Scoping and Notice of Proposed Action & Opportunity to Comment

South Beaver Vegetation Management

Beaver Ranger District, Fishlake National Forest
Beaver County, Utah
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Chapter 1: Purpose of and Need for Action

1.1 Introduction
The South Beaver Vegetation Management project is proposed for National Forest System lands on the Beaver Ranger District (BRD) of the Fishlake National Forest. The purpose of this proposal is to implement the Fishlake National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) by proposing vegetation treatments designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Rejuvenate aspen and mountain brush to improve conditions for MIS.
2. Identify and improve habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species including participation in recovery efforts for both plants and animals.
3. In greater sage-grouse habitat management areas, including all seasonal habitat, 70% or more of lands capable of producing sagebrush have from 10 to 30% sagebrush canopy cover and less than 10% conifer canopy cover.
4. Use prescribed fire (and other fuel management tools) to reduce fuel buildup and meet resource objectives.
5. Improve the timber age class distribution and maintain species diversity, while using silvicultural tools to prevent and control insect infestation and disease.
6. Integrate aspen management into the timber management program to perpetuate the species and improve aspen quality.

The Forest Service is conducting an environmental analysis to determine whether this proposal may significantly affect the quality of the human environment and thereby require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The findings associated with this analysis will be presented in an Environmental Assessment (EA), demonstrating the Fishlake National Forest’s compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations.

1.2 Location of the Proposed Project Area
The BRD is located in southern Utah, an island of National Forest completely surrounded by major transportation routes: I-70 to the north; US-89 to the east, SR-20 on the south; and I-15 to the west. The Ranger District is just over 313,000 acres in size, though almost 15,000 acres of that is in private ownership. Elevations range from 6,300 feet along the Sevier River near Circleville Canyon to just over 12,000 feet at the summit of Belknap, the highest peak in the Tushar Mountain Range. The major forest vegetation types include pinyon-juniper woodlands, ponderosa pine, limber pine, Douglas fir, blue spruce, aspen, and spruce-fir.

The 42,903 acre South Beaver analysis area is located in the south east corner of the BRD (Figure 1). The analysis area is bordered to the north by SR-153 and by the North Beaver and Big Flat project areas. To the east is the ridge line of Circleville Mountain. The analysis area is bordered on the south and west by BLM lands intermixed with private parcels and state sections. It should also be noted that this analysis area boundary includes two collections of private property—Hi-Lo-Mostly Lo Estates and Arrowhead/LeBaron—that, between them, contain approximately 1,445 acres. Moreover, the analysis boundary includes two smaller forest vegetation projects that are currently in the implementation stage: South Fork and Little Res II.
Other notable features include a portion of the Circleville Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), described below, and a popular grouping of Forest Service campgrounds along the Kent’s Lake Road—Little Reservoir, Tushar Lakeside, Kent’s Lake, Anderson Meadow, and LeBaron. Elevations range from about 7,100 feet at the forest boundary to just over 11,000 on the slopes of Circleville Mountain. The project area includes 34 forest compartments, with an average size of 1,260 acres. Compartments are further subdivided into forest stands; the analysis area contains 349 of these, each of which averages about 122 acres.

The South Beaver analysis area is located in portions of three Hydrologic Unit Code 5 (HUC5) watersheds. Of those, two can be further divided into sixth HUCs, while the small section of the Upper Sevier contains just a single HUC6 (Table 1).

Table 1. South Beaver Vegetation Management Watershed Areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HUC5 Watershed</th>
<th>Total Size (Acres)</th>
<th>Project Area Acres</th>
<th>HUC6 Watershed</th>
<th>Total Size (Acres)</th>
<th>Project Area Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Creek-Sevier River</td>
<td>158,988</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>Eehard Creek</td>
<td>15,898</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremont Wash</td>
<td>215,383</td>
<td>5,741</td>
<td>Lees Spring Wash</td>
<td>16,213</td>
<td>4,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coyote Creek</td>
<td>24,739</td>
<td>1,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Creek-Beaver River</td>
<td>196,189</td>
<td>36,877</td>
<td>Big Twist Creek</td>
<td>13,903</td>
<td>11,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>East Fork Iant Creek</td>
<td>26,704</td>
<td>18,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johnson Hollow</td>
<td>16,123</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South Creek</td>
<td>21,533</td>
<td>5,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>570,560</td>
<td>42,905</td>
<td></td>
<td>135,113</td>
<td>42,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the Clinton era roadless rule, areas displaying high quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air; diversity of plant and animal communities; primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized classes of dispersed recreation; or natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality were identified for inclusion in the roadless area inventory. At that time, five areas were identified on the BRD. One of these, Circleville Mountain, is a 24,132 acre parcel on the south end of the ranger district. The Circleville Mountain polygon overlaps with the South Beaver analysis area for approximately 13,700 acres. While IRAs do not have the status of, say, wilderness areas, forest vegetation management is restricted to the cutting, sale, or removal of generally small diameter timber to improve TES habitat or to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects. Moreover, with a few minor exceptions, all road construction or reconstruction is prohibited within the Circleville Mountain IRA.

