek stream channel to retain sediment and restore stream function and stability to a down-cut unstable channel. Large woody debris would be anchored in the channel every 100 feet with small and large wood scattered throughout the rest of the channel.
- Surface fuels (slash) west of Blue Creek Road would be hand piled and burned to meet the desired condition for fuels management. This would occur outside the area within 100 feet of Blue Creek so as not to have slash burned immediately adjacent to the creek.
- Surface fuels (slash) east of Blue Creek would be chipped or masticated or hand piled and burned outside the aquatic influence zone to meet the desired condition for fuels management.
- West Blue Creek Road 018 would be temporarily opened to allow for the purchase of forest products (green firewood, post, and pole material) to be removed by the public (refer to design features limitations of firewood removal in this area). Once treatments are complete West Blue Creek Road would be effectively closed.

Unit 3 (*South of the Yale Kilgore Road and east of the Old West Ranches Subdivision*)

The proposed treatment for this unit is prescribed as a commercial thin from below combined with coppice with reserve where quaking aspens are present followed by prescribed burn to enhance quaking aspen regeneration. Remove all conifers within two-and-one-half aspen tree heights of all aspen greater than 4-feet tall to enhance aspen regeneration.

The following implementation mechanisms would be:

- Leave mature Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine free of insects and disease with an average spacing between crowns of 15 feet or greater. The focus for tree removal would be from the lower and mid canopy to decrease ladder fuels.
- Remove all subalpine fir.
- A temporary road of 300 feet would be newly constructed to facilitate mechanical removal of trees. Once treatments are complete the temporary road would be obliterated to restore hydrologic function and productivity and restrict motorized vehicle use.
- All remaining trees within 350 feet of Old West Ranch Subdivision boundary and along both sides of Yale Kilgore Road would have limbs pruned up to 6 to 8 feet from the ground.
- Surface fuels (slash) remaining in the unit would be masticated or burned with a low-intensity, understory prescribed burn within the unit. The understory burn would be patchy across the treated areas and burned in the fall. The objective of the understory burn is to remove some of the finer fuels such as needles, litter, and leaves.

Unit 4 *(North of the Yale Kilgore Road and north of the Old West Ranches Subdivision)*

The prescribed treatment for this unit is prescribed as a commercial thin from below combined with coppice with reserve where quaking aspens are present.

The following implementation mechanisms would be:

- Trees would be removed with mechanized equipment for wood fiber use and other forest product purposes.
- Remove small-diameter trees, primarily less than 10 inches in diameter, mainly lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and small-diameter Douglas-fir. The focus for tree removal would be from the lower and mid canopy to decrease ladder fuels.
- Coppice with reserves consists of removing all conifers within two-and-one-half aspen tree heights of all aspen greater than 4 feet tall to enhance aspen regeneration; except leave all Douglas-fir within the aspen areas greater than 20 inches in diameter.
- Remove all subalpine fir.
- One mile of temporary road would be newly constructed to facilitate forest product removal. Following treatments, this temporary road would be obliterated to restore hydrologic function and productivity and restrict motorized vehicle use.
- Whole trees would be removed to a landing to limit down woody material left in the treatment unit. Tops and limbs would be chipped and removed or piled and burned at the landing.
- Slash remaining in the unit would be mechanically piled and burned within the unit or burned with a low-intensity, understory burn. The understory burn would be patchy across the treated areas and burned in the fall. The objective of the understory burn is to remove some of the finer fuels such as needles, litter, and leaves.
- All remaining trees within 350 feet either side of Yale Kilgore Road would be pruned 6 to 8 feet from the ground.
- The treatment area along Yale Kilgore Road may be available to the public for forest product (firewood, post, poles) removal.

Unit 5 *(Area within Mt. Jefferson Idaho Roadless Area designated as Backcountry/Restoration (313 acres) and General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland (322 acres))*

The prescribed treatment for this unit is prescribed as a thin from below. Thinning from below would reduce stand density in the lower canopy, decrease ladder fuels, and raise canopy base height; thus increasing torching index and reducing the potential for crown-fire initiation. No temporary or permanent roads would be constructed in Unit 5.

The following implementation mechanisms would be:

- Cut all trees less than 6 inches in diameter with chainsaws.
- Surface fuels, also known as slash, would be hand piled and burned to meet the desired condition for fuels management.
- All remaining trees would have limbs pruned up to 6 to 8 feet from the ground.
- Standing dead trees (snags) would be removed where there is an overriding safety concern.

