



File Code: 1950

Date: 29 July 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The Hood River Ranger District on the Mt. Hood National Forest has identified you as an individual, agency, or organization that has shown interest in the planning process for the North Fork Mill Creek Restoration Opportunities Project. The Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project is now complete. It is available on the Mt. Hood National Forest website, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/projects/>. If you do not have access to the internet, please notify team leader Jennie O'Connor Card at 541-352-6002, if you would like us to send you a compact disc or a hard copy of the EA.

The Mill Creek planning area includes the North Fork of Mill Creek watershed and small portions of Mosier and Neal Creek watersheds on National Forest System lands. The legal land description is T1S-T2S, R10E-R11E, Willamette Meridian. The Hood River Ranger District proposes to treat approximately 2,800 acres under the Proposed Action. The purpose of all the activities is to reduce hazardous fuels (removal of surface fuels, removal of ladder fuels, and opening of the canopy) and improve forest health conditions (removing root rot pockets, removing diseased trees, thinning overstocked stands). The mechanical fuels reduction treatment methods would consist of tree thinning from below (including the sale of vegetative material), machine piling, hand thinning, pruning by hand, machine mastication, and manual brush removal. Underburning (prescribed fire) would be used in combination with mechanical treatments or with limited non-mechanized (pruning, hand falling) treatments to restore stand health and to create conditions whereby fire could function in a more natural role.

This project is being prepared under the Health Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) authorities with an emphasis to reduce hazardous fuels in the Mill Creek Watershed to protect the City of The Dalles Watershed. The Responsible Official has determined that the North Fork Mill Creek Restoration Opportunities Project fits HFRA criteria because the project is located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary. Since the project is within WUI and further than 1½ miles from the boundary of an at-risk community, HFRA requires the agency to analyze the Proposed Action as well as one action alternative (Alternative 2) [HR 1904, Section 104(d)(1)]. Alternative 2 does not have vegetation management treatments proposed in previously entered stands. In addition to the Proposed Action and Alternative 2, the No Action Alternative was considered to form a baseline for the project. Both alternatives incorporate other restoration opportunities, including road closure/decommissioning, culvert replacement/removal, and trail construction/improvement.

There are some special requirements and exemptions in an EA prepared under the HFRA that are different from traditional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures. These include limitations to the number of alternatives that are analyzed, and a predecisional administrative review (objection) process prior to the decision.



Predecisional Review (Objection) Process: Participation in the predecisional review (objection) process is limited to individuals and organizations who have submitted specific written comments related to the proposed hazardous fuels reduction project during the public scoping comment period (Section 105(a)(3), 36 CFR 218.6).

How to file an objection: Objections (including attachments), may be mailed, hand delivered, faxed, emailed, express delivered, or delivered by messenger to the Reviewing Officer at the address below. They must be received within thirty days following publication of the legal notice in *The Oregonian*. The legal notice will be published on approximately July 31, 2008. **Please be advised that it is the responsibility of objectors to ensure that their objection is received in a timely manner.**

Objections to this project must be filed with the Reviewing Officer at the following address:

REVIEWING OFFICER
Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Region Six
ATTN: 1570 Appeals/Objections
P.O. Box 3623
333 SW First Avenue
Portland, OR 97208-3623
Fax: 1-503-808-2255

Objections must comply with the requirements in 36 CFR 218.6 and 36 CFR 218.7.

Hand delivered objections must be presented to the above address between 8:00AM and 4:30PM Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. Objections can be filed electronically at: appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Electronic objections must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (.pdf) only. E-mails submitted to email addresses other than the one listed above, or in formats other than those listed or containing viruses, will be rejected. ***It is the responsibility of the appellant to confirm receipt of objections submitted by electronic mail.***

Timeline: A Decision Notice will be issued on this authorized hazardous-fuel-reduction project after the reviewing officer has responded to all pending objections.

Thank you for your continuing interest and participation in this process. For further information, please contact Jennie O'Connor Card at 541-352-6002 or jennieoconnorcard@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



GARY L. LARSEN
Forest Supervisor