The project area includes all or parts of T.30S, R.4W, Sections 6 and 7; T.29S, R.5W, Sections 19-21 and 27-36; T.30S, R.5W, Sections 1-12, 14-22, and 28-33; and T.31S, R.5W, Sections 5 and 6; T.29S, R.6W, Sections 21-22, 24-29, and 33-36; T.30S, R.6W, Sections 1-4, 10-15, 22-27, and 34-36; and T.31S, R.6W, Sections 1-3 of the Salt Lake Base Meridian.
1.3 Resource Conditions

While many of the stands within the project area have a relatively diverse overstory composed of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*), Douglas fir (*Psuedotsuga menziesii*), aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), the most prominent
cover type on the landscape is spruce-fir (Figure 2). (Cover types used by the Forest Service have been defined by the Society of American Foresters (Eyre 1980).) Western forest cover type 206 is composed of Engelmann spruce (*Picea Engelmannii*) and subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*).

The spruce-fir type is widespread throughout southern Utah, growing especially on the higher mountains and plateaus (Alexander 1987). In older stands, Engelmann spruce tend to dominate the canopy due to its ability to regenerate on bare mineral soil, a superior rate of growth, and longevity (Veblen and others 1991). In response to spruce beetle (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*) outbreaks, however, the composition of these stands trends toward subalpine fir because of the reduction in spruce seed sources and the lack of soil disturbance (Schmid and Hinds 1974; Dymerski and others 2001). In fact, subalpine fir can become dominant for up to 200 years after a spruce beetle outbreak because fir accounts for most of the advanced regeneration in undisturbed stands (Jenkins and others 2008). Subalpine fir, given its insect and disease problems has less management potential than spruce (McCaughey and Schmidt 1982), especially in achieving large tree objectives.

![Figure 2. BRD Cover Types (in acres) for South Beaver based on Current Dominant Over-story.](image)

Along with the spruce beetle, forest insect attacks have been detected within the South Beaver analysis area each year from 1991 through 2015, with the exception of 1992. The detection data has generally shown an increase in both attacks and acres affected over that time period (Figure 3). The total number of acres mapped since 1991 is 66,425. While this exceeds the total size of the South Beaver landscape, there is considerable polygon overlap from year to year and from pest to pest, so the total area of impact is somewhat less than indicated.
Figure 3. Aerial Detection Survey Data from 1991 through 2015 for South Beaver.

The Forest Health Protection’s Aerial Detection Survey (ADS) has estimated that these attacks have been perpetrated by up to seven bark beetle species, though just five of them can be credited with most of the damage. These five include the Douglas fir beetle (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*), the fir engraver (*Scolytus ventralis*), the mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*), pinyon ips (*Ips confusus*), and the spruce beetle. In addition, staff on the BRD have recently noticed an uptick in western balsam bark beetle (*Dryocoetes confuses*) attacks on subalpine fir, though they have not been mapped by the ADS.

Along with bark beetles, the western spruce budworm (*Choristoneura occidentalis*, WSB) has recently become a common pest throughout the South Beaver analysis area. Across the entire BRD, there were no WSB detections by the ADS prior to 2000. Since that time, WSB has been mapped 14 of 16 years, the only exceptions coming in 2005 and 2008. The number of detections has increased steadily, as has the areal extent of the impact. The WSB has affected five different hosts—Engelmann and blue spruce, subalpine and white fir, and Douglas fir—but, based on our observations and on these data, the three “firs” have borne the brunt of the outbreak. Of the total number of defoliated acres across the ranger district, spruce have been identified on just 1,170 acres (1%), so, on the BRD, this is primarily a pest of subalpine, white, and Douglas fir.

