



File Code: 1950

Date: October 30, 2023

Dear Interested Party,

The **Rumbling Owl Fuels Reduction Project** located on the Swan Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest southeast of Condon, Montana and east of Highway 83 on National Forest System Lands. This project would make progress towards decreasing the risk/severity of future wildland fires, improve fire suppression effectiveness, improve firefighter/public safety in the wildland-urban interface and improve forest health conditions in which they are better prepared for, respond to, and aid recovery from severe wildfire, post-fire effects, and other disturbances.

The following project activities are proposed on approximately 5,400 acres:

- Decrease tree densities and surface fuels to reduce the likelihood of stand replacing fire within the wildland-urban interface.
- Increase the presence of large size classes of tree species over time, which may help maintain low levels of insect and disease activity in the project area.
- Construction of approximately 4 miles of temporary road.

The full public scoping package can be found on the Rumbling Owl project webpage at:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=64924> .

The Flathead National Forest is requesting approval from the Secretary to use the Emergency Action Determination authority for the Rumbling Owl Fuels Reduction project. The project lies within the High Risk Fireshed identified as Condon, Montana [278]. The reason for requesting this emergency authority is to mitigate the harm to life and property adjacent to National Forest System land; remove hazardous fuels; and protect and restore water resources and infrastructure.

The request is currently pending approval. If approved, the Rumbling Owl project will not be subject to the pre-decisional objection review process. It is therefore critical you provide feedback on this project during this scoping period. An additional comment period will be offered once a Draft EA is produced from feedback received from the scoping period. The public may not be able to raise additional project concerns during an objection period.

If the request is not granted, the Rumbling Owl project would be subject to the predecisional administrative review process (objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B. Objections will only be accepted from those who have submitted written comments specific to the proposed project during this 30-day scoping period, the future comment period or other public involvement where written comments are requested by the Responsible Official (36 CFR 218.5).

Public Meeting and Field Trip

The Flathead National Forest, Swan Lake Ranger District, will be hosting a public meeting/field trip at the Swan Valley Community Hall, 6803 MT Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826 about the Rumbling Owl Project on Wednesday, November 29, 2023 from 2:00-4:00 pm MST. The first portion will be a discussion of the project at the community hall followed by a field trip to the project area. The purpose is to engage in information sharing with the public on project activities and to answer questions.

How to Submit Comments During Scoping

Comments on the project are due by December 13, 2023. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.



Due to the large amounts of research available, if you cite literature in your comments, please provide us with a complete bibliography and a copy of the referenced materials. The following options are available for submitting comments:

1. **Electronic comments** must be submitted through the project webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=64924>. On the right side of the project webpage there is a box “Get Connected” click on the ‘*Comment/Object on Project*’ link to submit your comment. An automated response will confirm your electronic submission was received. If you do not receive this automated response, then your comment was not received. Acceptable formats for electronic submission are text or html email, Adobe portable document format (PDF), and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications (e.g. Word).
2. **Hardcopy comments** can be mailed or hand-delivered (Monday through Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays)

Mail or Hand Deliver

U.S. Forest Service, Swan Lake Ranger District
Attn: Christopher Dowling (Rumbling Owl)
200 Ranger Station Road
Bigfork, MT 59911

3. **Fax comments** to (406) 837-7522. Cover page needs to include “Comments for Rumbling Owl, Attn: Christopher Dowling.”

Thank you for taking the time to review the actions proposed for this project. If you have any questions, please contact Jeff Durkin, jeffrey.durkin@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Christopher Dowling
Swan Lake District Ranger

