

Decision Memo

LITTLE ANNIE

VEGETATION TREATMENT PROJECT



USDA Forest Service
San Isabel National Forest
Salida Ranger District
Salida, Colorado
Chaffee County

Introduction

The Little Annie project area is located northeast of Buena Vista in Chaffee County, Colorado within portions of T. 13 S., R.78 W., Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 17 & 18. This area of the San Isabel National Forest Service is a mosaic of vegetation types ranging from mountain grasslands to mixed shrub communities to ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests with pockets of aspen.

A mountain pine beetle outbreak has occurred in the ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands in the project area. This outbreak has killed up to 50% of the ponderosa pine in some stands and pine beetles are still active in stands containing ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir within the project area. Aspen is present as both a dominate component as well as a minor component of conifer stands.

The project area is located in Management Area 5B (Big Game Winter Range). The Buffalo Peaks Wilderness Area is located to the north of the project area. The project area also includes both protected and restricted Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) habitat.

The intent of this project is to restore and maintain healthy and diverse ecosystems to provide improved resilience and sustainability. In addition the project will treat vegetation so that growth and vigor of residual trees are maintained or increased to favor the development of a large tree forest structure within the MSO recovery plan guidelines. Treating hazardous fuel accumulations will also result in a landscape condition closer to the historical fire regime, improve Fire Regime Condition Class Rating and create stand conditions that allow for greater resistance of remaining stands to insect and disease outbreaks.

Proposed Action,

The Little Annie project proposes to improve forest stand conditions and wildlife habitat by reducing fuel loading and increasing diversity of stand conditions through forest management (prescribed fire and mechanical treatments) in the Little Annie area on the Salida Ranger District of the Pike and San Isabel National Forest. The proposed action will treat approximately 1,050 acres of Forest lands. Treatment types and acres are listed below.

Summary of Treatment Types

Treatment Type	Proposed Action (Approximate Acres)
No Treatment	183
Prescribed Fire	470
Mechanical Treatments	398
<i>Salvage, Thinning & Prescribed Fire</i>	260
<i>Sanitation-Dwarf Mistletoe</i>	82
<i>Fuel Break Treatments</i>	56
National Forest lands	1,050
Private lands (BV-School District)	51
Project Area-Total Acreage	1,101

The proposed action will thin trees and remove dead material throughout the forested treatment units. The trees cut and removed from the thinning efforts will be utilized whenever possible (sawlogs, posts, stays, firewood, etc) or disposed of by burning (broadcast and pile). See Appendix A for a detailed description of the treatment prescriptions for each polygon.

Decision

I have decided to implement the actions listed above in the “Summary of Treatment Types” table and identified in Appendix A of this Decision Memo on the National Forest System lands within the Little Annie project area.

Design Criteria developed by the Interdisciplinary Team, will be followed to implement the project. A detailed description of the treatments and the associated design criteria are located in Appendix A of the Decision Memo.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

Originally, this project was scoped under FSH 1909.15, Category 31.2 (10). On December 5, 2007, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declared the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Categorical Exclusion (FSH 1909.15, chapter 30, 31.2 (10)) developed under the President’s Healthy Forest Initiative invalid. After review of the administrative record and review of the project, I have determined that this project better meets the requirements for Categorical Exclusion 1909.15, chapter 30, 31.2 (06)). This review concluded that this action falls within a category of actions, which normally do not individually or cumulatively have significant effect on the environment, and, therefore, can be excluded from documentation in an environmental analysis or environmental impact statement. This provision is in FSH 1909.15, Category 31.2 (06): Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.

Category 31.2 (06) applies in this case because the project area is designed to improve forest stand conditions, improve wildlife habitat, along with reducing fuel loadings and addressing forest health issues within the project area. The project is consistent with all applicable land resource management plans, will not affect wilderness or proposed wilderness, and will not make use of herbicides, except for the treatment of noxious weeds, or result in new permanent infrastructure such as roads. A project or case file is required for actions listed in Category 31.2. The project file will be maintained at the Salida Ranger District, Salida, Colorado.

Extraordinary Circumstances and Consistency with Other Laws

I find the proposed action can be categorically excluded because there were no extraordinary circumstances or issues identified by the interdisciplinary team of resource specialists that analyzed this proposal or during public scoping. Extraordinary circumstances considered in my evaluation, but dismissed with reasoning are as follows:

- *Threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat:* A Biological Evaluation for this action has been prepared. No potentially significant impacts to Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species were found.
- *Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:* This project will not take place in a flood plain or in a municipal watershed. The project is anticipated to have minimal to no impacts on wetlands and riparian areas. Identified wetlands and riparian areas will be protected from impacts from the proposed action
- *Congressionally designated areas (such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, etc):* No actions will occur in Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas.
- *Roadless areas (wild and scenic study rivers, etc):* There are no roadless areas located within the analysis area.
- *Research Natural Areas:* There are no Research Natural Areas located within the analysis area.
- *Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas:* Archeologists have reviewed the affected area for Native American religious and cultural sites, archaeological sites and historic properties. Known sites will be protected from impacts from the proposed action.