The BRD also provides habitat for dozens of wildlife species, including fish, migratory birds, and big game. Within the South Beaver landscape analysis area, a few of these are of special importance. First, Birch Creek West is occupied by a remnant population of Bonneville cutthroat trout (*Oncorhyncus clarkii utah*). In addition, approximately 12,600 acres of the area have been designated as critical big game winter range. This designation is focused along the western edge of the analysis in the sagebrush and pinyon-juniper cover types at elevations ranging from 7,200 to 8,600 feet. Indeed, as the district’s biologist and rangeland management specialist have both noted, these areas support some of the healthiest stands of elk and deer forage—bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, etc.—available anywhere.
Along with these large ungulates, the agency has recently moved to protect a less visible low-country denizen, the greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) by designating priority habitat management areas. In the case of the South Beaver analysis area, there is significant overlap between the critical big game winter range and priority sage grouse habitat, though the sage grouse polygon is less than half as large at 5,033 acres. Under the recent Great Basin Record of Decision, the Regional Forester, Nora Rasure, amended each of the LRMPs in Utah to incorporate new desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for the management of these habitat areas.

Though the sage grouse has recently made headlines, many other birds rely on habitat within the South Beaver landscape. Of particular value to cavity nesters and raptors, among many others, are the aspen clones that remain within the analysis area (Richardson 2007). Aspen is, in fact, widely regarded as one of the most important forest types for providing wildlife habitat (Griffis-Kyle and Beier 2003). It is a species favored by cavity nesting birds (Harestad and Keisker 1989), as well as bats (Kalcounis and Brigham 1998). Moreover, plant species diversity and richness are far higher within aspen stands than in adjacent areas dominated by conifers (Kuhn and others 2011). This provides for biological diversity in southern Utah forests, where conifers often predominate (Kay 1997). In fact, aspen is considered second only to riparian areas in its support of biodiversity (Chong and others 2001).

Along with the wood-land and sage-brush communities and aspen stands that provide for much of the best wildlife habitat on the South Beaver landscape, there thousands of acres of suitable conifer habitat for the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). While the goshawk is not listed, it does enjoy special status in the Intermountain Region and on the Fishlake National Forest where it is designated as sensitive and as an indicator of management respectively. Moreover, the northern goshawk is not the only one. The South Beaver analysis area may provide habitat for numerous wildlife species with special designations under both the Endangered Species Act (Threatened and Endangered) and the Regional Forester’s sensitive species list.

### 1.4 Purpose and Need

#### 1.4.1 Purpose

As is noted above, the purpose of this proposal is to implement the Fishlake National Forest LRMP by proposing vegetation treatments designed specifically to achieve the following goals:

- Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities.

- Identify and improve habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species including participation in recovery efforts for both plants and animals.

- Improve or maintain the quality of habitat on big game winter ranges.

- Determine current status and monitor trends in management indicator species (MIS) and their habitats.

- Integrate aspen management into the timber management program to perpetuate the species and improve aspen quality.

- Improve the timber age class distribution and maintain species diversity.
• Prevent and control insect infestation and disease.

• Restore and maintain ecosystems, consistent with land uses and historic fire regimes, through wildland fire use and prescribed fire.

• In greater sage-grouse habitat management areas, including all seasonal habitat, 70% or more of lands capable of producing sagebrush have from 10 to 30% sagebrush canopy cover and less than 10% conifer canopy cover.

1.4.2 Need
This proposal is needed to allow for forest vegetation management actions on the BRD designed to improve age class and species distribution and diversity, reduce fuel buildup, prevent and control insect infestation and disease, and maintain and improve wildlife habitat. Each of these needs has been identified by the BRD resource management team through comparison of specific LRMP desired conditions to the natural resources under National Forest management.

1.5 Relationship to the Forest Plan
This action responds to the goals outlined in the Fishlake National Forest LRMP, as amended, and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan. In this case, the analysis team considered every LRMP goal and selected those that specifically fit the current condition of the landscape under analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. LRMP Goals and Project Objectives for the South Beaver Analysis Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LRMP Goals (Summarized)</th>
<th>Project Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide and maintain a diversity of plant and animal habitats—including species and age classes—to support TES species, big game forage, and other resource benefits</td>
<td>Manage for a balance of plant communities that mimic natural conditions and historic disturbance regimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejuvenate aspen and mountain brush to improve conditions for MIS</td>
<td>Regenerate early seral species to maintain wildlife habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuate aspen</td>
<td>Identify high priority aspen stands &amp; reduce conifer competition to stimulate suckering and seedling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent and control insect infestation and disease</td>
<td>Maintain a moderate to low risk of bark beetle epidemics—reducing stand density to improve tree vigor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage vegetation to allow for more frequent fire</td>
<td>Reduce forest fuel loads and fire hazard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain sagebrush in designated locations while reducing conifer encroachment</td>
<td>Improve greater sage-grouse habitat by removing invading conifers and other undesirable species on 7,000 acres across the Fishlake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposed action is a project level analysis that is not intended to re-examine the basic land use allocations made in the LRMP, nor propose broad changes in land use allocations. Instead, planning at the project level involves the development, analysis, and disclosure of potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of specific actions designed to achieve the overall goals and objectives of the LRMP. Under the LRMP, the forest is segmented into management areas. While multiple uses occur throughout each management area, the LRMP provides direction regarding priorities, as well as more specific guidelines based on those priorities. Within the South Beaver project area there are parts of six management areas:
• 2B (Rural and Roaded-Natural Recreation) – 1,338 acres, “Management emphasis is for rural and roaded-natural recreation opportunities.”

