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**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
P.O. Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

A. Background

BLM Office: Kremmling Lease/Serial/Case File No.: _____

Number: DOI-BLM-CO-120-2010-0042-CX

Proposed Action Title/Type: Spruce Creek Thinning\Salvage Sale

Location of Proposed Action: T. 2 S., R. 81 W., Sections 10, 11; Eagle County, Summit County, Colorado; 6th Principal Meridian.

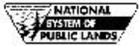
Description of Proposed Action: The BLM administered public lands near Kremmling, Colorado have experienced a severe epidemic level infestation of Mountain Pine Beetles (MPB) over the past several years. The extent of mortality to the lodgepole pine forests is wide spread throughout these public lands. The BLM is proposing to use a combination of thinning and mechanical treatment to harvest dead, currently infested and beetle/disease susceptible trees in three units that are approximately 48 acres (combined) in size (see map).

The units are primarily comprised of lodgepole pine but other tree species, subalpine fir, aspen, and Engelmann spruce, are scattered within the units. Designated timber within the three units was advertised for sale in 2001, but not purchased. The BLM is proposing to re-offer the designated timber in these units for sale, or may treat by service contracts, BLM crews or by other means. An environmental assessment and a class III cultural survey were completed for this sale in 1999. Originally the project specified thinning\salvage of trees in three units on 48 acres, leaving approximately 100 live trees per acre. Since the original analysis was completed, (MPB) mortality has increased in these units. The dead, infested and susceptible trees would be designated by the BLM for removal. Some areas would be thinned to a specified spacing, whereas other areas may appear like a clear cut. All Aspen and other groups of conifer species less than five inches DBH, would be retained where feasible.

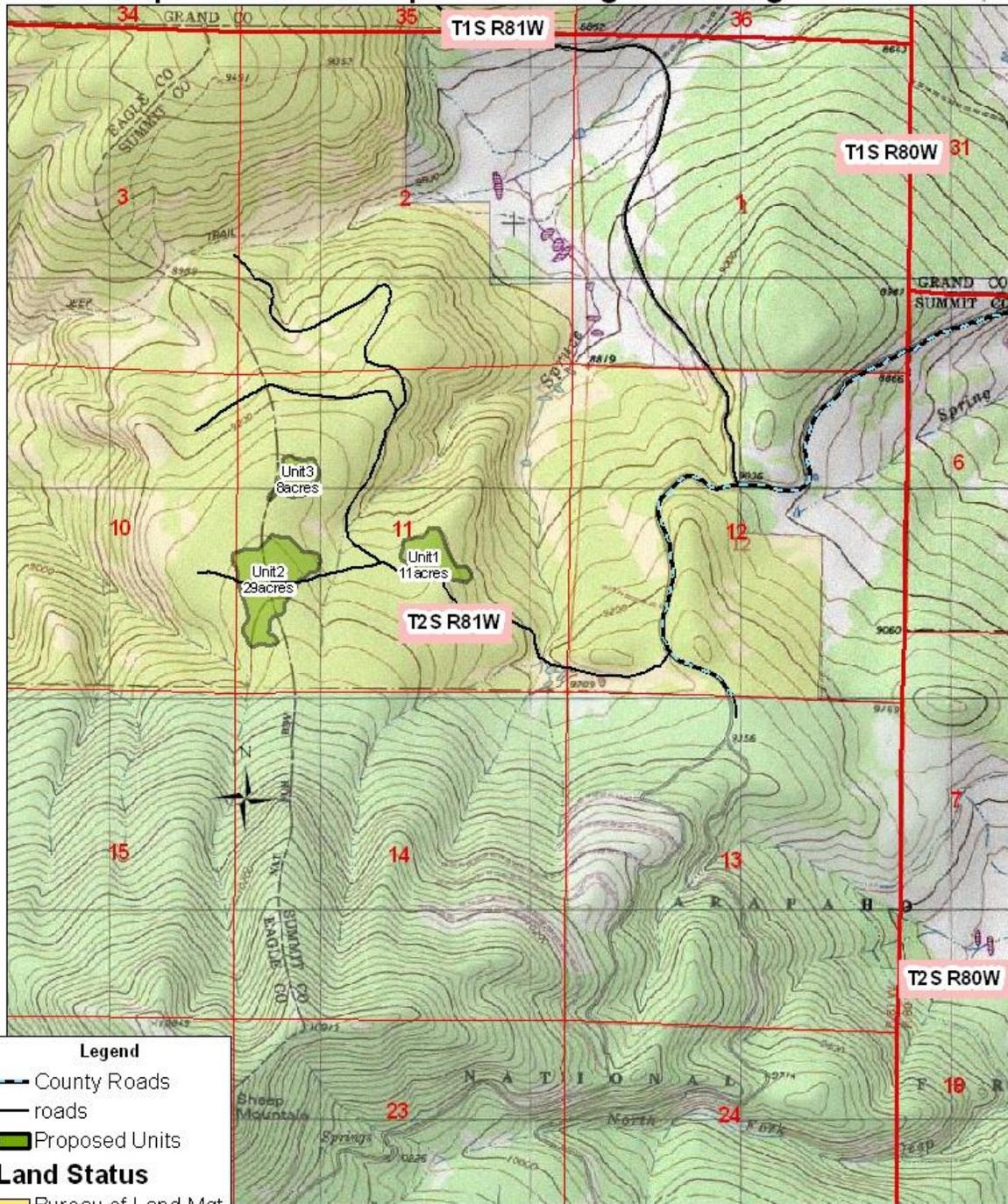
Operations would be done with conventional ground-based logging equipment. The sale is accessed by graveled BLM Roads 2767 and 2770, which are adjacent to, or pass through, the units. Existing open and closed native surface roads provide additional access. The existing roads may need to be improved and maintained. County Road 10 would be used as the main haul road. No other access, except for skid trails, should be necessary.