Public Involvement

Beginning on March 13, 2007, the Little Annie area was mentioned in the Mountain Mail Newspaper in Salida, CO as a potential area for fuels reduction treatments. Legal Notices were published in the Mountain Mail and Chaffee County Times on March 16, 2007 and March 22, 2007, respectively, discussing the opportunity to comment on and eligibility for appeals of the project.

A proposal for the vegetation treatment project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions on December 31, 2006. A "scoping letter" identifying this proposal and soliciting public comments and participation in the planning process was mailed on March 15, 2007 to about 75 addresses. The list included surrounding property owners, citizen organizations, environmental

groups, government agencies, local media, and individuals who had expressed interest in this project. The list of individuals, groups, organizations, and agencies that were notified of the proposed project and invited to comment on it, may be found in the project file located at the Salida Ranger District Office.

Issues raised during public involvement included the use of and closure of project created roads, slash piling and burning, mountain pine beetles, noxious weeds, roadless designation, and wildlife issues. These comments are considered in this decision and the responses to these comments are located in Appendix B.

Findings Required by Other Laws

The proposed action is consistent with the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan (1984) as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines for the protection of forest resources. The project is also in conformance with Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines for the following Management Areas:

Pike/San Isabel National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan	
5D-Managing forage and cover on Big Game winter ranges.	pp. III – 149 - 153

This proposed action complies with other laws and regulations applicable to actions undertaken on the national forests, including but not limited to the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 12898 Environmental Justice, and the Endangered Species Act.

The Fourmile Allotment Management Plan manages grazing allotments in the analysis area.

Implementation Date

This project could be implemented as early as 5 days after the end of the 45 day appeal period.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Mountain Mail*, published daily in Salida, Colorado. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Sec. 215.13 Who may participate in appeals.

- (1) Any person or group who submitted written comment in response to a project draft; or
(2) Provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in a particular proposed action by the close of the comment period specified in Sec. 215.6.

Appeal filing for District Ranger decisions:

USPS, UPS, FedEx/hand-carry

USDA Forest Service, Region 2
Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer
740 Simms St.
Golden, CO 80401-4790

FAX : 303-275-5134

EMAIL: appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us

Appeal Content Requirements

It is an appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official's decision should be reversed. At a minimum, an appeal must include the following (CFR 215.14):

1. Appellant's name and address (CFR 215.1) with telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant (CFR 215.2) and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
5. The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either this part of part 251, subpart C (CFR 215.11d);
6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
7. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
8. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
9. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

Notice of appeal that do not meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14 will be dismissed.

If no appeal is filed, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of the appeal disposition.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Sam Schroeder, Forester, Salida Ranger District.

Address: Salida Ranger District, 325 West Rainbow Blvd., Salida, Colorado 81201
Phone: (719) 530-3969
Email: sschroeder@fs.fed.us

William A. Schuckert

July 7, 2008

William A. Schuckert

Date

District Ranger
Salida Ranger District
San Isabel National Forest

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Appendix A**Treatment Options: Description of the Treatment Prescriptions**

No Treatment (approximately 183 acres): *Polygons: 172, 173, 875, 876 (of the Numbers Watershed); 625, 712, 755, 756, 757, 758, 776, 780, 785, 786, 793, 809, 829, 835, 839, 859, 871, 876, (within the Fourmile Watershed).*

Actions currently permitted and actions approved on earlier decisions will continue as authorized.

Prescribed Fire (approximately 470 acres): *Polygons: 199 and 877 (of the Numbers Watershed); polygons 642, 644, 645, 646, 647, 724, 726, 728, 729, 730, 731, 746, 749, 752, 789, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 847, 849, 850, 851, 852, 877, (within the Fourmile Watershed).*

The objective of prescribed fire is to reduce hazardous fuel accumulation, promote regeneration (grass, forbs, shrubs, and trees) and reintroduce fire into fire-dependent ecosystems. Prescribed fire will also be used to improve the health of the rangeland and improve the forage. The desired result will be a mosaic pattern in the meadows and shrub-land of approximately 50 to 75% of the vegetation burned. In Forested stands where broadcast burning is used, the desired result would be a mosaic pattern of 50-75% of the understory vegetation burned and less than 10% of the overstory. Unit 728 is Mexican spotted owl (MSO) protected habitat; although prescribed fire has not been excluded, and may be allowed to creep through the stand, it will not be intentionally lit through prescribed burn operations in order to prevent loss of the overstory component. If fire intensity threatens the overstory component, suppression efforts would be initiated in this unit.