• 4A (Fish Habitat Improvement) - 632 acres, “Management emphasis is on fish habitat improvement where aquatic habitat is below productive potential.”

• 4B (Habitat for Management Indicator Species) - 9,919 acres, “Management emphasis is on the habitat needs of one or more management indicator species. Species with compatible habitat needs are selected for an area. The prescription can be applied to emphasize groups of species, such as early succession dependent or late succession dependent, in order to increase species richness or diversity.”

• 5B (Big Game Winter Range--Non-Forested) - 3,698 acres “Management emphasis is on winter range for deer, elk, and bighorn sheep if introduced. Treatments are applied to increase forage production of existing grass, forb, and browse species or to alter plant species composition. Prescribed burning, seeding, spraying, planting, and mechanical treatments may occur.”

• 6B (Intensive Livestock Management) – 11,094 acres, “Maintain and manage forested inclusions to provide a high level of forage production, wildlife habitat and diversity.”

• 7A (Wood-fiber Production and Utilization) - 16,206 acres, “Management emphasis is on wood-fiber production and utilization of large roundwood of a size and quality suitable for sawtimber.”

1.6 Proposed Action
The following brief paragraphs are supplemented by a detailed, site specific description of the proposed action in Chapter 2 of this document.

1.6.1 Commercial Thinning
While project objectives generally focus on habitat improvement, species diversity, and fuel reduction needs, the proposed action may include sites with opportunities for commercial removals. Woody material targeted for thinning and/or burning under the South Beaver is generally of small diameter and low quality—not suitable for saw timber. Nonetheless, the thinned material may have several uses—including for posts and poles, firewood, pallets and pellets, etc. For this reason, the BRD may look for opportunities to work with commercial forest producers to remove material and recover economic value from these forest products.

1.6.2 Non-Commercial Thinning and Stand Improvement
The proposed action would utilize thinning and stand improvement methods to improve the composition and quality of desirable trees in stands throughout the project area. Thinning is a cultural treatment made to reduce stand density of trees primarily to improve growth or enhance forest health. Stand improvement treatments may also include improvement planting and improvement cutting, which are designed to restock stands with native species, while removing less desirable species.

1.6.3 Prescribed Fire
Prescribed fire treatments may include pile burning and broadcast burning. Pile burning is, just as it sounds, the collection of excess fuel and slash—both activity and natural—into piles which
can then be burned during the cooler, wetter months when the risk of unwanted wildfire is low. Broadcast burning, on the other hand, is the application of fire to in situ forest fuels under specified environmental conditions that allow the fire to be confined to a predetermined area.

1.6.4 Conifer Cut and Lop

Forest Service or contract crews would use chainsaws to hand-cut, lop, and leave undesired small conifer trees in sage grouse habitat. Stumps would be severed within six inches of the ground. Tree branches and stems would be lopped to within 24 inches of the ground. Conifer cutting would be focused on stands of non-persistent pinyon and juniper trees of 150 years of age or less. Generally these trees will be 15 inches or less in diameter at root collar. Large, older trees on rocky soils with evidence of fire scars would be retained.

1.7 Decision Framework

The Responsible Official for this analysis and decision is the District Ranger, Beaver Ranger District, Fishlake National Forest. The Responsible Official will decide whether to proceed with this action as described above, to proceed with an alternative action, or to do nothing at this time.

1.8 Public Involvement

By soliciting public comments the Forest Service ensures that a wide range of interests and perspectives are considered in the development and refinement of the proposal, and that any site specific natural resource concerns are identified. From a procedural perspective, soliciting public comment provides a means to meet the NEPA requirements for public scoping, and provides the interested public with a formal notice and opportunity to comment prior to a decision by the responsible official.

1.8.1 Scoping

Scoping is the process of obtaining public comments about proposed federal actions to determine the range of issues to be addressed. This document and the accompanying cover letter initiate the public scoping process for the South Beaver Vegetation Management project. This analysis will be posted on the Fishlake National Forest’s Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), and the announcement will be mailed to government entities, elected officials, special interest groups, and individuals known to be interested in this project.

