

**NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION**  
Gibbonsville Wildland/Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Project  
USDA Forest Service  
Salmon-Challis National Forest  
North Fork Ranger District

The North Fork District Ranger is proposing to cut by hand, and by tractor and skyline mechanized equipment approximately 5,000 acres of hazardous fuels within the North Fork Salmon River drainage in the vicinity of Gibbonsville, Idaho. The District is also proposing to close approximately 14 miles of unclassified road, and reopen the Hammerean Creek Road (#60449) by removing a slide to allow seasonal access. Lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands would be treated in 117 units, ranging from approximately 2 to 344 acres in size. Treatments would begin in 2005 and are anticipated to be complete by 2012. The proposed action can be viewed on the following Internet website: [www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/projects](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/projects).

This proposed action is based on four years of analysis. Public scoping on this project began in May 2001. An Environmental Assessment was published in April 2003, and a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was issued on October 2, 2003. The Decision Notice was withdrawn on January 28, 2004. Additional analysis was completed on Management Indicator Species and Unroaded Areas. A new Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was issued on March 3, 2004. The Deputy Regional Forester reversed this Decision on June 3, 2004.

Project specifics of the proposed action are identified below and on the attached maps.

***Amount, type and site specific locations of vegetative management practices:*** Included in this proposed action are silvicultural prescriptions that treat approximately 5,000 acres, resulting in an estimated 12, 820 CCF (approximately 6.4 million board feet) of forest products. Vegetation management practices concur with Forest Plan direction (Forest Plan, page IV-2) to improve the growth, health and vigor of forest stands through silvicultural treatments while maintaining or improving other resource values. Vegetation management will be implemented through the use of several silvicultural prescribed treatments:

- Thin young seedlings and saplings from plantations and naturally regenerated areas to an 18 x 18 feet spacing to provide for crown separation between the trees and maintain a healthy and vigorous condition.
- Increase the spacing between trees greater than 7 inches dbh to a Stand Density Index of 80. Spacing will be increased to 18 x 18 for 7-inch dbh trees and to 41 x 41 feet for 20-inch dbh trees. This prescription will maintain crown separation between the trees to limit the risk of crown fires, retain stand vigor and limit insect and disease activity. Fuel loading will be managed by hand piling, machine piling and broadcast burning. Shaded fuelbreaks will be developed.
- For selected stands in the urban interface and Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA), remove ladder fuels up to 8 inches dbh and follow up by hand piling and

burning or broadcast burning. This will reduce the likelihood of crown fires and lessen the risk to adjacent private and forest resources.

- Remove dwarf mistletoe diseased trees to reduce fire hazard and the spread of the disease.

***Amount, type, and site-specific location of appropriate transportation system management activities:*** Included in this proposed action is a determination of the transportation system necessary to provide access and achieve resource objectives. A roads analysis was performed for the proposed action. Classified roads within the project area total 75.9 miles. Of this total, 53.5 miles are open roads and 22.4 miles are designated closed to vehicle traffic. In addition to the classified roads, there are 71.0 miles of unclassified roads. Of the unclassified roads, 56.1 miles are currently closed to vehicle traffic and 14.9 miles are open. Of the total miles of unclassified roads, 5.9 miles were user created, not constructed. The interdisciplinary (ID) team addressed access and resource concerns and opportunities and recommended changes to the road system were based on their roads analysis. This proposed action includes the following:

- Travel management designations for big game security in Smithy Creek and Granite Mountain currently restrict motorized access from August 25 through June 15. Roads located in these areas would remain closed to public motorized use. Motorized use associated with proposed treatment activities would be allowed during the closure period.
- Road decommissioning will remove approximately 14 miles of existing roads from the system road inventory. Decommissioned roads will be closed with a berm or other natural materials and allowed to grow over with natural vegetation. These roads are in areas of substantial erosion and in RHCA's where other suitable access exists.
- Hammerean Road (#60449) will be reopened by removing the slide and allowing loop traffic. The road will have a winter closure (December through May) from Volter Creek north to Twin Creek to mitigate disturbance to wildlife by opening the road to traffic.

***Design criteria and site-specific monitoring:***

- Knapweed along the Crone Gulch Roads and all other treatment areas within Management Area (MA) 3A-4A will be treated to prevent its spread into forage areas on big game winter range.
- Suitable lynx habitat has been avoided.
- To maintain old growth characteristics in Unit 158, north of Gibbonsville, treatments will be limited to removing ladder fuels that exist underneath overstory trees. Areas that have no overstory will receive no ladder fuel treatment.
- To provide adequate thermal cover in key winter range, 182 acres located along the North Fork River corridor will not be treated. In Unit 126 ladder fuels will be removed where overstory canopy closure is greater than 60 percent; in areas where canopy closure is less than 60 percent, ladder fuels will only be reduced to an 18 by 18 foot spacing.

- Unit WS2 has a high fire risk rating combined with a high inherent erosion hazard rating. Because of these ratings, WS2 will receive ladder fuel reduction and slash hand piling within 200 feet of the private land to provide a defensible space for firefighters and to maintain thermal cover. Unit WS4 (37 acres) will have ladder fuels reduced and slash hand piling. On both units, four tons of downed material will be left per acre.
- The Forest will continue ongoing fishery and aquatic habitat inventory and monitoring efforts, including R1/R4 Stream Habitat inventories, presence/absence and population densities of fishes, stream sedimentation, stream connectivity, road density and the percent of stands less than 30 years old in the 6<sup>th</sup> field hydrologic unit codes.
- Intensive-complete inventories will be conducted for all non-inventoried high cultural resource probability areas potentially affected by the treatments. Any previously undocumented cultural properties found will be evaluated in consultation with the SHPO and appropriate Tribe. The Forest Archeologist will certify avoidance procedures.
- Air quality, old growth retention, fish habitat, soils, water quality and visual quality will be monitored.
- Monitoring requirements of the Interagency Implementation Team under the Timber Module of the National Fire Plan Consultation will occur.
- All treated areas will be monitored for fuel treatment effectiveness and the need for follow-up maintenance treatments.

The public is invited to comment on the proposed action. Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be accepted as appellants. Substantive comments are those within the scope of, are specific to, and have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision. Each individual, or representative from each organization, submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to attain appeal eligibility. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project. Comments should include the information required pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), as published in the Federal Register on June 4, 2003.

Please send written comments to: Terry Hershey, Acting District Ranger, North Fork Ranger District, P.O. Box 1805, North Fork, ID 83466; phone: (208) 865-2700, fax: (208) 865-2739; e-mail: [comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-northfork@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-northfork@fs.fed.us). E-mailed comments must be submitted in MS Word (\*.doc) or rich text format (\*.rtf). Comments may also be delivered to the North Fork Ranger District office during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m, Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of this legal notice in the *Recorder Herald*.

If you have any questions, would like a copy of the project proposal or wish to remain on the mailing list, please contact Bill Baer, Team Leader, 50 Hwy 93 South, Salmon, ID 83467 or call (208) 756-5263.