Broadcast burning may occur March through November, though late spring (April-May) and early fall (September - October) are the typical burn windows. The prescribed fire units will be delineated using natural fuel breaks, roads, handline, ATV dragline, and / or wetline. Preparation work may be needed to ensure the prescribed burn is maintained within the prescription set forth in the prescribed fire plan. Preparation work may include the construction of hand lines, ATV dragline and the removal of brush or mechanical thinning to be completed prior to ignition to improve holding features. Where available, natural and existing fuel breaks will be used.

Aerial ignition (ping-pong ball, helitorch), hand ignition (drip torches, fusees) and/or all terrain vehicle (ATV) ignitions may be used. A prescribed fire plan and appropriate smoke permits will be completed prior to burning. The prescribed fire plan will address such items as unit delineation, weather parameters, necessary holding resources, sensitive areas (i.e. power lines, highways, and improvements), public safety, and smoke concerns. Prescribed burning of individual units will likely be completed in 2 to 3 days, with residual smoke lasting 3 to 5 days.

Pile burning may take place in areas where broadcast burning is not desired or where fuels must be reduced prior to broadcast burning (ie. fuel breaks). If pile burning is used to dispose of the slash, hand piles will be no larger than 6 feet x 6 feet x 6 feet and mechanical piles would be no larger than 15 feet x 15 feet x 15 feet. A prescribed fire plan and appropriate smoke permits will be completed prior to burning. The prescribed fire plan will address such items as unit delineation, weather parameters, necessary holding resources, sensitive areas (i.e. power lines, highways, and improvements), public safety, and smoke concerns. The burning of the piles

usually takes place in the winter months (November-April). Prescribed burning of the piles will likely be completed in 1 to 3 days, with residual smoke lasting 1 to 5 days.

Prior to prescribed fire operations, cheat grass areas need to be identified, treated and avoided; prescribed burn units need to be monitored post treatment.

Mechanical Treatments (approximately 398 acres):

Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire (approximately 260 acres): Polygons: 745, 747, 748, 750, 751, 779, 787, 853, 854, 858, 860, 861, 865, 869, 870, 873, 878, (all within the Fourmile Watershed).

Mixed conifer-Ponderosa pine & Douglas-fir mix: None of the stands identified for MSO restricted habitat management within the Little Annie Project Area currently meet the minimum target/threshold structure conditions for both Basal Area (BA) and large tree component. Most stands are approximately 100 year old second growth forest. Treatments will be designed to develop stand structure towards MSO target/threshold conditions and to encourage aspen regeneration. The Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) has demonstrated through modeling that both light and moderate thinning treatments would move existing stands toward these desired structural conditions faster than no treatment. Removal of smaller diameter trees would reduce competition and encourage large tree growth. Both even and uneven age silvicultural systems may be used with a preference for uneven aged management. For even aged management, rotation ages are expected to be greater than 200 years. All trees greater than 24 inch DBH would be retained on the landscape.

In areas of heavy mountain pine beetle activity, infested trees will be removed. Stands of ponderosa pine uninfested by mountain pine beetle may be thinned if needed, to improve structural diversity in the residual mature stand. Thinning will be in a variable space pattern emphasizing irregular tree spacing and may incorporate small (0.10 to 0.25 acre) patch cuts within untreated areas in these units in an effort to mimic natural disturbance patterns. Within stands infested with dwarf mistletoe, thinning treatments will be designed to remove trees infected by dwarf mistletoe and favor leaving un-infected trees. Stands would be thinned to an average BA of 80 ft²/acre. Thinning will be in a variable space pattern emphasizing irregular tree spacing and may incorporate small (0.10 to 0.25 acre) patch cuts within untreated areas in these units in an effort to mimic natural disturbance patterns. Stand densities would be reduced in the short-term (up to 40 years) but, would move stand structure toward MSO threshold conditions (BA of 150 ft²/acre, with large tree {>24 inch DBH} component) in the long term (40-80 years).

Where aspen exists within the stand, aspen regeneration would be emphasized by creating openings adjacent to aspen stands. Existing conifer regeneration needed for desired stocking levels will be protected where practical. Methods of removal include but are not limited to chainsaws, harvesters, skidders, dozers, and log trucks.