Comments received will be analyzed and categorized as 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence; or 5) identifying a site specific natural resource concern to be addressed and tracked through the analysis. (The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “…identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3) . . . ”)

Those comments categorized as site specific natural resource concerns will be further classified as being either “key” or “non-key” issues. Key issues will be used to generate alternatives to the proposed action. These alternatives may be analyzed fully or may be considered by the Forest Service but eliminated from full analysis. Where alternatives are eliminated from full consideration the rationale for such elimination will be presented in the final analysis and decision documents. Non-key issues will be carried into the analysis and may result in modifications to the proposed action or the development of additional project design features.
1.8.2 Formal Notice of Opportunity to Comment

This document and letter also serve as the formal Notice and Opportunity to Comment for this project. While this project is not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), it is a project implementing the Fishlake National Forest LRMP and is thus subject to the regulation at 36 CFR 218. Instead of an appeal period, there is an objection process before the final decision is made and after the final environmental document and draft decision are mailed to interested parties. While scoping comments (described above) may be submitted at any time during the project, **those who wish to be eligible to file an objection must submit comments during the formal comment period.**

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of this notice in The Richfield Reaper. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. You should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Moreover, the regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written Comments Must be Submitted to: Kathy Johnson, District Ranger, Beaver Ranger District, PO Box E, 575 South Main Street, Beaver, UT 84713. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Comments may be faxed to 435.438.1242. Electronic comments must be submitted in PDF, rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-fishlake-beaver@fs.fed.us with Subject: South Beaver Vegetation Management. Comments must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3). Only those who submit timely comments will be eligible to object to the project under 36 CFR 218.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the 30 day comment period. Those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to object to the project under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

1. Name and postal address;
2. Title of the proposed action;
3. Specific written comments as defined in § 218.2 regarding the proposed project or activity, along with supporting reasons;
4. Signature or other verification of identity upon request and identification of the individual or entity who authored the comment(s). For comments listing multiple entities or multiple individuals, a signature or other means of verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each entity and for each individual in the case of multiple names. A scanned signature or other means of verifying the identity of the individual or entity representative may be used for electronically submitted comments;
5. Individual members of an entity must submit their own comments to establish personal eligibility; comments received on behalf of an entity are considered as those of the entity only.
Chapter 2: Detailed Proposed Action

The proposed action has four components: commercial removals, stand improvement thinning and burning, stand-alone prescribed fire and conifer cut and lop treatments.

2.1 Commercial Removals

2.1.1 Activities

The Forest Service is a multiple use agency that provides, as part of its mission, forest products to the American public. In some cases, however, the material targeted for removal in thinning or prescribed burning projects is of little value and will not attract a commercial operator. For example, Little Res II, which has focused on removing small diameter white fir and Rocky Mountain juniper, has not yielded commercially valuable material. While the story holds true for much of the proposed South Beaver project, there are a few locations where the BRD would like to retain the flexibility to offer commercial removals to local operators. In general, offerings would involve forest products such as fuelwood, posts, and poles, though some operators may find markets for chips, shavings, pallet wood, or small sawtimber. The stands proposed for commercial removals will be thinned and burned (see the next section) regardless of whether any commercial operator purchases forest products, but, where possible, commercial removals will occur prior to other treatments.

2.1.2 Locations

Commercial removals may be allowed in portions of 21 South Beaver forest stands. These stands are currently accessible by forest roads and no new road construction is authorized. In fact, each of these stands is located along the Kent’s Lake Road corridor, and most of them have had prior logging activities. The total area of the 21 stands is just under 4,000 acres, though only a portion of that is physically accessible to commercial operators, due to steep slopes and roadless areas (Table 3). For a map of the affected stands, see Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compartment</th>
<th>Stands</th>
<th>Size (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 7, 15, 17</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1, 4, 5, 6, 8</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 – 5, 8, 9</td>
<td>1,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>1,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3,956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Stand Improvement: Non-Commercial Thin and Burn

2.2.1 Activities

Thinning is an intermediate treatment made to improve the composition, structure, condition, health, and growth of even- or uneven-aged stands. In this case, non-commercial tree thinning involves the mechanical removal of small diameter material, primarily shade tolerant and less desirable species such as white fir and rocky mountain juniper. These treatments will be focused
on reducing the density of conifer stands to help protect the health and vigor of overstory ponderosa pine and Douglas fir trees. A contractor or Forest Service crew would accomplish the proposed thinning treatments by mechanically or manually removing small diameter trees. Mechanical treatments can include a variety and/or combination of tools designed for shredding, chipping, mulching, or masticating small trees and limbs. Manual treatment is the cutting of small trees using chain saws. Manual treatments are not cost effective for large areas, but may be used to reduce forest densities in areas that are too steep or too remote for machinery. Mechanical/manual treatments may be used alone, or in combination with prescribed fire, to modify the volume of flammable material in treated stands. Moreover, the proposal does not include the development of new roads, so mechanized operations will be limited to the use of existing roads and trails.

