



## FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

## Media Release

April 15, 2005

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### **Forest Upheld on West Side Reservoir Post-Fire Project**

The Flathead National Forest was recently upheld on the West Side Reservoir Post-Fire Decision relating to four appeals received by individuals and organizations. The agency's regional office in Missoula reviewed and affirmed the forest's decision and denied the appeals.

The January, 2005 Forest Service decision allows for salvage of approximately 38 million board feet of burned timber affected by some of the 2003 wildland fires. Four salvage sales are implementing this decision on approximately 3,200 acres of National Forest System lands. Trees will be planted on approximately 700 acres and various road and trail actions will take place across the area. The area is located in the South Fork drainage, outside of wilderness, on the Hungry Horse and Spotted Bear Ranger Districts. The purpose of the project is to recover merchantable wood fiber, affected by some of the 2003 wildland fires, in a timely manner to support local communities and contribute to the long-term yield of forest products.

Some of the issues raised by appellants included the use of ground-based equipment on burned soils, the significance of forest plan amendments related to this project, snag and live tree retention, grizzly bear security management, old-growth, sensitive, and threatened and endangered species management and cumulative effects. In response to additional recommendations received by the regional office, the forest will continue the marking of larch trees designated to remain.

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The Flathead National Forest has received a notice of intent to litigate this project, and the Robert Wedge Post-Fire Project, based on alleged Endangered Species Act issues.

An emergency exemption allowed for implementation of both post-fire projects, as well as the Crazy Horse III Salvage Project, during the appeal periods. To date, more than 7 million board feet, or 1299 truck loads of salvaged wood have been removed from these three post-fire projects.

As anticipated, spring road break up and grizzly bear den emergence temporarily suspended all salvage harvest operations as of April 1. Salvage harvest operations will continue in June.

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