



FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior
Web: <http://www.doi.gov>

Making a Difference Helena National Forest - Montana

Under the Healthy Forests Initiative, a Forest Service decision memo (for a categorical exclusion) signed on July 28, 2004 addresses the need to reduce hazardous fuels and the associated risk of high-intensity wildland fires on approximately 722 acres on the Helena National Forest. The risk of human caused ignitions is high to private and federal lands due to the close proximity of a transportation/utility corridor extending throughout the drainage. The purpose of the project is to provide better protection of values related to private land, public infrastructure, wildlife habitat and native ecosystems at risk to high-intensity wildfire. Activities utilized to accomplish fuels reduction would be cutting small diameter trees and applying prescribed fire. The project will be implemented over the next 3-5 years, with follow-up maintenance treatments applied as necessary to maintain the lower fire hazard levels.

This project was developed collaboratively with Broadwater County and the Tri-County Fire Working Group, and was designed using input from the public and a Forest Service interdisciplinary team. The County's 2002 fire hazard fuel inventory was used to identify areas needing treatment (i.e. areas having high and severe hazard ratings), while discussions with county commissioners, the fire working group, and private landowners were used to develop the Forest's proposal.

The project area has been classified as "high to severe fuel hazard with potential for high-intensity wildfire and extreme rates of spread" in the fire hazard fuel inventory mentioned above. Generally, these are dry habitat types that have been altered from historical conditions because they have missed multiple fire return intervals (i.e. areas determined to be in fire Condition Class 2 and 3). The project has been designed to reduce fuels (primarily ladder fuels), thus reducing the risk of large high-intensity wildfire. Methods of treatment include, prescribed burning and mechanical methods of crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching and mowing. The following pictures depict the existing conditions within the analysis area. Work has just commenced and no pictures of treated areas are available yet. For further information about this project contact Dewey Arnold at (406) 495-3852.

Pre-treatment areas along the eastern private boundary. Note dense vegetation.



For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Healthy Forests Initiative, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/> or <http://www.doi.gov/hfi/newhfi/>