Prescribed fire treatments may include pile burning and broadcast burning. Pile burning is the collection of excess fuel and slash—both activity and natural—into piles which can then be burned during the cooler, wetter months when the risk of unwanted wildfire is low. Broadcast burning, on the other hand, is the application of fire to in situ forest fuels under specified environmental conditions that allow the fire to be confined to a predetermined area. Because this project area is associated with a Wildland Urban Interface and abuts numerous high value private residences and recreational developments, the opportunities for widespread use of broadcast burning may be limited. Nonetheless, where the risk of unwanted fire spread is low, broadcast burning may be desirable for reducing fuels in specific locations and for introducing heterogeneity to the arrangement of forest fuels.

2.2.2 Locations

There are 46 forest stands proposed for thinning and burning treatments. In each forest stand selected for treatment, cutting and burning may be applied across the entire stand. In addition, these actions will be applied to stands, listed in the section above, where commercial removals have been completed. The area of the 46 stands is approximately 6,700 acres (Table 4), but the total treatment area may be over 10,000 acres (when the commercial stands, listed in section 2.1, above, are included). For a map of the thinning and burning stands, see Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compartment</th>
<th>Stands</th>
<th>Size (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
<td>1,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5, 9 - 12</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2, 3, 7</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>1, 2, 5</td>
<td>1,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>4, 20, 21</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
<td>869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1 - 6</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6,674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Prescribed Fire

2.3.1 Activities
In addition to the thinning and burning included under subsection 2.2, above, this proposal involves several thousand acres of broadcast burning in unthinned stands. Prescribed fire at these locations will regenerate aspen and mountain brush species, while reducing forest fuels. Using the full range of ignition techniques and following the requirements of the silvicultural prescription, prescribed fire will be introduced to these stands in a manner designed to meet project objectives. Prescribed fire will be managed under a signed burn plan and will follow all state regulations regarding smoke management, as well as public and firefighter safety.

2.3.2 Locations
There are 131 South Beaver forest stands targeted by these stand-alone prescribed fire treatments. These are located primarily in the steep, un-roaded areas to the south and west of Circleville Mountain. The total area is nearly 16,000 acres (Table 5). For a map of the affected stands, see Appendix A.

Table 5. Stands Subject to Stand-Alone Prescribed Fire Treatments under South Beaver.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compartment</th>
<th>Stands</th>
<th>Size (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 - 12</td>
<td>1,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1 - 10, 12</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 - 13</td>
<td>1,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2, 3, 5, 7</td>
<td>708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 - 4</td>
<td>873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1 - 9</td>
<td>1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1 - 8</td>
<td>1,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>2, 3, 10, 15, 17, 18</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>1,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>1, 4 - 15</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>1 - 11</td>
<td>1,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>1 - 9</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>1, 3 - 7</td>
<td>1,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>15,748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Conifer Cut and Lop

2.4.1 Activities
Finally, the South Beaver proposal includes hand cutting of pinyon and/or juniper trees in high priority greater sage grouse habitat. Forest Service or contract crews will use chainsaws to cut
woodland species to within six inches of the ground. Tree branches and stems will be lopped to within 24 inches of the ground. Conifer cutting will be focused on non-persistent pinyon and juniper trees of 150 years of age or less. Generally these trees will be 15 inches or less in diameter at root collar. Large, older trees on rocky soils with evidence of fire scars will be retained. The ultimate goal is to have less than 10% conifer canopy cover in sage grouse habitat.

2.4.2 Locations

There are 41 South Beaver forest stands intersected by the priority sage grouse habitat polygon which is located in the southwest corner of the project area. In addition, a number of the sagebrush and pinyon-juniper stands that are bisected by the habitat polygon would likely benefit from the proposed treatment despite not being strictly within the priority habitat. As a result, there are up to 57 stands that may receive this treatment, for a total of just over 8,000 acres (Table 6). For a map of the affected stands, see Appendix A.

