

PRECOMMERCIAL THINNING ADDENDUM
To the Decision Memo for the
SOUTH PASS SALE AREA IMPROVEMENT AND FUELS REDUCTION

Washakie Ranger District
Shoshone National Forest

Fremont County, Wyoming

Decision

This addendum to the South Pass Sale Area and Fuels Reduction Decision Memo (dated March 24, 2000; hereafter refer to as South Pass) documents a decision to implement the proposed action described below. The proposed action is excluded from any additional requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act including preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The basis for this exclusion is the lack of any significant issues identified during the scoping process, and the determination that there are no extraordinary circumstances involved. The action is excluded under Category Number 6 under section 31.2, “Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.” This decision is tiered off of the South Pass Decision Memo and project file. This project file, as well as the South Pass project file, are located at the Washakie District Office in Lander, WY.

I have decided to precommercially thin seedlings and saplings consisting of predominantly lodgepole pine in the South Pass area. Precommercial thinning will improve the growth and health of stands that have regenerated after treatment during the 1976 South Pass Timber Sale. Precommercial thin areas are located where disease infected overstory trees have been removed as described in the South Pass Decision Memo.

I find that no extraordinary circumstances exist to significantly affect the environment with implementation of this action. Extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Steep slopes or highly erosive soils.
- Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.
- Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.
- Inventories Roadless Areas.
- Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

At the time that the South Pass Decision Memo was being prepared, Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) on the Shoshone National Forest had not been identified as per the Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (2000)¹. Precommercial thinning in LAUs is only allowed when stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat.² Precommercial thinning was excluded from the South Pass Decision for this reason. LAUs have since been identified for the Forest. Areas proposed for precommercial thinning with this Addendum do not fall within any of the Shoshone National Forest's LAU's.

Public Involvement

Public scoping for the South Pass project was conducted in November and December, 1998. Adjacent landowners, the Fremont County Commissioners and the Wyoming Congressional Delegation were notified as part of the scoping process. In addition, a notice was published in the Wyoming State Journal. Precommercial thinning was included in scoping, but was excluded from the decision for lack of LAU identification as described above.

All of the comments received were in favor of the South Pass Project (including precommercial thinning). The state of Wyoming recommended several items to be incorporated in the South Pass project. These were included in the Project Design Criteria South Pass Decision and are included in the South Pass project file. The state of Wyoming's recommendations specific to this addendum included:

1. Retaining spruce and fir in lodgepole dominated stands.
2. Thinning in lodgepole stands should maintain a visual barrier along open roads.

These items will be incorporated into project design by:

1. Including a species leave preference for spruce and fir within the thinning contract.
2. Leaving an unthinned strip for one chain (66 feet) on either side of an open road where open roads traverse thinning units.

I conclude from scoping that there is a demonstrated public interest in performing this work. This decision, as well as a copy of the March 24, 2000 South Pass Decision and accompanying map, are being distributed to interested and potentially affected parties, including those who were sent or responded to the South Pass scoping letter.

Findings Required By Other Laws

This proposed project is consistent with laws, regulations, and policy, as well as standards and guidelines in the Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Precommercial thinning will

- Improve health and vigor of vegetation (Forest Plan III-6).

¹ Ruediger, Bill, Jim Claar, Steve Gniadek, Bryon Hold, Lyle Lewis, Steve Mighton, Bob Naney, Gary Patten, Tony Rinaldi, Joel Trick, Anne Vandehey, Fred Wahl, Nancy Warren, Dick Wenger, and Al Williamson. 2000. Canada lynx conservation assessment and strategy. USDA Forest Service, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, and USDI National Park Service. Missoula, MT.

²Self-pruning processes have eliminated snowshoe hare cover and forage availability during winter conditions with average snowpack.

- Prevent and control insect infestations and disease (Forest Plan III-8).
- Manage the timber resources on lands suitable for timber amangement to provide sawtimber, roundwood,and firewood (Forest Plan III-8).

Precommercial thinning is also performed in conformance with Management Area Direction 2A (Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation), 2B (Rural and Roaded National Recreation), and 7E (Wood Fiber Production); all apply to the South Pass Area.

Implementation

This decision can be implemented immediately and is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4). The project will be implemented beginning the spring of 2002.

Contact person

Further information about the decision can be obtained from:

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Responsible Official

/s/ Burns Davison
Burns Davison, District Ranger

March 7, 2002
Date