In addition to the activities noted above, there are numerous design features that will be used while implementing the project (EA pgs. 15-20). The purpose of design features is to completely avoid, or to the fullest extent possible, minimize the potential for adverse effects to resources.

Mitigations and Design Criteria for this project are found in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

Other Alternatives Considered

As described in the environmental analysis, I considered the proposed action and the effects of taking no action based on the purpose and need for the project and the current condition of the analysis area. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act requires that only the proposed action be analyzed, with one exception. If the community has adopted a community wildfire protection plan and the proposed action does not implement the recommendations in the plan regarding the general location and basic method of treatments, the agency is required to analyze the recommendations in the plan as an alternative to the proposed action (HFRA 104(d)(2) and (3)). The proposed action is consistent with recommendations in the 2016 Fremont County Community Wildfire Protection Plan; therefore, no other alternatives were considered or analyzed.

Rationale for My Decision

My decision was based on a thorough review of the environmental assessment and supporting documentation, and consideration of how well each alternative would:

- achieve the purpose and need for the project,
- respond to forest plan goals, desired conditions and objectives for the area, and
- address the public comments and issues that were raised.

As explained below, I believe the Proposed Action would address each of those decision criteria in a positive way while the no-action would not.

Achieving the Project Purpose and Need

The combination of accumulating fuels and increasing development on adjacent private lands has led to an increased risk to human life and property from wildfire. The purpose of this project is to reduce the threat to human life and private property while increasing fire fighter safety. This would be achieved by reducing tree-crown density, and increasing canopy-base height to help reduce the risk of crown fires, removing ladder fuels, which provide vertical and horizontal fuel continuity and would reduce the risk of fire moving into the canopy.

The Proposed Action was specifically designed to fully meet the purpose that the Caribou-Targhee National Forest has for proposing this project, as well as meeting the need to move the project area to be more resistant and resilient to disturbances such as fire. In contrast, taking no action would not address any of the resource management needs that my staff and our partners (e.g., collaborative interagency/user group consisting of Idaho state and county agencies, federal agencies in the area, private individuals, non-profit organizations, and local businesses) have identified for this area.

Responding to Forest Plan Goals, Desired Conditions and Objectives

As described in more detail on pages 8 and 9 of the environmental assessment, the 1997 Revised Forest Plan contains goals, desired conditions and objectives for the management of various resources on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Although the list was not comprehensive, they were the

primary components in the Revised Forest Plan that addressed the projects purpose and need, relevant issues, and management actions.

Fire Goals (Forest Plan, page III-6):

Suppress fire in a safe, cost-effective manner where necessary to protect human life and safety, developments, structures, and sensitive resource values. Fuel accumulations are reduced and managed within their historic range.

- Treatments would reduce surface, ladder and crown fuels and therefore reduce the potential for flame lengths greater than four feet. There would be a reduced risk to the public and firefighting forces and increase the success of firefighters engaging in fire suppression actions. Also, implementing the Proposed Action would likely reduce the risk of wildfire impacts to adjacent private lands and other resource values. These areas would become more resilient to stand-replacing wildfire and would likely allow for increased protection within the wildland urban interface. It is anticipated treatments would help fire managers introduce more low-intensity prescribed fire in the future to continue to reduce the negative impacts from unwanted wildfires.

- In addition to meeting the Forest Plans desired conditions and objectives, there are two local plans (Fuels Report, Buhl 2017). The 2016 Island Park Sustainable Fire Community Strategic Plan, and the Fremont County Wildfire Protection Plan. Both of these plans have documented their specific goals within their wildland urban interface. The purpose and need for action, as well as the Proposed Action for the Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment are aligned with these goals.

- Without treatment, over time there would be 1) an increase in surface and ladder fuels that affect flame length; 2) an increase in surface fuel loading levels that affect fire intensity and severity; 3) an increase in tree crown density that make crown fire initiation more likely. Increased fuel loading levels would continue to pose a threat to adjacent private land and ecosystems as fire suppression becomes more difficult.

Vegetation Goals (Forest Plan, pages III-12–13)

Maintain and restore healthy, diverse forested and non-forested ecosystems through time, including appropriate components of dead and down woody material. Use vegetation management to achieve a broad array of multiple-use and ecosystem management objectives, including: maintenance, improvement, and restoration of forest health; scenic viewsheds and corridors; wildlife habitat effectiveness and quality; hazardous fuels reduction; biological diversity of plant and animal communities; riparian and watershed health and function; and vegetation structure, composition, and distribution in larger landscapes.

