

# Notice of Proposed Action

## Budworm Response Project

Shoshone National Forest  
Wyoming

November 2016

### Comments Requested

The North Zone of the Shoshone National Forest welcomes your comments on its proposal to manage forest vegetation on the Clarks Fork Ranger District along the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway. The proposal is to treat approximately 2,000 acres heavily impacted by an ongoing Spruce Budworm epidemic. Treatment would be accomplished using the following methods:

- A combination of salvage and sanitation harvest would be applied throughout the project area.
- In areas where residual green trees exist, a Shelterwood/Seed tree harvest prescription would be applied.

### Public Involvement

This notice is intended to seek input on the development and preparation of the Budworm Response Project (BRP). Participation by interested persons, state and local governments, and Indian tribes is encouraged now and throughout the remainder of the planning and analysis process.

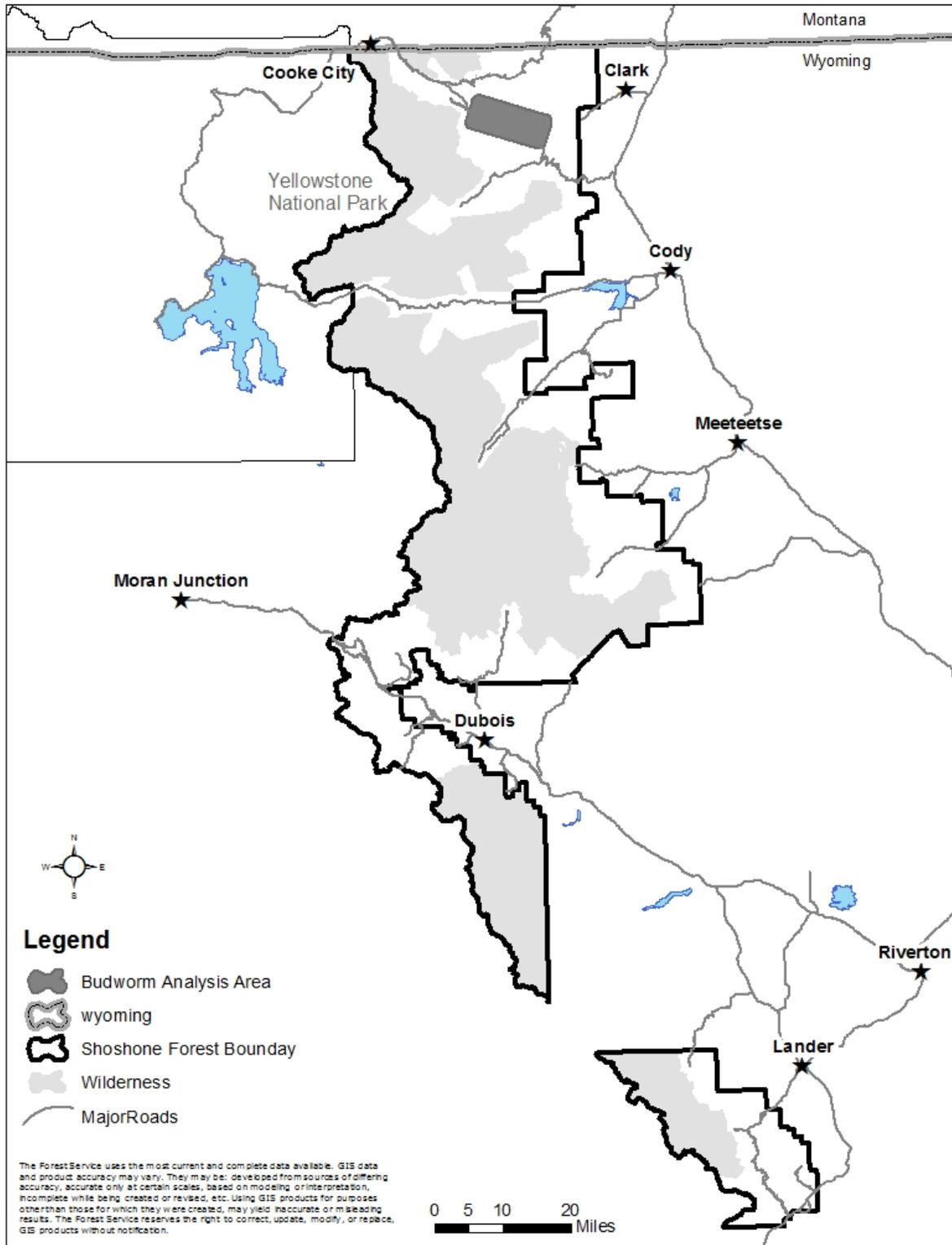
A public meeting was held in the Crandall area on September 1, 2016 to inform residents in the immediate vicinity as well as others interested in the proposal. Landowners expressed concern about the effect of the infestation on private property and asked about ways to control it on a smaller scale. Others asked about what the road corridor would look like post-treatment given the current heavy mortality.

