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Ravalli County Commissioners

File Code: 1950
Date: July 14, 2015

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Dear Ravalli County Commissioners:

I have selected Alternative 4 from the Como Forest Health project analysis to manage the forest in the project area. I modified the alternative to include treatments in units 3, 8, 10, 26, 38, and 57 as analyzed under Alternative 2. Unit 8 was proposed as a non-commercial thin in Alternative 4 and I am changing the treatment to an intermediate harvest. Thirteen acres of ponderosa pine old growth were not proposed for treatment in Units 3 and 10 in Alternative 4 but I am including this area for treatment in the decision. The modifications to Alternative 4 will increase the area of commercial harvest by 185 acres and the commercial volume by about 1,500 hundred cubic feet. I describe the reasons for these modifications to Alternative 4 in the ROD. To summarize my rationale, these treatments reduce the mountain pine beetle hazard in more ponderosa pine stands in the wildland-urban interface and conserve some key wildlife habitat characteristics.

The Como Forest Health Project requires a project-specific Forest Plan amendment to reduce coarse woody debris levels to 5-10 tons/acre in fire groups 2 and 4, reduce the visual quality objective in Unit 8, and exempt the project area from thermal cover requirements on winter range. The Como Forest Health Project ROD and other environmental documents are available on the internet at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=33829>.

The Como Forest Health project was subject to the Pre-decisional Administrative Review process, 36CFR 218 subparts A and B. We received two objections. The Objection Reviewing Officer reviewed the project in the context of the objection points and suggested remedies. He found the project complied with all applicable laws and the Forest Plan. He allowed the decision to be signed after his instructions to the Forest in one objection were fulfilled and the FEIS was published in the Federal Register for 30 days. The instructions were fulfilled (PF-OBJ-003, PF-OBJ-004) and the FEIS was published in the Federal Register June 12.

Forest crews will start preparing the timber sale contract package based on the Como Forest Health project analysis immediately.

Thank you for your interest in this analysis. If you have questions about the Como Forest Health project analysis and decision, please contact me at (406) 363-7121 or stop by the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office at 1801 N. 1st St., Hamilton, Montana. Sara Grove, the interdisciplinary team leader, is also available to answer your questions at (406) 821-1251.

Sincerely,

Julie K. King
Forest Supervisor

