

**DECISION RECORD
GHOST TOWN FUELD HAZARD REDUCTION
MISSOULA FIELD OFFICE**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the Ghost Town Fuel Hazard Reduction Environmental Assessment (EA MT100-2002-03 or "the EA"), including the public comments received and determined that none of the alternatives constitutes a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not needed. I have determined that the Proposed Action alternative conforms with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the Goals and Objectives stated in the Garnet Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement approved in January of 1986 and amended in 1994.

No adverse impact on the production of energy will result from this Decision.

CONSULTATION

Informal consultation has been completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on potential impacts which may affect, but not likely to adversely affect the gray wolf, grizzly bear and Canada lynx. A determination of no effect was found for the bald eagle, and bull trout.

BLM has completed consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding the initial 20 acre treatment site. BLM and SHPO agree that implementation of the 20 acre initial treatment may proceed in accordance with stipulations contained within the design features of the project.

DECISION

It is my decision to reduce fuels on 20 acres of the 330 acres proposed for treatment in the EA. Please refer to the "Project Area Map" on page 20 of the attached EA for the location of the treatment area.

Fuels will be reduced by cutting and removing a portion of the live vegetation, and removing down/dead woody fuels. These actions will reduce two key wildfire risks to the ghost town structures; (1) combustion from radiant heat exposure, and (2) firebrands dropping onto the structures. Fire research has determined that these are the principal ignition factors associated with structures in a wildland-urban interface (NRCG, 2001).

Design Features:

- Down and dead woody fuels will be removed to a target fuel load of 5 tons or less per acre. Decomposing coarse woody debris is not considered fuel and would be retained for nutrient cycling and soil productivity.
- To reduce radiant heat exposure to the highly ignitable structures, surrounding trees will be thinned according to the following guidelines developed by USDA fire researchers (NRCG, 2001).

<u>Distance from structure</u>	<u>Crown Spacing (minimum)</u>
Less than 20 meters	26 feet
20 - 30 meters	13 feet
30 - 40 meters	10 feet

- Outside the 40-meter zone, overstory trees will be removed to open tree canopy closure and reduce crown fire potential, fire intensity, and firebrand production. Groups of trees which require treatment to reduce crown closure, but which are not wind firm, may be removed since leaving a portion of these trees could result in increased fuel loads after "blowdown" events.
- Interpretive trails will be located prior to fuel treatment, and a skid trail will follow this layout to help ensure no unnecessary trails are constructed.
- To minimize disturbance to historic ditches from the project, trees will be placed in ditches where mechanical equipment crosses them to lessen damage to their banks.
- Care will be taken to prevent or minimize disturbance at historic and cultural sites. Prior to the project implementation a cultural resource staff member will go out in the field with the tree marking crew and assist with tree marking near sites.
- The BLM Missoula Field Office Archaeologist will be present or available for consultation when the fuel reduction work occurs near cultural sites.
- Access to the Blue Moon claims will be retained while reclaiming a redundant access road.
- Equipment and vehicles used off established roads will be power washed to avoid introducing weed seed. Weed establishment and proliferation will be closely monitored and infestations controlled using integrated weed management strategies.
- Off-road equipment use will be limited to conditions which minimize soil compaction.
- In instances where removing trees within the 40-meter zone might compromise visual objectives, the trees will be pruned of their lower branches to remove ladder-fuels. Trees immediately adjacent to structures will be removed, where feasible, to reduce needle accumulation on the shake roofs.
- Existing stands of trees will remain along roads to enhance visual objectives.
- Temporary closures, signage, temporarily rerouted trails, or other measures will be used as needed to help ensure visitor safety.
- To help achieve visual objectives, no skid trails or landings will be visible from Garnet Ghost Town or the overlook.
- To help reduce recreational traffic conflicts, hauling on the Garnet Range Road and Cave Gulch Road will be restricted: No hauling will occur on weekends. Hauling routes will be signed and commercial traffic may be routed to the China Grade Road and away from the Cave Gulch Road.
- All forest practices are subject to Montana Best Management Practices as minimum protective measures for activities near streams and wetlands. Site-specific BMPs will be designed and employed as needed if additional or special protection is needed.
- Mining claim corner markers will be identified and protected from damage.
- To reduce potential human/bear conflicts, standard contract specifications will require that contractor camping occur in areas agreed upon by the BLM. Contractors will be prohibited from carrying firearms in the project area. Food storage and sanitation guidelines will be written into all contracts to reduce potential human/grizzly bear conflicts.
- Snags and replacement snags greater than 10 inches in diameter will be retained at 5 to 10 per acre to provide nesting habitat for cavity dependent birds.
- Surveys will be conducted for sensitive species inhabiting the project area to help mitigate potential adverse impacts to habitat.
- Sensitive species' bird nests will be protected from adverse impacts related to project activities.

Timing of Implementation

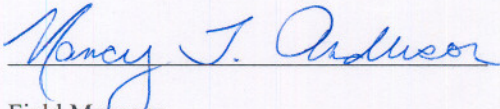
Implementation of this decision is contingent on funds being available. Project work is planned to begin in 2004.

Appeal Period

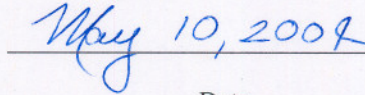
The actions described in this Decision are now open for appeal. In accordance with 43 CFR Sections 4.411 and 4.413 a Notice of Appeal must be filed with this office within 30 days of the issuance of this Decision.

The decision to sell forest products is not protestable at this time. Under BLM regulations, that Decision does not become final until a notice advertising the sale is published in local papers.

The EA and supporting documentation are available for review at the BLM, Missoula Field Office at 3255 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, Montana.



Field Manager



Date

Missoula Field Office, Missoula, Montana