### Location and Background

The proposed Budworm Response Project is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Cody Wyoming along State Highway 296, Chief Joseph Scenic Byway (see Figure 1). Parts of the Clarks Fork Ranger District are experiencing an ongoing outbreak of Western Spruce Budworm. In addition to the current outbreak, insect and disease mortality has occurred on the Clarks Fork District from Spruce beetle, Douglas-Fir beetle, mountain pine beetle, mistletoe, and Comandra rust. Heavy mortality is evident along the scenic corridor and beyond.

The predominant overstory vegetation in the project area consists of Lodgepole pine, Englemann spruce, Subalpine fir, Douglas fir, and aspen.

**Figure 1. General Project Location**



## Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of this project is to treat vegetation affected by a Spruce Budworm epidemic in the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway. A variety of vegetation treatments would be used to meet the following goals:

- Increase resistance to future insect and disease occurrence.
- Reduce fuels adjacent to the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
- Recover the value of dead timber.
- Enhance ecological resiliency to promote future forest vegetation.

The proposed management would have the following beneficial effects:

- Reduce stocking of vegetation to improve forest health and develop resiliency to future insect and disease infestation.
- Reduce the existing and potential heavy accumulation of forest fuels that may cause an increase in wildfire hazard to and from nearby communities.
- Increase the defensibility of values in the National Scenic Byway travel corridor from wildfire, by altering the fuels.
- Provide utilization of forest products through timber harvest.
- Perpetuate and enhance present and future forest vegetation.

## Proposed Action

A variety of silvicultural methods would be applied to vegetation in the project area. Methods may include a blend of even-aged silvicultural systems such as overstory removal, seed tree, clearcut, and/or shelterwood. In an effort to be responsive to areas where severe Spruce Budworm infestation has occurred and continues, a combination of salvage and sanitation cutting would be applied. Proposed treatments would involve removing dead and dying trees.

The proposed action includes the following activities.

- 1,600 acres of ground based logging
- 400 acres of cable logging
- Approximately 9 miles of temporary road construction
- Approximately 16 miles of road reconstruction
- Post-sale temporary road decommissioning

Connected actions would include treatment of invasive weeds as necessary, and planting immediately post-harvest as needed if regeneration requirements are not met. Post-harvest activities may include treatment of fuels by lopping and scattering or piling and burning.

The proposed project will include approximately 125 acres in the Windy Mountain Roadless Area (#02039). The roadless area proposed treatments are consistent with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule; to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, within the range of variability which would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period. Sec 294.13 (b)(1)(ii).

Several proposed units are adjacent to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone Wild River corridor (Management Area 1.5A).

## Land Management Plan Guidance

Part of the process of initiating a project on a national forest is to check the proposed activity against direction and guidance in the respective Land Management Plan (LMP). The LMP includes direction for protecting the full range of forest resources. A vegetation treatment project like this one would need to comply with standards and guidelines for forest resources ranging from wildlife protection to soils, water, air, etc.