### Table 6. Stands Subject to Conifer Cut and Lop Treatments under South Beaver.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compartment</th>
<th>Stands</th>
<th>Size (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10</td>
<td>1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>1 - 6</td>
<td>1,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>1 - 6</td>
<td>1,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8</td>
<td>905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>1 - 17</td>
<td>1,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8,133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Project Design Features

Project design criteria are listed in Table 7. These criteria were developed to avoid or eliminate adverse impacts from project activities, and are incorporated as an integrated part of all action alternatives. Project design criteria are based upon standard practices and operating procedures that have been employed and proven effective in similar circumstances and conditions: Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction, Regional Watershed Conservation Practices (FSH 2509.22 for Region 1 and 4), LRMP standards and guidelines, and other management requirements that apply to the proposed activities.

### Table 7. Project Design Features.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Area</th>
<th>Project Design Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality 1</td>
<td>Under the Utah Smoke Management Plan, the Fishlake National Forest complies with the requirements of the Clean Air Act by coordinating all prescribed fire with the Utah Office of Smoke Management. No burning will occur under this proposal before the Beaver Ranger District obtains the proper air quality permits from the State of Utah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural 1</td>
<td>Cultural resource surveys have been completed and the proper forms submitted to the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Historic sites within the project area have been specifically identified for avoidance. Project activities will not occur at those locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural 2</td>
<td>In the event that new cultural resources are discovered during implementation of the project, all activity in the immediate area must stop and a member of the Fishlake National Forest Archaeology Staff must be notified to determine an appropriate course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of action. Appropriate consultation with the SHPO, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and other applicable parties would take place as directed by 36 CFR 800.

**Fire and Fuels 1**
Reduce or otherwise treat all activity fuels so that the total loading of materials less than 6 inches in diameter is less than 25 tons/acre, or break up continuous activity fuel concentrations exceeding the above standard into manageable units with fuel breaks or fire lanes, or provide additional protection for activity fuel areas exceeding the above standard when such protection will not be required for more than five years.

**Fisheries 1**
If equipment crosses or enters the stream it should be thoroughly cleaned and dried or decontaminated before moving from one water source to another to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). See “Guide to Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Transport by Wildland Fire Operations – January 2017” for general guidance and technical information.

**Fisheries 2**
Treatments within riparian areas may be fenced to protect riparian vegetation regeneration.

**Forest Vegetation 1**
Activities treating or affecting live forest vegetation will be conducted according to management plan standards and detailed silvicultural prescriptions prepared by a certified silviculturist, per Forest Service regional and national policy. Prescriptions will designate the trees to be cut or reserved and control other elements of forestry operations according to a timetable for implementation that is included; these requirements will be applied by Forest Service Timber Sale Administrators and incorporated into any contracts.

**Forest Vegetation 2**
Utilization standards for live and dead timber: Minimum DBH is 8”; Minimum Top Diameter is 6”; Length is 8”; % Net of Gross is 33 1/3.

**Forest Vegetation 3**
For other than suitable lands, commercial timber cutting is limited to salvage, sanitation, or cutting for road construction.

**Forest Vegetation 4**
Within conifer treatment units, protect residual trees through the designation of skid trails and landings, directional falling, restriction of skidding equipment to approved skid trails, and winching of all felled material to skidders on the skid trail prior to transfer to the landing. Designated skid trails should be located approximately 100 to 150 feet apart depending on terrain.

**Hydrology 1**
To facilitate the control of soil erosion within acceptable tolerance: 1. Allow conventional logging equipment on slopes up to 40% where soil surveys or site-specific soil data are available to design erosion mitigation needs. 2. Utilize cable and aerial systems on slopes over 40%.

**Hydrology 2**
Skid trails will be approved by the sale administrator before commencement of logging.

**Hydrology 3**
Reclaim disturbed areas (skid trails and decks) to protect soil and maintain road closures to minimize disturbances.

**Hydrology 4**
Landing locations would, where feasible, take advantage of existing openings or areas with no regeneration. Log landings and decking areas within any riparian area is prohibited.

**Hydrology 5**
No harvesting will occur adjacent to or near perennial streams based on the following LRMP standard: Special protection and management will be given to floodplains, wetlands, and all land and vegetation for a minimum of 100 feet from the edge of all perennial streams, lakes, and other bodies of water or to the outer margin of the riparian ecosystem if wider than 100 feet.

**Hydrology 6**
A. Prohibit the operation of motorized equipment within the riparian area except at constructed stream crossings.  B. Locate skid trails, landing and decking sites, and other harvest facilities outside the riparian area.  C. Locate roads outside of riparian area except for stream crossings or where other feasible alternatives do not exist.  D. Select stream crossing points to minimize bank and channel disturbance.

