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File Code: 1950
Date: October 10, 2014

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Interested Party:

The West Fork Ranger District is proposing vegetation management activities located along the West Fork Road near Bonnie Blue Creek/Rombo Gravel Pit and along the Hughes Creek drainage, approximately 4 - 8 miles east of the West Fork road (see enclosed map).

I am requesting your comments on the proposed vegetation treatments outlined below. This letter begins the coordination and public scoping process.

The proposed action encompasses approximately 66 acres within the Bitterroot Mountain Range, approximately 20 miles south of Conner, Montana. The project area is located in Township 1 South, Range 22 West, Section 15; Township 2 South, Range 22 West, Section 34; Township 2 South, Range 21 West, Sections 33 and 34; and Township 3 South, Range 21 West, Section 3.

The purpose of this project is to reduce hazardous fuels, control the spread of mountain pine beetle, and improve the long-term resilience of trees within the project area. I hope to begin implementation of this project either during the winter of 2014 or the spring of 2015.

Mountain pine beetles have been active within the project area for several years and increasing mortality amongst lodgepole pine is readily apparent. Treatment would include the removal of dead and dying lodgepole pine in units 3, 4, 5, and 8 (refer to attached map for specific locations).

Unit 6 is a mixed conifer stand comprised of lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine. In addition there is dispersed camping along the western edge of the unit adjacent to the West Fork of the Bitterroot River. As proposed, the treatment would consist of removal of all dead and dying lodgepole pine throughout the entire unit. The ponderosa pine, on the northern end of the unit, is associated with a plantation that is 45 year old. This area would be thinned to a 24-32 foot spacing which would mitigate further Mountain pine beetle infestation. Douglas-fir would not be removed from the unit, but would instead be left for stand diversity and visual screening. There would be some thinning of green trees on the southern end of the unit near a dispersed camping area to provide for user safety.

All units proposed for harvesting would incorporate the use of ground-based logging methods (e.g. tractor/skidder). Whole trees would be skidded to common landings where slash associated with harvesting activities would be piled and burned. Any residual slash left in the unit from the cutting of designated trees would be hand piled and burned within the respective boundaries of the associated unit.

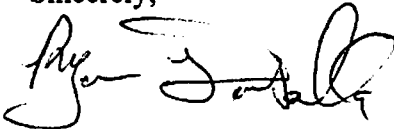


I am interested in any specific information you believe should be considered, prior to making a decision. I am particularly interested in any effects from the proposed project and any reasonable mitigation you think might help limit those effects. This project is being considered as categorically excluded (CE) from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (36 CFR 220.6(e)(12)). The information you provide during this scoping period will help to further refine the proposed project and determine whether there are extraordinary circumstances that would preclude categorically excluding the project from documentation in an EA or EIS. Categorically excluded projects are not appealable, nor are they subject to pre-decisional objections.

