



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Upper Snake Field Office
1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, ID 83401
http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/upper_snake

In Reply Refer to:
9210

SURNAME/DATE	

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Upper Snake Field Office is conducting an environmental analysis on a proposed Victor Community Forest Health and Fuels Reduction project in the Trail Creek, Teton Basin, and Middle Teton River Watersheds. The proposed Victor Community Forest Health and Fuels Reduction project consists of seven parcels of BLM administered land located within the two Teton Counties of Idaho and Wyoming (see attached maps). The project area consists of approximately 7,390 acres of land in whole or part within Townships 0307 North and Ranges 44–46 East of the Boise Meridian and Townships 44–45 North and Ranges 118 West of the 6th Principal Meridian.

The purpose of this project is to:

1. Reduce the hazard and potential for high intensity wildfires on BLM administered lands and adjacent private properties.
2. Maintain or return vegetative communities to historic fire regimes (Fire Regime Condition Class 1).
3. Manage for forest health and/or diversity on BLM administered lands.

This project would reduce surface fuel loading and ladder fuels on BLM administered lands by reducing existing hazardous fuel loads by 50%, reducing conifer canopy densities, and by reducing conifer encroachment into historical aspen groves and forest. The proposed vegetation treatments would improve stand health, aid in wildfire suppression activities, and improve public and firefighter safety from wildfires. Forest stands would be made more resilient to insects and disease through a combination of stocking control and sanitation. Allowing low intensity fire to return as a disturbance agent to the landscape would maintain these open conditions and return this area to a frequent low-severity fire regime.

Alternative A (Proposed Action)

Under Alternative A, approximately 5, 109 acres would be treated using mechanical commercial thinning, helicopter commercial thinning, mechanical pre-treatment and manual treatment methods. Approximately 2, 990 acres would be treated using mechanical commercial thinning followed by prescribed burning or chipping to treat the slash (see attached map 1). Mechanical commercial thinning would be accomplished by using the selective harvest method, which removes trees either as single scattered trees or in small groups throughout different age classes

in a stand. The vast majority of trees selected would be Douglas-fir with a small volume of lodgepole pine and subalpine fir, and a few aspen to rejuvenate clones. Trees would be mechanically or manually felled and would then be yarded using a rubber tire skidder and/or crawler tractor.

Helicopter commercial thinning would use the same selective harvest method as the mechanical commercial thinning method with the exception that no ground based mechanical equipment would be used to remove trees. To aid in the felling and piling of trees for transport, a feller buncher would be authorized under this treatment. Approximately 200 acres would be thinned or harvested using a helicopter.

Mechanical pre-treatment would occur only within the Victor treatment unit on approximately 470 acres. Mechanical pre-treatment would include thinning and removal of tall dense areas of brush prior to implementing manual thinning treatments and/or prescribed burns. This would be accomplished using wheel tractors, crawler-type tractors, or specially-designed vehicles with attached implements for mechanical vegetation treatments. The vegetation treatments may include but are not limited to roller chopping, roto-beating, hydro-axing, and mulching.

Manual treatments would involve crews using chainsaws and/or power tools to cut, clear, or prune herbaceous and woody species. Manual treatments would be used on approximately 1,430 acres in areas of sensitive habitat or in areas where accessibility limits effective use of other treatments.

Once the timbered areas have been thinned and hazardous fuels reduction areas have been mechanically and/or manually treated, prescribed fire or chipping of piled slash would be used to complete the treatment. The hazardous fuel reduction areas would be burned in a mosaic pattern with an objective to treat a maximum of 60% of the existing vegetation cover. Mechanical and helicopter commercial thinning areas would either pile slash and burn or chip, or if slash is left lying on the forest floor, a low intensity broadcast burn would be used.

Implementation of the proposed action would require approximately 10 miles of temporary road construction. Upon completion of this project, temporary roads that are constructed for implementation of this project would be ripped, water barred, and seeded, in order to maintain the current level of motorized impacts to the wildlife habitat.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Alternative B (No Temporary Roads)

Under Alternative B, approximately 4,610 acres would be treated using mechanical commercial thinning, helicopter commercial thinning and manual treatment methods. Approximately 1,350 acres would be treated using mechanical commercial thinning, 1,365 acres treated using helicopter logging, and 1,900 acres treated using manual treatment methods (see attached map 2). As in Alternative A all treatments would be followed by prescribed burning or chipping to treat the slash. No new temporary or permanent roads will be constructed under this alternative. Access into the project area will be from 2 miles of existing routes that will be maintained and improved to provide access for mechanized equipment.

Alternative C (No Action Alternative)

Under Alternative C, fuel reduction would not be conducted within the Victor Community Forest Health and Fuels Reduction project boundary. The area would continue to have a high risk of large wildfire, increased rates of insect and diseases outbreaks, reduced forest health, and diminished aspen health and regeneration. The BLM would not meet land use planning objectives, nor would it meet the purpose and need for this proposal. This alternative would not be consistent with the objectives stated in the *1985 Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)* as amended by the *2008 Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan and FEIS*.

