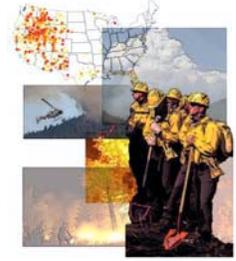
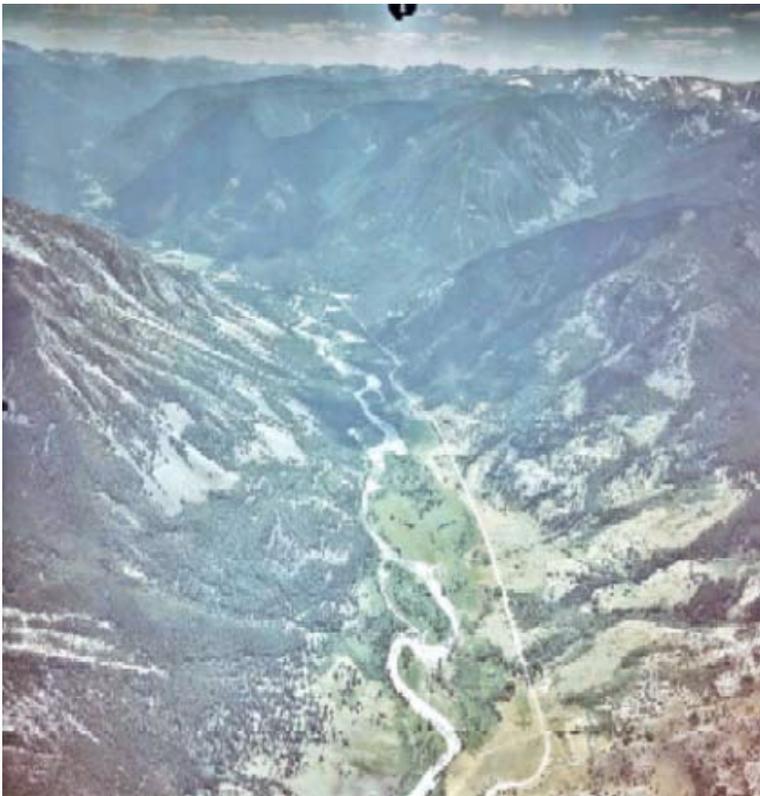


National Fire Plan

Building Community Support & Commitment Montana 2002



The 40-mile Boulder River Canyon, located on the Big Timber Ranger District of the Gallatin National Forest in central Montana, is home to some 250 private landowners, 25 Forest Service summer home permittees, four large church camps, and five campgrounds. This beautiful canyon also boasts of a scenic river corridor, prime grizzly bear habitat, and the neighboring Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. But the story doesn't end here. Unfortunately, the fir bark beetle has arrived in the canyon, attacking trees that are already stressed by several years of drought, and there's a heavy fuels load. But even more daunting is the fact that there is only one road (and on way) into the canyon. It is also the only way out.



“Our main objective is public and firefighter safety,” stated Bill Avey, Big Timber District Ranger. He added, “I am pleased that so many folks have come to the table in the early stages of this project.”

To tackle the problem, the Big Timber Ranger District has engaged local community members in planning a multi-faceted fuels reduction project. The District can already boast of a long list of partners including the Boulder River Watershed Association, Sweet Grass County Commissioners, Department of Emergency Services, Big Timber Fire Chief and Fire Dept., Sweet Grass County Sheriff, County road crew, and local residents.

The Boulder River Canyon partners are already eagerly exploring a number of project options including fir beetle repellent and trapping, stewardship contracts for thinning, assistance to private landowners to help them create “defensible space,” and the development of an evacuation plan for the river canyon. Planning will continue through the winter with project implementation expected to be in the spring or early summer of 2003.