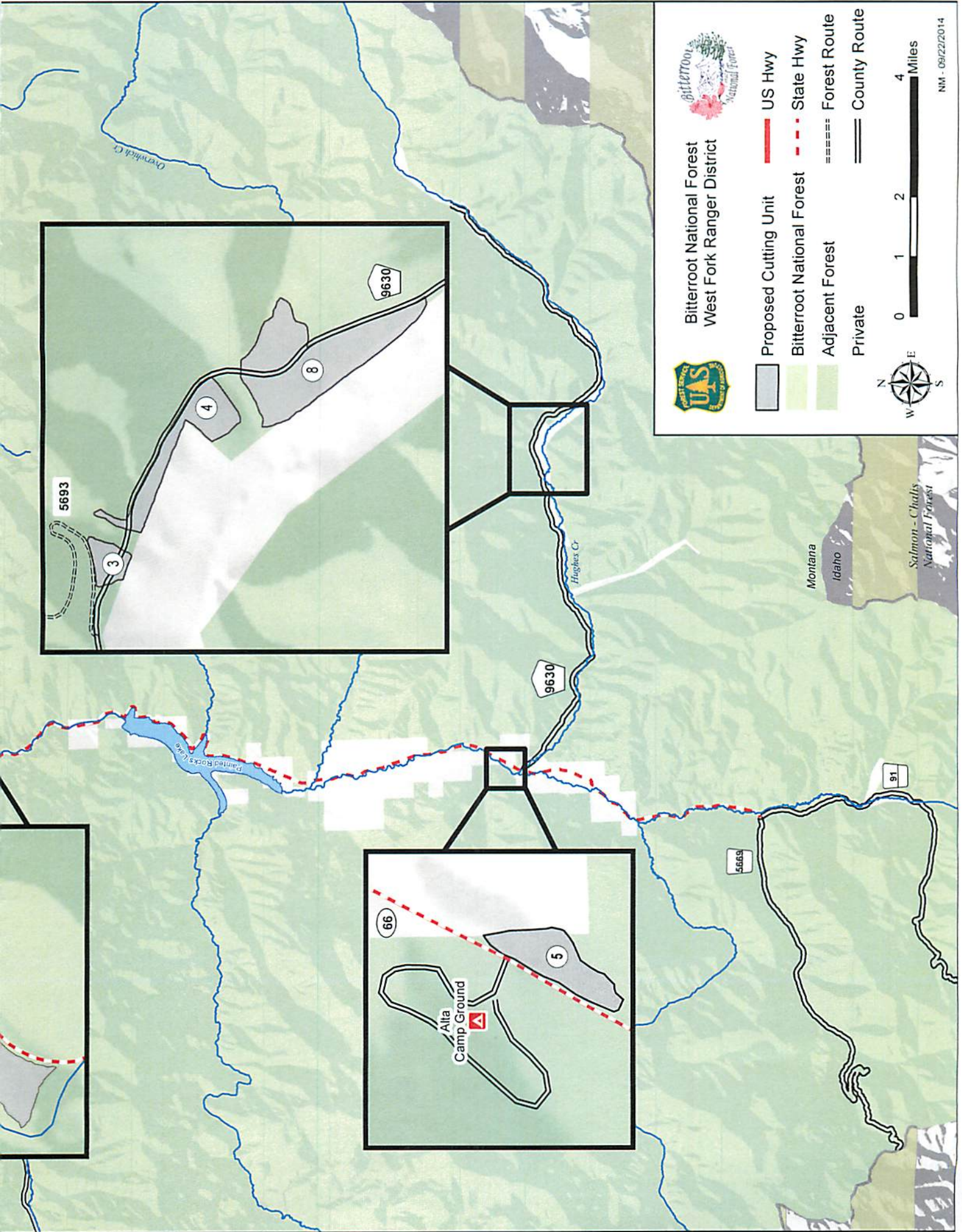
If you wish to comment on this proposed project, please address your comments to: Ryan Domsalla, District Ranger, West Fork Ranger District, 6735 West Fork Road, Darby, Montana 59829. Comments should include: 1) name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of project on which the comment is being submitted; and 3) specific facts and supporting information for the responsible official to consider. Comments may also be hand delivered weekdays 8:00 am - 4:30 pm at the above stated address. Commenter names, addresses and e-mail addresses will become part of the public record. Comments must be received or postmarked by October 31, 2014. For additional information, contact Tracy Anderson at the Darby Ranger Station, (406) 821-3913.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your comments. I can assure you that your comments are integral part of the decision process.

Sincerely,




A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan S. Domsalla". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "D".

RYAN S. DOMSALLA
District Ranger



Bitterroot National Forest
West Fork Ranger District



-  Proposed Cutting Unit
-  Bitterroot National Forest
-  Adjacent Forest
-  Private
-  US Hwy
-  State Hwy
-  Forest Route
-  County Route



Hughes Creek Firewood Sale Scoping Map

