



File Code: 1950

Date: September 17, 2004

Planning Participant,

The intent of this letter is to inform you that on September 17, 2004, Custer National Forest Deputy Forest Supervisor Gary L. "Stan" Benes signed the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Ekalaka Hazardous Fuel Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The complete DN/FONSI is enclosed. The project is on the Sioux Ranger District and the project area is in Carter County, Montana. The closest town is Ekalaka, Montana.

The Deputy Forest Supervisor has selected Alternative #2, the-Proposed Action, for implementation. The selected alternative as noted in the DN/FONSI and described in detail in the EA (pp. 17-31), will treat hazardous fuels and that include commercial thinning (4, 870 acres), non-commercial thinning (2,480 acres), pre-commercial thinning (575 acres), prescribed fire (480 acres), aspen stand rejuvenation (120 acres), and activity fuels abatement on a total of approximately 8,525 acres of National Forest System lands in response to the purpose and need for action. Activity fuels abatement includes treatments such as lopping, activity fuels underburning, and whole tree yarding. Commercial thinning would use only tractor yarding methods. No new system roads would be needed, but 26.3 miles of temporary roads would be used to access the commercial thinning acres. The DN/FONSI has a detailed description of the Selected Alternative and project design measures. A detailed map showing the management activities planned for the Selected Alternative is found in the DN/FONSI, Appendix A-Maps #2a-#2d.

This decision is not subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.12. No substantive comments expressing concerns and/or only supportive comments were received during the comment period for the proposed action. In accordance with 36 CFR 215.9, implementation of this decision may occur immediately following publication of this decision in the Billings Gazette, Billings, Montana. Copies of the Ekalaka Hazardous Fuel Project EA and DN/FONSI are available at the Sioux Ranger District Office in Camp Crook, South Dakota, and at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Billings, Montana. In addition the complete EA and DN/FONSI, including color project maps is available on the Custer NF website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/custer/>. The supporting Project Record, which includes the internal scoping, public involvement, specialist reports, and other supporting documents, is available at the Sioux Ranger District Office. For further information on this decision, contact Rhonda O'Byrne, District Ranger, or John Clark, Project Leader, Sioux Ranger Station, Camp Crook, South Dakota (605-797-4432).

Sincerely,

RHONDA O'BYRNE
District Ranger

Attachment: DN/FONSI for the Ekalaka Hazardous Fuel Project