After harvesting is complete, the slash and hazardous fuels in the area may be reduced through fuelwood removal and/or prescribed fire, while meeting the above measures (BA, horizontal diversity, etc.). Prescribed fire includes pile burning, broadcast burning or a combination of both. See the section on prescribed fire for more details.

Sanitation-Dwarf Mistletoe Treatments (approximately 82 acres): Polygon: 751

Where stands are infested with dwarf mistletoe, thinning treatments will be designed to remove trees infected by dwarf mistletoe and favor leaving un-infected trees. Because these mixed conifer stands have a diversity of species; species not susceptible to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe

will be favored and the stands thinned to an average BA of 80 ft²/acre. Where removal of dwarf mistletoe infected trees reduces stocking below 80 BA ft²/acre, all trees of species not infected with dwarf mistletoe would be retained. If removal of trees infected with dwarf mistletoe reduces stocking below 70 BA ft²/acre, then no treatment would occur for this portion of the stand. Openings (patch cuts) would not exceed 1 acre in size. Thinning will be in a variable space pattern and may incorporate small (0.10 to 0.25 acre) patch cuts within untreated areas in these units to mimic natural disturbance patterns. Stand density would be reduced in the Douglas-fir stands to treat heavy infestations of dwarf mistletoe in the short-term (up to approximately 60 years) and move stand structure toward MSO target stand conditions (BA of 150 ft²/acre, with large tree {>24 inch DBH} component) in the long term (60-80 years). Where aspen exists within the stand, aspen regeneration would be emphasized. Existing conifer regeneration needed for desired stocking levels will be protected where practical. In areas of mountain pine beetle activity, infested trees may be removed and remaining trees may be thinned (lightly), if needed, to improve structural diversity in the residual mature stand. Methods of removal include but are not limited to chainsaws, harvesters, skidders, dozers, and log trucks.

Fuel Break Treatments (approximately 56 acres): Polygons: 790, 798, 819, 830, 832, 834, 836, 855, 856, 863, 868, and 875 (all within the Fourmile Watershed).

The objective of this treatment is to create a shaded fuel break along the adjacent private lands. This fuel break is irregular in shape; although, it is approximately 400 feet wide. Where the fuel break meets natural features like grasslands, they were not included in the acres presented because there would be no mechanical treatments needed. Riparian areas, including a 100 feet wide buffer (the Water Influence Zone [WIZ]); have also been excluded from the fuel break.

Within forested stands tree density will vary from as low as 40 ft²/acre BA at the private – National Forest boundary; then increase in density towards the edge away from the boundary, transitioning into the adjacent thinning prescription density outside of the fuel break. The majority of trees removed will be less than 9" DBH, depending upon existing stand composition. Within forested stands, the fuel break will extend approximately 400 feet from the private land boundary. Natural openings, ridgelines and other fire control features will be utilized where possible in the design and layout of these fuel breaks. Down wood smaller than 12" diameter will be removed from the fuel break; individual pieces of down wood larger than 12" diameter may be retained. Snags will be removed from the fuel break particularly in the proximity to the private land boundary; and a reduced number of snags may be left near the transition area out of the fuel break. Numbers of snags that are reduced in the fuel break will be added to the numbers required in stands outside the fuel break to meet the intent of the 40 wildlife trees per 5 acres of treatment over the landscape. Clumps of non-treated area may be left near the outer transition area of the fuel break. Small openings (0.10 to 0.25 acres) may be created throughout the fuel break.

After harvesting is complete, the slash and hazardous fuels in the area may be reduced through fuelwood gathering, chipping, and/or prescribed fire. Prescribed fire includes pile burning, broadcast burning or a combination of both. See the section on prescribed fire for more details.

Road System

Existing county and USFS system roads would be used as much as possible to access the Project Area. These roads would be maintained as needed for safety and environmental considerations. No new system roads would be constructed in association with the proposed project. Within the Project Area, there are approximately 4.36 miles of existing system roads that are planned for use. No system roads in the Project Area would be decommissioned after the project is complete. Existing non-system roads and closed roads (approx. 2.70 miles) would

be used to access treatment areas. No new temporary roads would be created. All non-system roads and closed roads would be permanently closed and rehabilitated as needed; to be determined by soils specialist or hydrologist. These routes will be closed as soon as possible after completion of the project.