**Hydrology 7**
Reduce to natural rate any erosion due to management activity through necessary mitigation measures such as water-barring and revegetation. Rehabilitation measures will be implemented within one year of the activity.
Timber sale haul roads will be inspected annually to determine what work, if any, is needed to keep drainage functional and the road stable. Timber sale haul road ruts will be removed and drainage made functional during periods of high runoff or at least once per year. Maintenance must protect drainage facilities and runoff patterns to insure that damage to adjacent land and resources—including meadows—is held to a minimum.

The State of Utah and the Utah National Forests have agreed, through a 1993 Memorandum of Understanding, to use Forest Plan Standard & Guidelines and the FSH 2509.22 SWCPs to meet the water quality protection elements of the Utah Nonpoint Source Management Plan. The SWCPs most applicable to this project are 13.02, 13.04, 13.06, 14.01, 14.02, 14.03, 14.04, 14.05, 14.06, 14.07, 14.08, 14.10, 14.11, 14.12, 14.13, 14.14, 14.15, 14.16, 14.17, 14.18, 14.20, 14.23, 15.02, 15.03, 15.04, 15.05, 15.06, 15.09, 15.10, 15.11, 15.12, 15.13, 15.14, 15.15, 15.19, 15.21, 15.22, and 15.25. These SWCPs will be carried through to the timber sale contract or other implementation plan.

Designate equipment servicing and refueling areas at least 300 feet from any stream channels.

Public recreation within the project area will continue throughout implementation of treatment activities, but may require localized, temporary interruptions or restrictions limited to public safety considerations for activities such as logging, burn operations, and the like.

To minimize the spread of noxious weeds, require equipment washing prior to arrival at project area under timber sale contract provision B6.35#. In addition, where proposed activities would occur in areas infested with noxious weeds and considered to be at high risk for spread, equipment associated with the activity will be washed before leaving the site to prevent spread of weeds to adjacent National Forest System and private lands.

Seed landings, skid trails, and log decks with approved seed mix to reduce erosion and prevent the establishment of noxious weeds. The seed mix will be selected and approved by the FNF’s staff botanist.

There are no known occurrences of sensitive plant species in the project area. Therefore, no related conservation measures have been proposed. If any sensitive or federally listed plant species are identified in the project area prior to implementation of proposed treatments, the local biologist or botanist will be contacted to ensure that proper conservation measures are established.

In compliance with guideline g of the LRMP goshawk amendment, the Big Flat Project should leave 300 snags greater than 18 inches DBH and 30 feet tall for each 100 acres treated. Snag calculations should be done at the stand level. If the minimum snags are unavailable, then the largest trees on site should be substituted.

In compliance with guideline h of the LRMP goshawk amendment, the Big Flat Project should leave 50 down logs greater than 12 inches in diameter and longer than 8 feet on each 10 acres treated. In addition, coarse woody debris greater than 3 inches in diameter should equal 100 tons per 10 acres. This CWD can include the large down logs. Down wood and CWD calculations should be done at the stand level.

Trees designated as wildlife leave trees will be marked for retention. Removal of designated wildlife trees, or dead trees needed to meet habitat requirements, is prohibited.

Record any new observations of threatened, endangered or sensitive wildlife species and implement appropriate management strategies in accordance with wildlife biologist recommendations.

Forest vegetative manipulation is prohibited (prescribed burning, fuelwood collection, thinnings, weedings, etc.) within active goshawk nest areas during the active nesting period. The active nesting period will normally occur between March 1st and September 30th.

Forest vegetative manipulation within active, alternate, and replacement nest areas should be designed to maintain or improve desired nest area habitat. Use the active
nest area habitat characteristics as an indicator of the desired nest area habitat, and as the best available information for nest area habitat for that cover type.

| Wildlife 8 | Openings created as a result of mechanical vegetative treatments should not exceed one acre in the spruce-fir cover type. Management activities should be restricted during the active nesting period. The active nesting period will normally occur between March 1st and September 30th. Where timber harvest is prescribed to achieve desired forest conditions, plan the transportation system to minimize disturbance to the PFAs. For example, small, permanent skid trails should be used in lieu of roads to minimize disturbance in goshawk PFAs. Variance may occur if it is determined that a combination of new permanent or temporary roads and permanent skid trails would result in less overall disturbance to PFA habitat. |
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Appendix A. Potential Treatment Area Maps

Figure 4. Stands Available for Commercial Removals.
Figure 5. Stands Proposed for Thinning and Burning.
Figure 6. Stands Subject to Stand-Alone Prescribed Fire Treatments.
Figure 7. Stands Proposed for Conifer Cut and Lop.
Figure 8. Stands Not Proposed for Treatment under South Beaver.