- Prescribed burning reduces surface fuels, prunes low branches of over story trees, and reduces flammable understory vegetation. It also promotes growth of herbaceous understory plants as well as having important ecological effects in areas that have historically had fire as part of the disturbance process.

- Tree stands are currently experiencing high competitive tree interactions; are growing at much less than potential; and full site occupancy has occurred. The Proposed Action changes stand structure from multi-story stands to both single and two-storied stands after projected aspen regeneration. Thinning to reduce basal area can effect a reduction in susceptibility to Douglas-fir beetle.

- Project activities would not occur in habitats that are important for grizzly bear foraging. No timber harvesting or similar type of disturbance activity would occur within the security areas during the time the security areas are designated. The total acreage of this project would not exceed one percent of the acreage of the largest subunit within the bear management unit. Henrys Lake Bear Management Unit 1 allows 1,227 acres of secure habitat to be temporarily lost. When constructed, the proposed temporary roads would reduce secure habitat to 1,012 acres which is below the 1,227 acres allowed.

- Long-term water quality would be maintained under the Proposed Action by implementing design features (EA pages 17-18) that ensures long-term large woody debris recruitment, minimize ground disturbance, and protect water quality. The Willow Creek sub-watershed presently does not meet the Forest Plan guideline for hydrologic disturbance (EA pages 34-35). Although Willow Creek is currently very hydrologically disturbed at 76 percent, very little treatment is proposed in this sub-watershed (16 acres or approximately 0.1 percent of the watershed area). This sub-watershed would be 76 percent hydrologically disturbed with or without implementation of the proposed action.

Timber Management Goals (Forest Plan, pages III-31 and 33)

Silvicultural techniques would be used as a tool to manage or manipulate vegetation for the purpose of achieving Forest Plan resource objectives. Emphasis would be placed on restoration of ecological function, structure, and composition.

- In Units 1-4, removal of trees will reduce tree competition and interactions. The effects of density dependent mortality are significantly reduced. Treatments under the Proposed Action prevents these stands from entering the *Zone of Imminent Mortality*[1] for 50 years. In Unit 5, where only thinning from below occurs, the stand overstory remains unchanged. Over time, this stand is experiencing high competitive tree interactions, growth is less than potential and full site occupancy has occurred. In 50 years, the stand is nearing the *Zone of Imminent Mortality*. The effects of density dependent mortality are only moderately reduced in Unit 5.

- Without treatment, in 10 years, stand densities would enter the *Zone of Imminent Mortality*, and after 20-50 years, units would experience density dependent mortality in earnest. An increase in stressors from drought, competition, insects and disease can be expected to increase and induce density dependent mortality contributing to increase the component of dead, standing and down fuels in the wildland urban interface.

Wildlife Goals (Forest Plan III-16-23)

Wildlife biodiversity is maintained or enhanced by managing for a diverse array of habitats and distribution of plant communities. Provide suitable habitat conditions for known active and historic goshawk nesting territories.

- Goshawk surveys were conducted in 2015 and 2016. An active nest was identified in Unit 1 and there is a foraging portion of a territory in Unit 3. In Unit 1, all Forest Plan standard and guidelines for the nest area will be achieved. No treatments would occur in the nest area. The original Unit 3 was slightly altered from the pre-2015 surveys to remove the nest and post fledgling family area from treatment. The project would retain mature and old tree overstory, and would not reduce the security of the area for goshawk nesting.

[1] A zone where there is a probable occurrence of competition-based mortality in stands.

Addressing Public Comments and Issues

As presented in detail the Yale Creek Scoping Report, located in the project record, the substantive comments that I received during the comment period were addressed. A few subjects led me to modify the initial Proposed Action to incorporate public suggestions (e.g. grizzly bear security and Mt. Jefferson Roadless Area) into the final Proposed Action (EA, page 10 and page 4 of this document).

In general, the public seemed to be very supportive of the project and understands the need to take action. For these reasons, I believe the Proposed Action would respond much better to public sentiments than taking no action.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

For each resource, the environmental assessment and/or specialist reports contains a discussion on how the Proposed Action is consistent with the laws and regulations relevant to the specific resource being addressed. After reviewing each report and the environmental assessment, I find my decision to implement the Proposed Action complies with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The Proposed Action does not require any forest plan amendments. Activities in this project are consistent with the NFMA (16 USC 1604 (i)) and the 1997 revised Targhee National Forest Plan and will 1) provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area to meet overall multiple-use objectives; 2) ensure that soil, water, and watershed resources will be protected (see environmental assessment, soil and hydrological analyses).