Little Annie Vegetation Treatment Project

Summary of Treatment Types

Treatment Type	Proposed Action (Approximate Acres)
No Treatment	183
Prescribed Fire	470
Mechanical Treatments	398
<i>Salvage, Thinning & Prescribed Fire</i>	260
<i>Sanitation-Dwarf Mistletoe</i>	82
<i>Fuel Break Treatments</i>	56
National Forest lands	1,050
Private lands (BV-School District)	51
Project Area-Total Acreage	1,101

Little Annie Vegetation Treatment Project

Treatment Summary by Cover Type

Treatment by Cover Types	Proposed Action (Approximate Acres)
No treatment	183
<i>Grass</i>	1
<i>Shrubs (Mountain mahogany, Sage)</i>	18
<i>Aspen</i>	26
<i>Douglas-fir</i>	108
<i>Ponderosa pine</i>	14
<i>Lodgepole pine</i>	16
Prescribed Fire	470
<i>Grass</i>	71
<i>Shrubs (Mountain mahogany, Sage)</i>	287
<i>Aspen</i>	5
<i>Douglas-fir</i>	18
<i>Ponderosa pine</i>	89
Mechanical Treatments	398
<i>Salvage, Thinning & Prescribed Fire</i>	260
<i>Grass</i>	60
<i>Shrubs (Mountain mahogany, Sage)</i>	19
<i>Douglas-fir</i>	89
<i>Ponderosa pine</i>	92
<i>Sanitation- Dwarf Mistletoe</i>	82
<i>Douglas-fir</i>	82
<i>Fuelbreak</i>	56
<i>Douglas-fir</i>	36
<i>Ponderosa pine</i>	20
Total Acres (National Forest lands)	1050
Private lands (BV-School District)	51
Project Area-Total Acreage	1,101

**Little Annie Vegetation Treatment Project
Treatment Summary by Polygon Number**

6 th Level Watershed	Polygon Number	Cover Type	Treatment
Numbers	172	Aspen	No Treatment
Numbers	173	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
Numbers	875	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
Numbers	876	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	625	Shrub	No Treatment
4 Mile	712	Shrub	No Treatment
4 Mile	755	Aspen	No Treatment
4 Mile	756	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	757	Lodgepole	No Treatment
4 Mile	758	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	776	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	780	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	785	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	786	Ponderosa pine	No Treatment
4 Mile	793	Ponderosa pine	No Treatment
4 Mile	809	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	829	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	835	Aspen	No Treatment
4 Mile	839	Shrub	No Treatment
4 Mile	859	Douglas-fir	No Treatment
4 Mile	871	Shrub	No Treatment
4 Mile	876	Grass	No Treatment

6 th Level Watershed	Polygon Number	Cover Type	Treatment
4 Mile	790	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	798	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	819	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break
4 Mile	830	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	832	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break
4 Mile	834	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break
4 Mile	836	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	855	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	856	Douglas-fir	Fuel Break
4 Mile	863	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break
4 Mile	868	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break
4 Mile	875	Ponderosa pine	Fuel Break

6 th Level Watershed	Polygon Number	Cover Type	Treatment
Numbers	199	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	642	Douglas-fir	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	644	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	645	Ponderosa Pine	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	646	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	647	Douglas-fir	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	724	Grass	Prescribed Fire

4 Mile	726	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	728	Mixed Conifer	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	729	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	730	Ponderosa Pine	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	731	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	746	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	749	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	752	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	789	Aspen	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	840	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	841	Douglas-fir	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	842	Ponderosa Pine	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	843	Douglas-fir	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	844	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	845	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	847	Shrub	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	849	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	850	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	851	Grass	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	852	Ponderosa Pine	Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	877	Grass	Prescribed Fire
Numbers	877	Shrub	Prescribed Fire

6 th Level Watershed	Polygon Number	Cover Type	Treatment
4 Mile	745	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	747	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	748	Grass	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	750	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	779	Shrub	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	787	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	853	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	854	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	858	Grass	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	860	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	861	Grass	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	865	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	869	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	870	Douglas-fir	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	873	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
4 Mile	878	Ponderosa Pine	Salvage, Thinning, Prescribed Fire
6 th Level Watershed	Polygon Number	Cover Type	Treatment
4 Mile	751	Douglas-fir	Sanitation-dwarf mistletoe

Summary of Road Types

Road Type	Proposed Action (Approximate Miles)
FDR System Roads within project area (Nat'l Forest)	4.36 miles
Non-System Roads (existing to be used, then closed)	2.70 miles
TOTAL	7.06 miles

Design Criteria:

