



File Code: 1950

Date: March 20, 2009

Dear Interested Individuals, Organizations and Agencies:

The U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) is seeking public comment on the Proposed Action for the Spooner Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project (Spooner project). The project is located entirely within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) with treatments proposed along both sides of Highway 50 and Nevada State Route 28, between Lincoln Park (to the south) and Sand Harbor State Recreation Area (to the north). This project is in portions of Washoe, Carson City, and Douglas Counties in the state of Nevada (see enclosed project area map). A detailed description of the project can be downloaded from the LTBMU website <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects> under "Local Projects" and "Spooner Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project." Hard copies and CDs are available upon request. A summary is provided below:

Project Background

The Spooner project incorporates the communities around Logan Shoals and Glenbrook for fuel treatments as described in the Fuel Reduction and Forest Restoration Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin Wildland Urban Interface (TRPA WUI Plan) (TRPA 2007). This plan includes all at-risk communities within the Lake Tahoe Basin that have developed Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) and includes treatment areas that are prioritized within the Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District. The LTBMU collaborated with the Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District to identify fuel reduction activities that coordinate with the CWPP and provide the defensible space identified in the CWPP where it occurs on National Forest System lands.

Tiering off of the efforts of the TRPA WUI Plan, a multi-agency team (17 agencies represented) developed the Lake Tahoe Basin Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy (Fuels Strategy) (2007) that includes proposed vegetation and fuel treatments in the project area to occur within the next ten years. According to the Fuels Strategy, the proposed areas of treatment are priority-based to reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire and its impacts to commercial, private, and public infrastructure, as well as the ecological values along the East Shore of Lake Tahoe.

The needs for the project are to treat areas in WUI defense and threat zones to:

- reduce the potential for a catastrophic wildland fire in the area;
- move the project area toward a pre-fire suppression vegetative condition related to stand density, tree size class, and species composition to provide for healthy forest conditions;
- create conditions that enable the managed reintroduction of fire into these fire-adapted ecosystems; and,
- provide for firefighter and public safety while restoring the health and vigor of the forest.



Project Description

Proposed treatments for this project would occur only on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the WUI and total approximately 3,500 acres (30 treatment units) within the 16,900-acre project area. Activities include:

- Mechanically treat up to 365 acres. Mechanical treatment could include whole tree yarding using mechanical harvesters and whole tree skidding, and/or cut-to-length harvest with log-forwarding operations. For non-commercial sized trees and brush, masticators and/or chippers could be used, or the material could be removed as biomass or be piled and burned.
- Hand treat with chain saws up to 3,025 acres. Due to the terrain (majority of the treatment areas have no vehicle access and are located in steep areas greater than 30 percent slope), density of live vegetation, and amount of dead and down material, the majority of the hand treatment areas would require more than one entry to meet project objectives. This means that in hand-treated units, where no road access is available for fuels removal and existing surface fuel loading in combination with live fuel ladders does not allow prescribed pile burning to occur safely and effectively with one entry; more than one entry is needed. This could include a combination of hand piling of surface fuels followed by prescribed pile or underburning, and then thinning and piling of understory trees followed by additional pile burning.
- One unit, approximately 75 acres (Unit 16), may be partially treated through cable yarding (partial or full suspension of logs), with equipment such as a Yoader yarder. This unit would be monitored before, during, and after implementation. If monitoring results are favorable using this system, adaptive management would be applied and other units could receive this method of treatment given access feasibility and ability to meet prescribed project design features.
- All units would receive at least one follow-up prescribed fire treatment (either through pile burning and/or broadcast underburning).
- Approximately 60 acres within the treatment units are proposed for aspen restoration.
- Temporary improvements include 16 landings proposed within nine of the treatment units and 0.43 mile of temporary road proposed to increase access to two units.

I am anticipating the project would be completed in the next 10 years due to the need for more than one entry into many of the treatment units. The majority of thinning would occur within the first 3-5 years and prescribed burning would follow. Project implementation may begin with mechanical and hand thinning as early as the fall of 2009 based on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision. The Spooner Project proposed activities are consistent with the objectives and management direction of the Forest Plan as amended.

Public meeting

We are hosting a public meeting on March 31, 2009, to share the proposed project activities, answer questions, and encourage comment on the project. The location for the meeting is the Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District, Station 3, 193 Elks Point Road, Zephyr Cove, Nevada. The meeting will use an open house format with brief presentations at 1:00 p.m. and again at 5:30-7:00 p.m. to explain the proposed action. After each presentation, you will have the

opportunity to learn about the project in more detail through information stations for addressing specific resources, asking questions and submitting comments.

Announcements regarding these meetings and continuing project progress will be posted on the LTBMU website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/lbmu/projects> and will be provided to media outlets.

How to Comment and Timeframe

This public comment period is the scoping stage under the NEPA process. This scoping notice is intended to provide those interested in, or affected by, this project with an opportunity to make their concerns known. We encourage you to be as specific as possible in your comments with regard to potential effects of the proposed action.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this project will be most helpful if they are submitted by April 23, 2009, which is the end of the public scoping period. The office business hours for those providing hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone at (530) 543-2600 or in person. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-lbmu@fs.fed.us using subject: Spooner Project. Comments in written, hand delivered or facsimile forms can be submitted to Duncan Leao, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Dr., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150; 530-543-2693 (FAX).

An environmental analysis will be completed and mailed to those who have submitted comments and to those who have requested to be added to the Spooner Project mailing list. The analysis is tentatively planned to be completed in August 2009.

For further information regarding this proposed action including requesting detailed copies or a CD of the proposed action, contact Duncan Leao at (530) 543-2600 or Marian Kadota at (805) 220-6388. We encourage your input by reviewing the proposal as provided in summary through this letter and described in detail on our website and appreciate your interest in the management of the LTBMU.

Sincerely,



TERRI MARCERON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: Project area map