If closed, native surface roads are used for access, they would be re-closed by the purchaser or contractor following use. Disturbed areas, including landings and closed roads, would be scarified and seeded, as necessary, to stabilize soils and control noxious weeds. Any seeding would be with a BLM-approved mixture of forbs and grasses.

Slash, in the form of cull logs and top wood, would be offered for sale as biomass. Remaining slash would be offered for sale as biomass, piled and burned, lopped and scattered, or some combination of the above. Piles would be burned during the winter by the BLM when adequate snow depth is present and consistent with burning permit stipulations.



Spruce Creek Proposed Salvage/Thinning Sale Area

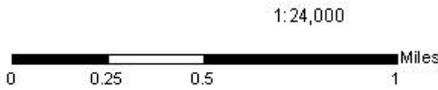


Legend

- County Roads
- roads
- Proposed Units

Land Status

- Bureau of Land Mgt
- Private
- State
- US Forest Service



Map ©: T:\GIS\src\rc\city\spruce_creek\spruce_creek.mxd
 BLM, Item # Mining PO
 TA 52-10

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD) Date Approved/Amended: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions(s):

Decision Number/Page: Ch. 2 -6, page 10

Decision Language: “To manage all productive forest land that is suitable for producing a variety of forest products on a sustained yield basis. This action will create a healthy forest environment through continued forest management practices.”

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.0, Section C (9), *“Commercial and non-commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 miles of temporary road construction.”*

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM2 apply.

I considered the size of the project and the design features built into the proposed action in reaching my decision that the proposed action would have no potential for significant impacts.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Review Completed
Megan McGuire	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Species and Wildlife	5/17/10
Frank G. Rupp	Archeologist	Paleontology	6/10/2010 * see write up under remarks.
Paula Belcher	Hydrologist	Soil, Water, Air, Wetlands	5/25/10
Bill B. Wyatt	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Tribal Consultation	8/2/2010
Richard Johnson	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation and Range Mgt	6/14/2010

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: A cultural survey was completed in 1999, BLM report #CR-18-99 by Frank Rupp, on 46 acres, that includes all three units. No new cultural sites were located within the cutting units. The use of GIS to determine the number of acres would account for the difference in acres from the original dot grid used for acre determination. The proposed action for the project would be a no effect, there are no historic properties that would be affected.

Native American Religious Concerns: Tribal consultation was initiated on March 26, 2010, and to date no tribe has identified any area of traditional spiritual concern.

Paleontology: Two potential fossil bearing geologic strata are observed within the proposed project area. They are the Morrison formation, and the Chinle/State Bridge Formations. These formations have been given BLM's highest Primary Fossil Yield and Condition Classifications. The formations are potentially of very high scientific value and the potential for their discovery is also very high. A random, pedestrian sampling of the geologic formations showed that the project area has few surface exposures of bedrock and no fossil bearing strata was discovered. It is possible, however, that fossils could be discovered during thinning and mechanical forest treatment. The project is recommended to proceed with BLM standard cultural/paleontological "discovery" stipulations attached to the sale and authorization to proceed.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The proposed project would not impact Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive Species.

Vegetation and Livestock Grazing: Only the west half of Unit 2 is in a livestock grazing allotment. The Proposed Action would have no impact on livestock grazing within the project area. The area is forested with a sparse understory of grasses and shrubs. The Proposed Action would have a beneficial impact on the understory vegetation within the project area. Care needs to be taken to prevent the introduction of weedy species during the logging operation.

D. Signature

Authorizing Official: /s/ David Stout Date: 8/4/2010
(Signature)

Name: David Stout
Title: Field Manager

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

Tom Adamson
Forester
P O Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459
970-724-3006

DECISION RECORD
CX # DOI-BLM-CO-120-2010-0042

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached CX.

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Water Act. This decision is also in conformance with the LUP and other applicable laws, regulations and policies.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action and have determined that it does not represent an extraordinary circumstance and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

RATIONALE: The proposed action to cut and remove dead, infested and beetle/disease susceptible trees was chosen because it meets the purpose and need identified in the analysis. A combination of thinning and mechanical treatment to harvest dead, currently infested and beetle/disease susceptible trees will create a healthy forest environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ David Stout

DATE SIGNED: 8/4/2010