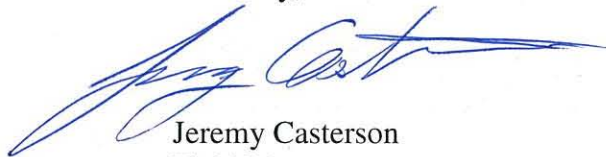
We welcome your comments on this proposal. A public scoping meeting will be held on January 26, 2012 from 4:00pm-7:00pm at the Driggs Senior Center (60 South Main St., Driggs, ID 83422). If you need further directions or information regarding the public meeting, please contact Shauna at (208) 354-6973. If you cannot attend the public scoping meeting, written suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the proposed project can be submitted to the address provided below. Comments must be received at this office by February 26, 2012. If we do not receive a response from you, we will assume you have no further interest in this project. Comments need to contain the following information:

1. Your name, address, and (if possible) telephone number, and organization represented (if any);
2. Name of the project for which you are submitting comments;
3. Additional key issues and concerns, and specific facts and supporting reasons that you feel should be considered in the environmental analysis and decision.
4. Additional alternatives or management opportunities that should be considered.
5. Any other additional comments you may wish to submit on the proposal.

Your comments should be mailed to Ben Dyer, Upper Snake BLM Field Office, 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401. You may also e-mail comments to bdyer@blm.gov. If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Ben Dyer at (208) 524-7534 or Channing Swan at (208) 478-6389.

Thank you for your interest in this project proposal. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

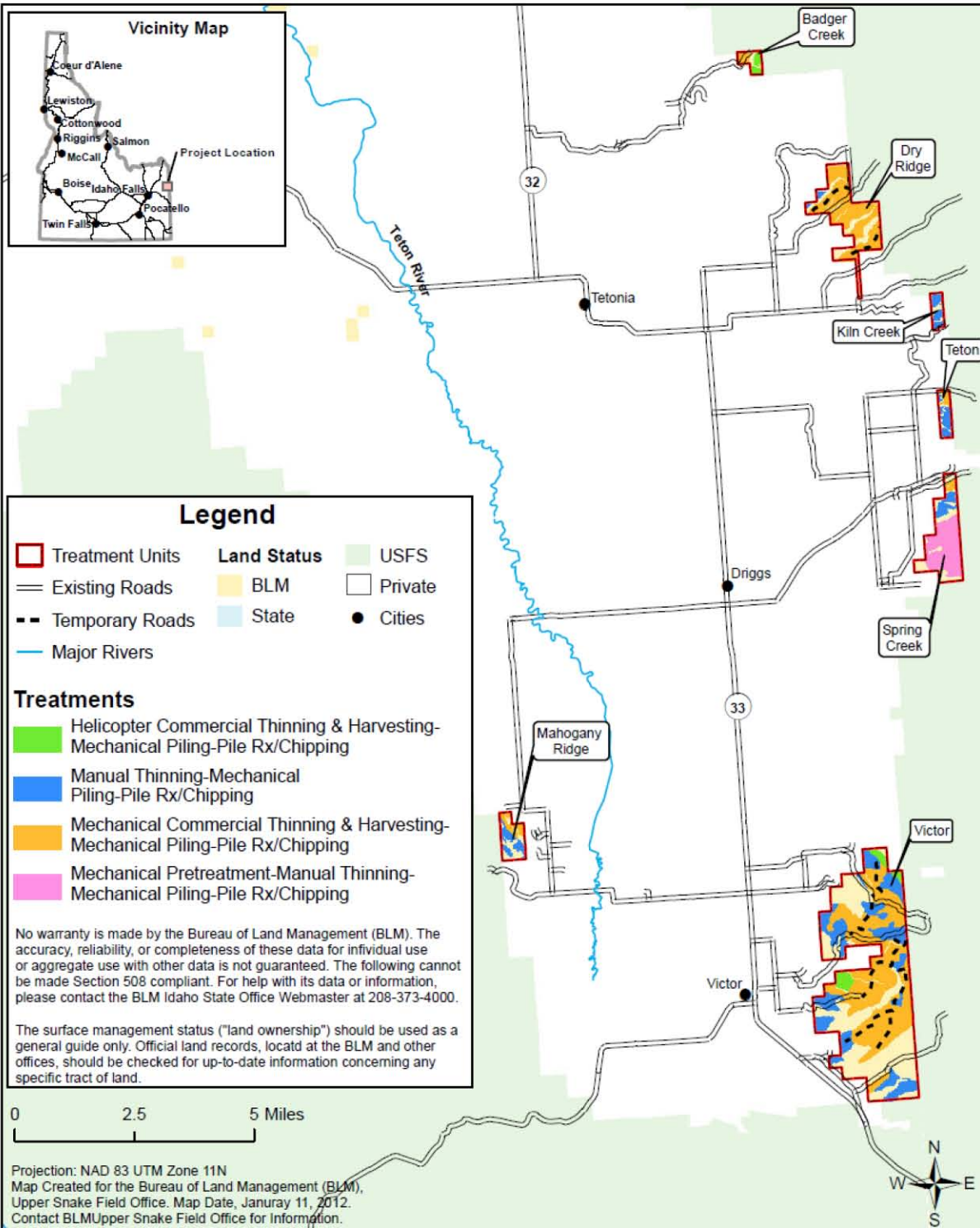


Jeremy Casterson
Field Manager

2 Enclosures:

1. Alternative A (Proposed Action) Map
2. Alternative B (No Temporary Roads) Map

Victor Community Forest Health Project Upper Snake Field Office Alternative A (Proposed Action)



Victor Community Forest Health Project Upper Snake Field Office Alternative B (No Temporary Roads)

