

Signed in Washington, D.C., on December 15, 1999.

Robert J. Prchal,

*Deputy Administrator, Insurance Services,
Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.*

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Bark Beetle Analysis Environmental Impact Statement Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District, Routt County, CO

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will assess and disclose the environmental effects of an imminent bark beetle analysis. The area of the analysis is the Hahns Peak/Bears Ranger District and the portion of the Parks Ranger District East of the Continental Divide to the boundary of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest.

Over the next few months the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests will be developing a proposed action and making decisions on how to respond to a bark beetle epidemic. The public is strongly encouraged to participate in this process.

An epidemic will cause significant changes to the forest landscape, recreation experience, watershed conditions, and wildlife habitat—changes that many people will not consider positive. Spruce and pine trees on private lands throughout Routt, Moffatt, and Grand counties will be at risk, including trees in urban areas.

The Forest Service has been working since late spring to define the problems an epidemic will present. Along with key members of the community, Forest Service officials visited the Dixie National Forest in Utah to see how they were managing their current bark beetle epidemic. A community task force was developing that continues to meet regulatory. Field surveys have been conducted on National Forest System lands to estimate the potential effects of bark beetles on various resources. Extensive beetle population surveys have also been completed.

The U.S. Forest Service has a responsibility to manage National Forests for the public good. Various laws, regulations and policies frame the purpose of National Forests and provide

reasons for the Forest Service to manage a bark beetle epidemic. The guiding legal framework compels the Forest Service to:

- Prevent an epidemic from spreading to adjacent lands where possible,
- Maintain healthy and aesthetically pleasing stands of trees in the ski area,
- Restrict insect outbreaks in timber management, recreation, and scenic areas,
- Sustain the growing stock of timber,
- Protect the wildlife and plant species that depend on mature spruce forest, and
- Maintain watershed health.

DATES: Public Scoping began with a mailing to people who expressed an interest in the Routt Divide Blowdown, South Fork Salvage Analysis, and Upper Elk River Access Analyses, land owners within the Forest Service boundaries adjacent to the analysis area, and State, County, and local officials. There will be a 45-day public comment period following the publication of this notice.

On January 6, 1999, Forest Service specialists will host an open house for the public to discuss the Bark Beetle Analysis from 4:00 pm until 7:00 pm at the Forest Service Office, 925 Weiss Dr., Steamboat Springs, CO 80487.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be prepared and available after the scoping comment period. After a 45-day comment period from the date of this notice, a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be prepared and available for the Bark Beetle Analysis.

ADDRESSES: Mail comment letters to and request further information from: Andy Cadenhead, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest, 925 Weiss Dr., Steamboat Springs, CO 80487, (970) 870-2220.

Responsible official: Jerry E. Schmidt, Forest Supervisor, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, 2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, WY 82070.

Jerry Schmidt,

Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Pendola Fire Restoration Project, Tahoe National Forest, Yuba County, CA

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest, will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for proposed timber salvage, wildlife habitat improvement, and non-native and invasive plant control projects within the 2,600-acre National Forest System land portion of the Pendola Fire Restoration Project analysis area located just north of Bullards Bar Reservoir and west of the town of Camptonville, California, near the Pendola Ranch. The project area is located within all or portions of T18N, R07E; T18N; R08E; T19N, R07E; and T19N, R08E MDB&M.

The agency invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis. In addition, the agency gives notice of the full environmental analysis and decision-making process that will occur on the proposal so that interested and affected people are aware of how they may participate and contribute to the final decision.

DATES: Comments should be made in writing and postmarked by January 7, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Written comments concerning the project should be directed to U.S.F.S., Tahoe National Forest, Downieville Ranger District, ATTN: Dennis Stevens, 15924 Highway 49, Camptonville, CA 95922.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeane Masquelier, District Ranger, or Dennis Stevens, Project Manager, Downieville Ranger District, Camptonville, CA 95922 at (530) 288-3231.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On October 16, 1999, the Pendola wildfire started just north of Bullards Bar Reservoir. Before being controlled, the fire consumed over 4,565 acres of land on the northeast side of the reservoir, with approximately 2,600 of these acres being National Forest System lands. These 2,600 acres of National Forest System lands are being analyzed for projects within the Pendola Fire Restoration analysis area. The analysis area incorporates land within the Upper Mill Creek, Lower Mill Creek, Bridger Creek, North Yuba Arm of Bullards Bar Reservoir, and the Willow Creek Arm of Bullards Bar Reservoir watersheds, all of which drain into the North Yuba River, on which Bullards Bar Reservoir is situated. Located west of Camptonville, California, and north of and immediately adjacent to the reservoir at around 2,000 to 2,500 feet in elevation, the area is dominated by mixed conifer and hardwood forest, of which over 70 percent burned with moderate to high intensity, leaving scattered live trees, small patches of live trees, and many