1. Protect current improvements including fences, ditches and aqueduct. Improvements would be protected and replaced, if damaged by treatment.
2. If chipping is used as a means of disposal, chips would be distributed so that the chip layer is a maximum of 2 inches in depth; otherwise the chips would be hauled off site.
3. If artifacts, features, or other indications of previously unrecorded heritage resources are identified in the course of ground-disturbing activities, all work in the vicinity of those materials would cease and the Archaeologist would be notified immediately.
4. Avoid operating mechanical equipment on slopes greater than 40%. Use designated skid trails on slopes between 25 and 40%; a Hydrologist or Soil Scientist along with a Sale Administer and a road specialist (Civil Engineer or Civil Engineer Technician) may be part of the team that lays out the designated skid trail routes.
5. A minimum 100-foot buffer on either side of perennial and intermittent streams and ephemeral areas would define the Water Influence Zone (WIZ) as specified in the WCP Handbook (FSH 2509.25, Chapter 10). The WIZ includes the geomorphic floodplain, riparian ecosystem, and inner gorge.
6. Mechanical thinning treatments would not occur inside the WIZ as delineated by a Fisheries Biologist or Hydrologist. If the area has not been delineated, then treatments would occur outside a 100-foot buffer from all perennial and intermittent streams. The 100-foot WIZ also applies to all lakes, ponds, kettles and other forms of standing water. Some activities such as prescribed burning and hand treatments may be allowed in the WIZ, but only after consultation and concurrence with the project Hydrologist or Fishery Biologist.
7. Prescribed burning would be allowed to migrate into the WIZ from adjacent slopes, but would not be encouraged to do so; ignition of prescribed fire would not occur in the WIZ.
8. Heavy equipment and vehicles would be kept out of the WIZ, streams, swales, and lakes, except to cross at designated points, building crossings, conduct restoration work, or if protected by at least 1 foot of packed snow or 2 inches of frozen soil. Before heavy equipment or vehicles would be allowed to cross streams, the project Fishery Biologist or Hydrologist would be consulted and determine where crossings would occur or be constructed, and to specify any stipulations necessary to minimize negative impacts on

aquatic resources. Heavy equipment or vehicles will not be allowed in streams during fish spawning, incubation, and emergence periods.

9. Use only hand treatments in riparian corridors; use cable or other non-mechanized means to remove products. In addition, use one end suspension methods when feasible.
10. Avoid soil disturbing activities during periods of wet soils. Apply travel restrictions to protect soil and water. Operate heavy equipment for land treatments only when soil moisture is below the plastic limit, or protected by at least one foot of packed snow or two inches of frozen soil. (Note: Soil moisture exceeds the plastic limit if the soil can be rolled into three millimeter threads without breaking or crumbling.)
11. If a unit has previously been mechanically thinned / treated, no salvage treatment would take place after prescribed fire treatments occur.
12. Deferment of grazing in burned areas would occur for at least one growing season. Timing of prescribed fire treatments would be coordinated with the Rangeland Management Specialist to avoid conflicts with permittee and stress on vegetation.
13. Protect or provide for one Abert's squirrel nest tree clump (0.1 acre of 9 to 22 inch dbh ponderosa pine with a basal area of 180 to 220, if available, and interlocking canopy) per six acres on ponderosa pine (Forest Plan, pg. III – 29). In addition, all ponderosa pine trees showing sign of Abert's squirrel feeding activity would be retained and protected as wildlife trees. This direction would be written into timber prescriptions and the prescribed fire plan. For the prescribed fire, protection measures include avoiding to the extent possible torching of ponderosa pine clumps and Abert's squirrel feed trees.
14. In red squirrel (pine squirrel) habitat, intact tree retention groups would be centered on existing food caches (middens). These intact tree retention groups would be at a minimum 6 large (< than 9 inch DBH) trees with interlocking canopies up to 2 ½ acres in size depending on quality of habitat (concentration of middens).
15. Implementation and effectiveness monitoring would be conducted by an interdisciplinary team. Snag, down woody material, and other stand conditions would be monitored pre and post treatment to ensure desired conditions are achieved. The following snags/down wood guidelines would be followed:

Snags and Coarse Woody Debris (CWD)

In forested areas, maintain greater than or equal to 40 snags/recruitment trees per 5 acre average; retain the largest sizes and numbers available (all stages of development). These should consist of at least 30 snags and/or down logs per 5 acres and 10 recruitment snags (green trees) per 5 acres. Guidelines for snags include:

- Retain all soft snags (class 3, 4, and 5) except for safety hazards (Forest Plan, pg. III – 12) to the greatest extent reasonable and practical.