1997 Revised Forest Plan Consistency

I have determined that the activities approved in this decision are entirely consistent with the Forest Plan, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The project was designed in conformance with forest plan direction in the form of desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines. The environmental assessment and associated resource reports provide details on consistency with the forest plan.

For specifics on how each resource meets the desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines in the 2015 forest plan, please refer to the environmental assessment and resource specialists report on the Caribou-Targhee website at **http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ctnf/landmanagement/projects** under the Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Project listing.

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990

I have also determined that my draft decision complies with Executive Orders 11988, and 11990, dealing with floodplains and wetlands. Incorporating design features described in the environmental assessment (pg. 15-20) the project will comply with the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, and Idaho Water Quality Standards.

Executive Order 13112 (Invasive Species)

The selected alternative will meet the intent stated in Executive Order 13112. Through the implementation of design features for invasive species, populations of weeds will have little potential to spread in the project area.

National Historic Preservation Act

Heritage surveys have been completed in portions of Units 1 and 5. The remaining units will be surveyed prior to implementation. If any historical properties are discovered, proper action or avoidance will occur in conjunction with consultation with Idaho State Historic Preservation Office. No treatments will occur that would affect a cultural site located in treatment Unit 5.

Endangered Species Act

To comply with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, biological assessments for wildlife, fisheries, and botanical species were completed.

There are no endangered wildlife species within the project area. There are two threatened wildlife species in the project area: Grizzly Bear, and Canada Lynx. Both wildlife species have a determination of **"may affect, but not likely to adversely affect"** for reasons cited in the environmental assessment on pages 26-29. US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with these findings October 1, 2017.

There are no threatened or endangered fish species that occur within the project area.

There are no plants listed as endangered within the project area. A threatened species, Ute ladies'-tresses, is the only plant species listed under the Endangered Species Act found on the Forest. No habitat suitable for the species exists within or near the project area. Therefore, it has been determined that there would be "**No effect**" on Ute ladies'-tresses.

Environmental Justice Act

The Proposed Action was assessed to determine whether it will disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations, in accordance with Executive Order 12898. There were no public comments raised regarding environmental justice considerations, and no impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified during scoping or any other portion of public involvement during the course of this analysis and based on this, I find that the selected alternative complies with this Act.

Administrative Review and Objection Rights

This decision is subject to administrative review (objection) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218, subparts A and C.

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the project either during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with §218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

A written objection must be submitted to the reviewing officer within 30 calendar days following publication of the legal notice in the newspaper of record, Idaho Falls Post Register. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection.

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d), as identified in the legal notice of the objection period. Incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). Incomplete responses make review of an objection difficult and are conditions under which the reviewing officer may set aside an objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218.10. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, express delivery, messenger service or fax to:

Objection Reviewing Officer
USDA Forest Service
Intermountain Region
324 25th Street, Ogden, UT, 84401
Fax: (801) 625-5277

Office hours for those submitting hand-delivered objections are: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays at the address above. Electronic objections must be submitted to objections-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us, with "Yale Creek Fuels Reduction Project" typed in the subject line. Electronic objections must be submitted in MS Word (.doc or .docx), rich text format (.rtf), portable document format (.pdf) or other format that can be read with optical character recognition software. It is the responsibility of Objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (36 CFR 218.9).

Implementation

If objections are filed, approval of project activities will not occur until the pre-decisional review process is complete and a final decision notice issued. A decision will not be signed until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all pending objections, and all concerns and instructions identified by the reviewing officer in the objection response have been addressed.

When no objections are filed, the responsible official may sign the DN on, but not before, the fifth business day following the end of the objection filing period. Project implementation may occur immediately after the Decision Notice is signed.

Contact Information

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact
Jon White, Project Leader
P.O. Box 858, 46 Highway 20
Ashton, ID 83420
208-652-7442

Responsible Official

I am delegated the authority and am the responsible official for the decision outlined in this Decision Notice. Based on the project record, the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, and the rational stated above, I find there are no significant impacts and therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Elizabeth Davy

Elizabeth Davy
District Ranger
Ashton/Island Park Ranger District
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

10-13-17

Date

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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