



Flathead National Forest

Media Release

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Red Whale Project Decision

The Glacier View Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest plans to implement the Red Whale Project located in the North Fork Flathead River drainage, approximately 30 miles north of Columbia Falls. The project allows for activities to reduce the intensity and severity of future wildfires, improve wildlife habitat and security, and provide access to state-owned land.

The decision is based upon information from the 2006 Red Whale Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and related public comments. **Hungry Horse and Glacier View District Ranger Jimmy DeHerrera said, “We have had many conversations with folks in the North Fork Community during the development of this project and appreciate their involvement which has helped us prioritize areas for fuels reduction treatment.” According to DeHerrera, many landowners in the North Fork area are taking action to reduce fuels on their private land which compliments the actions of the Forest Service. DeHerrera said, “We’re working together to reduce the risk of wildland fire in this wildland urban interface area.”**

The specifics of the Red Whale Project include:

- Mechanical fuels reduction (thinning and patch seedtree treatments) on approximately 2,807 acres to reduce the intensity and severity of future wildfires,
- Removal of approximately 4.5 million board feet (mmbf) of sawlogs and approximately 2-3 mmbf of other smaller diameter materials for firewood, post/poles, and other biomass,
- Prescribed burning on approximately 1,114 acres to improve wildlife habitat diversity and forage abundance,
- Wildlife security improvements through motorized use changes; approximately 8.1 miles of currently open roads (primarily Hay Creek and Moran Creek Roads) will be open seasonally from July 1 through November 30, about 0.5 miles of Moran Creek Road will be bermed and approximately 23.6 miles of currently open motorized use trails will be closed to wheeled motorized vehicles,
- Approximately 0.3 miles of new permanent road will be constructed to provide access across National Forest System land to a State of Montana section of land northwest of Polebridge, and
- Trees will be planted on about 338 acres, primarily with western larch and Douglas-fir.

The Red Whale Project decision is subject to administrative appeal. Implementation of the project may begin this fall. For more information or a copy of the decision, contact the Glacier View and Hungry Horse Districts at 387-3800 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead.

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