



# NEWS RELEASE

## Lolo National Forest

United States  
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service  
Lolo National Forest  
Building 24, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, Montana 59804

[www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo)

**For Immediate Release**  
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## DeBaugan Fuels Reduction Project Final EIS Released

Missoula, MT. – The final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the DeBaugan Fuels reduction project has been released and is available on the Lolo National Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo/projects/>.

The project specifically addresses the need for fuel reduction work within the wildland urban interface (WUI) near the communities of Saltese, Haugan, DeBorgia and Cabin City, approximately 80 miles northwest of Missoula on the Superior Ranger District. Work is proposed on approximately 5,220 acres near private property on both sides of Interstate 90 – with specific activities aimed at reducing the potential for crown fires and reduce surface fire intensity near communities and out-lying homes. Project leaders and specialists have worked closely with members of these communities in developing a project that considers local resident needs.

Superior District Ranger Sharon Sweeney noted that the project got its start about two or three years ago “when a group of concerned citizens came in to visit us about worsening fuel conditions near their communities.”

Sweeney welcomed the conversation. She said that there has been a history of high-intensity fire in the area and continued growth within the WUI. She said citizen concern about those conditions led to the creation of the DeBaugan Collaborative Group, which helped form the DeBaugan Fuels Reduction Project.

“It has truly been a joy to work with this group, and see their ideas grow into this project,” Sweeney said.

Sweeney said the district expects to begin implementing the project next summer.

Members of the local community, environmental groups, private landowners, and local elected officials have been working together on the DeBaugan project and have participated in the collaborative group since 2005. The project is consistent with the Mineral County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which addresses fuel reduction needs to reduce threat of fire to people and property, and the Superior Ranger District’s long-term fuel reduction strategy.

The final EIS displays the effects of the following proposed fuel treatments under the Modified Proposed Action:

- Commercial harvest, consisting mostly of thinning, on 3,338 acres
- Pre-commercial thinning on 500 acres
- Slash and handpiling on 16 acres adjacent to private property

- Prescribed burning on 1,366 acres

Proposed activities also include road construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and closures.

Wildfire has been a natural, historic occurrence within the project area. Over the last 100 years wildfire has burned approximately 120,000 acres – or 55 percent -- of the St. Regis watershed in which the project area is located. But, since 1924, wildfire has not affected much of the land within the project area due to fuel characteristics. Specialists note, however, that those fuel characteristics have progressed and created an increased large fire potential. Specialists also estimate that approximately 180,000 lodgepole pine trees have been killed by mountain pine beetle in the project area since the mid-1990s.

The project is being done under the authority of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) and is subject to a 30 day Objection Period that began September 26. An Objection to the project must be filed with the project's Reviewing Officer in writing within 30 days. If an Objection is filed, the Reviewing Officer will meet with the Objector to discuss the issues raised in the objection and seek a resolution. A Record of Decision on the project cannot be published until the Reviewing Officer has responded to all objections.

For more information on HFRA please go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/field-guide/>.

For more information on this project, please contact Superior District Ranger Sharon Sweeney at (406) 822-3928, or project team leader, Pat Partyka, at (406) 826-4314.

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