- Retain hard snags (when they are present) greater than or equal to 12 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) or as large as available.
 - If above existing snag levels are not available, provide for green recruitment snag trees sufficient to bring snag/recruitment snag levels up to the above mentioned levels in a well distributed manner of both clumps and individual trees, favoring largest available trees. Trees with defects (e.g. “wooly” appearance, dead tops, forked tops, cankers, heartrot, knarls, diseases, broken tops and large limbs) would be selected when possible as follows:
 - Provide for the above number of recruitment snags (live trees) which are not counted towards the BA requirements.
 - Create new snags by burn plan design or other means, as necessary to provide for snags of various classes within the treatment areas.
 - Protect reserved snags/down logs from fuelwood cutting, mechanical treatment and prescribed fire treatment to the greatest extent reasonable and practical.
 - In treatment units designated as fuel breaks, the above snag requirements would not be implemented. Other units untreated for fuel break prescriptions would retain an increased number of snags/CWD/green recruitment trees to make up for the acres designated as fuel break. These areas would be monitored by the Wildlife Biologist and Fuels Specialist to assure that the dead and down component is within acceptable levels for hazardous fuels reduction.
16. Nesting/denning sites would be reported to the Wildlife Biologist and appropriate protection measures would be implemented.
17. If new site information regarding threatened, endangered, and sensitive species is located during the course of ground disturbing activities, all work in the vicinity of those species would cease and the appropriate specialist would be notified.
18. An activity exclusion area would be marked by the Wildlife Biologist and avoided around known active raptor nests from March 1 through September 30. Surveys would be conducted prior to implementation of treatments to determine site activity.
19. Aspen regeneration will be monitored. If aspen regeneration is found to be adversely impacted by big game or livestock grazing pressure, those units may be fenced to promote regeneration.
20. Gates and/or barricades would be installed on temporary roads to restrict use by the public during operations and/or until final road closures occur.

21. In forested areas, a 200-foot buffer would be maintained along 75% or more of each side of FDR 375 to discourage and minimize off-road vehicles (OHV) use and maintain visual screening for wildlife. Mechanical treatment would not take place in the buffer, but prescribed fire may be allowed; hazard trees may be mechanically removed (Forest Plan, pg. III-32).
22. Access routes would be designated within public firewood areas.
23. Only administrative and permitted access would be allowed on previously closed roads being used for temporary treatment access.
24. Closed roads being used for temporary treatment access during project activities would be closed and/or obliterated by ripping and seeding with Forest Service approved native species, and then signed to inform the public that vegetative restoration is in progress. Closed roads being used for temporary treatment access during project activities would be closed and/or obliterated by ripping and seeding with Forest Service approved native species, and then signed to inform the public that vegetative restoration is in progress. Road closures would occur as soon as possible after completion of the project treatments.
25. As per the Fourmile Travel Management Plan, FDR 375 will be seasonally closed annually for big game winter habitat from December 1 - April 15. Administrative access to conduct prescribed fire activities may be allowed during this time period; and would be coordinated with the Wildlife Biologist.
26. To reduce risk of spreading noxious weeds, coordinate with the Noxious Weed Coordinator prior to implementation. Cheat grass has been identified within the Project Area. Heavy equipment would be cleaned and inspected prior to entering the project area. Treatment areas would be monitored pre and post treatment for noxious weeds. If present, avoid or remove sources of weed seed and propagules to prevent establishment of new weed infestations and spread of existing weeds. Weed locations would be sent to the Noxious Weeds Coordinator and scheduled for treatment.

Appendix B-Response to Comments**Little Annie Vegetation Treatment Project**

Respondent: Colorado Wild

Comment 1: The project area may be appropriate for reintroduction of fire, but logging is questionable.

Response: Thank you, Rocky for your comments. Prescribed fire has been incorporated into the project design as outlined in Appendix A of the Decision Memo. The goal of the broadcast burning is to provide diversity within the forest vegetation types of the area, improve winter range and reduce fuel loadings. Fire will encourage regeneration of all the species, especially aspen. Natural openings, ridgelines, existing closed roads and trails will be used as control features for the prescribed burning. Very minimal hand lines construction will be needed to complete these burns. The prescribed burns will most likely be accomplished in the spring of the year, when soil conditions are moist, and snow exists on the northern exposures. A Burn Plan will be completed for each burn. These plans design how the units will be ignited to meet the burn objectives and also identifies all holding features that will be used to safely execute the burn. Within the Little Annie project, a variety of fire effects, a mosaic burn pattern, and mixed severity and fire intensity is anticipated. The results should be very beneficial for the area.

The majority of the mechanical treatments identified within the project, are planned to be accomplished through the District's "public firewood program" and small, commercial firewood sales. Stands that will be thinned will favor leaving the larger and healthier trees. No new permanent roads will be constructed and all temporary roads and skid trails are planned to be obliterated following their intended use.

Comment 2: What is the desired vegetation for the area?