During field visits to the BRP site in the summer of 2016 it was evident that budworm infested timber stands were deteriorating very quickly along the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway and beyond. The line officer, advised by the interdisciplinary team, concluded that it would be impossible to respond to the budworm infestation and comply with LMP standards for Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) in the Scenic Byway corridor. Leaving sufficient live trees post treatment to meet visual standards isn't possible in the heaviest hit timber stands. Therefore the proposed action would involve a site-specific plan amendment to address SIO standards.

## Project-Specific Design Features

The analysis that will be documented in this environmental analysis (EA) will disclose the possible adverse and beneficial impacts that may occur from implementing the actions proposed. Measures have been formulated to mitigate or reduce adverse impacts. These measures will be guided by the direction from the Forest Plan.

Resource specialists use field reconnaissance, on-the-ground inventories, computer (GIS) data, and various studies to prepare their reports. Resource reports will show the cause and effect relationships between the alternatives and their specific effects, and indicate mitigations to reduce or eliminate those adverse effects in the design of the alternatives. These reports will be summarized and referenced in the EA and will be part the project record. Resource concerns and mitigation measures may be refined further during final design work, when specialists have one more opportunity to revise their recommendations.

Applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, the "Best Management Practices" (BMP's) used to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act, and project-specific mitigation measures are identified in these reports and will be a part of the proposed action as well as any additional alternatives if developed.

## Comment Process

The Budworm Response Project is subject to a "Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process" subject to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and C. After a project decision has been made, there will be a 30-day 'objection' period before the decision. This will enable the Responsible Official to notify the public of the intended decision and the rationale for that decision. In turn, the public is provided with an opportunity to raise any concerns with the decision before it is signed. If there is an objection, the Reviewing Officer will have 45-days following the end of the objection period to meet with the objector(s) and provide written response before a final decision can be made. For this project the North Zone District Ranger in Cody, Wyoming is the Responsible

Official and the Forest Supervisor for the Shoshone National Forest in Cody, WY will be the Reviewing Officer.

Individuals and entities who have submitted timely, specific written comments regarding a proposed project or activity that is subject to these regulations during any designated opportunity for public comment may file an objection. Issues raised in an objection must be based on previously submitted written comments specific to the proposed project or activity unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities to comment (36 CFR 218).

### Public Involvement

Comments must be received within 30 days of the date the legal notice is published in the paper of record, to be considered in the preparation of the environmental document. Please include the following information with your comments:

1. Name, address, telephone number, and organization (if applicable)
2. The name of the project (Budworm Response Project) for which you are submitting comments.
3. Specific issues and supporting reasons to be considered.

Written comments should be submitted to:

Olga Troxel, Team Leader  
Shoshone National Forest  
Wapiti Ranger District  
203A Yellowstone Avenue  
Cody, WY 82414

You may also hand deliver your comments to the address listed above during normal business hours from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. Comments may also be sent by email to [comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone@fs.fed.us)

We encourage your participation. Site-specific public comments are being requested to determine the scope of the analysis, and to identify significant issues and alternatives to the proposed action. Specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and should include supporting rationale for the Responsible Official to consider.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Shoshone National Forest with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

For further information on the proposed action please contact Amy Haas at 307-527-6921 or via email at [ahaas@fs.fed.us](mailto:ahaas@fs.fed.us).

## *Glossary of Terms*

**Even-aged Silvicultural Systems** – A planned program of treatments for managing forest stands designed to create or maintain a stand with predominantly one age class. Even-aged silvicultural systems include overstory removal, seed-tree, clearcutting, and shelterwood.

**Clearcutting** – A method of harvesting and regenerating trees in which all trees are cleared from a site and a new, even-aged stand of trees is grown.

**Seed-Tree** – Removal of the stand except for a small number of trees left to provide seed for the regenerating stand.

**Shelterwood** – A method of harvesting trees in a series of steps (two or three) designed to improve the vigor and seed production potential of trees left behind. It involves cutting most trees but leaving those needed to produce sufficient shade to produce a new age class.

**Overstory Removal** – The cutting of trees that make up the upper canopy layer in a stand of trees in order to allow trees or other vegetation in an understory to grow.