

Decision Memo
Riley Point Salvage
USDA Forest Service
Tongue Ranger District, Bighorn National Forest
Sheridan County, Wyoming

Applicable Legal Land Description

The legal location of the Riley Point Salvage project area is within Township 56 North, Range 88 West, Sections 4 To 6, and Township 57 North, Range 88 West Sections 32 To 34, Sheridan County, 6th principal meridian. All of the lands scheduled for management activities are on National Forest System lands.

Background

The Riley Point Wildfire started August 16, 2003. Approximately 850 acres were burned as result of this fire. All of this area was previously roaded and harvested as part of the Sheep Creek sale between September 1984 and August 1995.

Purpose and Need

One of the long-range goals of the Bighorn Forest Plan is to provide timber products for local communities economic structure while protecting the environment (Forest Plan, page III-5).

There is an opportunity to salvage entirely dead merchantable trees before they lose product potential over the next 1 to 4 years because of the fire. For safety, individual dying or live trees may need to be removed. Harvesting the fire-killed trees could provide both timber products and jobs for the local community, as anticipated under the Forest Plan (Forest Plan, page III-5).

The proposed project area is located in Management Areas 2B, 4B, 4D, and 6B described in the Forest Plan on page III-88. Salvaging unprogrammed amounts of forest products is permitted by management area direction (Forest Plan, page III-52, Management Prescriptions E0-3, 06, and 07)

Proposed Action

Salvage harvest would occur on 250 acres, removing spruce and larger lodgepole pine while leaving most of the subalpine fir and limber pine. Tree planting would be accomplished as needed within the project area to ensure NFMA regeneration requirements in suited timber lands. No permanent road construction is proposed. Trees to be considered for primary harvest would be entirely dead. For safety, individual dying or live trees may need to be removed. Any other dying, fading, or at risk trees would not be harvested under this proposal.

To facilitate the harvest activities, up to 2 miles of major skid trails, and ½ mile of temporary road would be required. Approximately 10 acres of landings would be required for this action. Slash burning associated with harvesting operations will occur only on landing decks.

Public Involvement

A proposal to salvage harvest burned timber within the 850 acres was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping between August 28, 2003 and September 29, 2003. A mailing list for the interested and affected agencies, organizations, and persons contacted is available in the project record. In addition, an article appeared in the Sheridan Press on September 9, 2003 that also described the project action, and how to be involved in public comment. The Responsible Official for this project is Bill Bass, Bighorn Forest Supervisor.

Decision

I have decided to implement the Riley Point salvage in its entirety as described in the above purpose and need statement.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment under the category in FSH 1909.15 § 31.2, 13 that addresses salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, road clearing, and safety reasons.

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. I considered the comments received during the scoping period in this decision. The comments centered on quick utilization of the burnt timber before the saleable product was lost, and support of the local economy.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the Bighorn National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed in conformance with forest plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan Management Area guidelines.

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after September 30, 2003.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Scott Hill, 2013 Eastside 2nd Street, Sheridan WY 82801, or at 307-674-2600

WILLIAM T. BASS

Forest Supervisor

/s/ William T. Bass

October 15, 2003

Date

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