Response: There is a variety of vegetation types within the project area. Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir are predominate, with aspen, lodgepole pine and pinon present throughout the area. The project area has also been identified as Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) protected and restricted habitat. The treatments are designed in accordance to the MSO recovery plan and intended to maintain this diversity and develop stand structure of varying age classes. Leaving the larger diameter and healthier trees is planned in the mechanical treated areas, resulting in a "thinning from below" prescription.

Comment 3: Stay out of the roadless area. It appears that a small part of the project area, in parts of sections 5 & 8 of T13S, R78W, is in the citizen-inventoried Marmot Peak Roadless area...

Response: Only prescribed burning is planned in sections 5 & 8 of T13S, R78W.

Comment 4: Fight noxious weeds...Follow-up surveys and eradications should be done for three years after the project completion.

Response: The area has been surveyed for noxious weeds. We will follow the Forest-wide Noxious Weed Plan and schedule treatment in the area as needed.

Comment 5: Logging units are proposed right up to the Wilderness Boundary...

Response: Many of the polygons that were originally purposed for treatment that border the wilderness boundary are no longer planned for treatment. The Wilderness Boundary will be marked on the ground before implementing treatment in Polygons 820, 784, & 779.

Comment 6: Implement the project in stages if necessary to avoid too great of a short-term loss of winter range.

Response: Implementation of the Little Annie project will take approximately 3-4 years to complete. Implementation will be staged to minimize impacts to wildlife and other resources. In the mechanical treatment areas, the thinning operations will be completed first, the slash allowed to cure before initiating the prescribed burns under the trees. Also, as per the Fourmile Travel Management Plan, FDR 375 will be seasonally closed annually for big game winter habitat from December 1-April 15. All of these actions and using the design criteria for the project will minimize the impacts to this winter range.

Comment 7: It is not clear if CE 10 can be used for the project...

Response: As stated in the Decision Memo, the project was originally scoped using FSH 1909.15, Category 31.2 (10). After further analysis and the requirements for the Mexican Spotted Owl recovery plan, the decision is being made using FSH 1909.15, Category 31.2 (6); Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.

Respondent: Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, John Stansfield

Comment 1: As we all know, funds are limited for wildland fuel treatments. Yet, there are numerous sites in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) requiring treatments. The Purpose and Need section of the scoping letter credits no WUI benefits to the Little Annie project. We wonder if there are other locations on the Salida Ranger District where fuel treatments might more directly benefit human safety and property than Little Annie area. If so, we suggest that these WUI areas might be better locations to expend scarce fuel treatment dollars.

Response: As stated above, the majority of the treatment units are within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and within one mile of private property. The northern private in-holding is owned by the Buena Vista School District and new facilities/structures are being constructed for their environmental education program/camp. Hazardous fuels mitigation work is being completed by the School District. The Forest Service treatments planned bordering this property (fuelbreaks) will strengthen this effort. The southern private property has also been developed with several permanent residences and the treatments planned will also help reduce the hazardous fuels that border these properties. This project is one of several other WUI areas on the Salida Ranger District that are also being analyzed to prioritize the fuel treatment projects and allocate fuels dollars. All of these projects are designed to be cost-effective. Much of the

fuels and thinning work get completed through the public and commercial firewood programs where people pay for the wood that needs to be removed, thus reducing the cost.

Comment 2: A small portion of the Little Annie project area overlaps with roadless lands which the Upper Arkansas-South Platte Project and our group have inventoried to include in the Marmot Peak Citizens Proposed Wilderness addition to the existing Buffalo Peaks Wilderness Area...

Response: As stated above, only prescribed burning is planned in sections 5 & 8 of T13S, R78W.

Respondent: Leon H. Hurd

Comment: We received your letter about the plan for Little Annie and the Fourmile area. We are happy to hear about what you intend to do. It is a mess up there and the forest needs help. Our only concern is the house we have at Four Mile Ranch. I am sure you are aware of it. Also it is private property. We would appreciate being notified when the work will take place...

Response: Thank you for support and comments on this project. We are aware of your private property and your house at the Four Mile Ranch. Notifications will be made to you and also in the local media when planned activities will occur on this project.

Respondent: Ken Warrington

Comment: I have no objections to the controlled burn in the Four Mile area. I realize this kind of program becomes necessary at times. I know that some times in the past, that they have gotten out of control. But I trust your office will have plenty of equipment and crews to insure this does not happen on this project.

Response: Thank you for your comments and support on the project. Every prescribed burn requires a "burn plan" that addresses weather, smoke management, holding and control issues. No burning will be initiated unless all favorable conditions are in place. Also, adequate resources of equipment and crews will be on hand to control the fire and protect your property.