Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact  
October 2007  

Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project  
USDA Forest Service  
Sulphur Ranger District, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests  
Grand County, Colorado  

Introduction  
The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project documents the analysis of two alternatives for treating vegetation to reduce hazardous fuels in a Wildland/Urban Interface in response to a mountain pine beetle infestation, and of the No Action Alternative. The EA is available for public review at the Sulphur Ranger District office located in Granby, CO.

My decision is based on the results and findings of this EA and a review of the 1997 Revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (Forest Plan). This decision applies only to National Forest System lands within the project area. The analysis and this decision were completed under the authority of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Background  
The Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project is part of the Forest Service’s on-going effort to respond to the mountain pine beetle infestation on the Sulphur Ranger District. The analysis area borders, and is part of, the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) formed by the towns of Granby, Hot Sulphur Springs, and the surrounding developed area as identified in the December 2006 Grand County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The 30,542-acre analysis area includes mostly National Forest System (NFS) lands between Church Park on the southeast and Hot Sulphur Springs on the north. The project includes NFS lands located in: 6th P.M., T1N, R78W; T1N, R77W; T1S, R78W; and T1S, R77W, Grand County, Colorado.

Much of the adjacent private land is developed, or is proposed for development. In addition, the adjacent private land contains large ranches and the YMCA of the Rockies’ Snow Mountain Ranch.

Much of the project area is characterized by continuous stands of mature, even-aged lodgepole pine, with similar stands of mature, even-aged lodgepole found on adjacent private land. The project area and the adjacent private land are experiencing a mountain pine beetle (MPB) epidemic that is now at or just past its peak, and losses in most of the stands within the area are consistent with such an epidemic. As a result, the majority of the mature lodgepole pine trees within the analysis area have been killed, both on and off NFS lands.

An extensive system of roads and trails, heavily used summer and winter by recreationists, connect the public and private lands. There are approximately 120 miles of roads within the
analysis area, of which 85 miles are National Forest System Roads (NFSR) and 35 miles are unauthorized or unclassified routes that are not a part of the Forest’s transportation system. The unauthorized system developed over time and is a mix of old logging roads, user-created roads, and user-created trails. In general these unauthorized or unclassified routes receive no maintenance.

The purpose of this project is to:
- Modify existing and future fuel buildup from the MPB infestation to moderate fire behavior near structures and other resource values.
- Maintain, restore or improve wildlife habitat and watershed conditions in the long term through road and trail management, aspen and sagebrush expansion, and shrub rejuvenation.
- Salvage the beetle-killed timber before it loses its marketable value.

**Decision Summary**

Based upon my review of the EA for the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project, public comments, and information contained in the project record, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, with modifications.

**Vegetation**

My decision includes vegetation treatments that will salvage dead and dying lodgepole pine from approximately 1,165 acres in 47 ground based treatment units, and 356 acres in 9 cable based treatment units. Approximately 18,325 CCF net commercial volume (9,150 MBF) will be removed. Units may resemble clearcuts except they will have some advanced natural regeneration and trees other than lodgepole pine remaining after harvest. Machine piling of the landing slash, lop and scatter of the unit slash, and burning the piles will be completed to manage the slash. Additional slash treatment may be completed within 600 feet of private land. Less than 3.2 miles of temporary road will be required to remove the timber. No new system road construction is required, although approximately 0.4 miles of reconstruction of system roads will be completed.

An additional 844 acres in 19 units will be treated to reduce the fuels hazard on NFS lands adjacent to private property, possibly with no commercial harvest of timber. Fuels treatment in these units will consist of opening up the crowns within the stand by thinning, removing ladder fuels, piling the slash and existing fuels, and burning the piles. Road construction is not required to access these units.

**Prescribed Fire**

The prescribed burning portion of Alternative 2 was modified in the decision by excluding from burning the area adjacent to and above the Sylvan and Brinker Ditches and north of Timber Creek to reduce the possibility of sediment entering the ditch from management actions. As a result of this modification, my decision includes approximately 11,652 acres to be treated using prescribed burning, a reduction of 993 acres from what was proposed in Alternative 2.
Prescribed burning includes burning in shrub lands and aspen to rejuvenate these habitat types; and burning stands of beetle-killed lodgepole pine, such as by under burning or stand replacement fire, to accelerate regeneration, reduce hazardous fuels, and improve wildlife habitat. The prescribed burning treatments would be implemented over several years, with the amount treated per year dependent on weather and available resources and generally being between 100 and 1,000 acres per year. Acres treated per year would vary depending on ground conditions at the time of implementation. Close coordination will occur with Grand County and Hot Sulphur Springs to reduce impacts of smoke on the town and individuals sensitive to smoke. Prior to implementing prescribed fire the Forest Service will also coordinate and review implementation procedures with the County and Town.

**Transportation System**

There are currently 119.7 miles of motorized routes in the project area, 47.9 of which are open to public motorized travel. Road management actions will maintain recreation and management access while complementing wildlife and watershed values. My decision affects only routes used by full sized vehicles; existing trails open only to ATV, mountain bike, snowmobile, foot or horse travel will not be affected. All travel management actions apply only to Management Area 3.5. Management Area 1.3 is currently roadless and will remain so. My decision does not change or alter the existing access to the Sylvan Ditch head gate via the Timber Creek Road (NFSR 868.1) by the ditch permittee.

**Motorized routes currently open to the public:** My decision will increase the routes open to motorized public access from approximately 47.9 miles of roads to 48.8 miles of a mix of roads and trails (43.5 miles of open road and 5.3 miles of motorized trail), thus improving overall recreation access in the area for the public. The construction of a new motorized trail will provide an opportunity for a managed multi-use trail experience where currently there is none.

**Motorized routes currently closed to the public:** My decision will rehabilitate and obliterate approximately 55.4 miles of routes not currently open to the public, such as Level 1 roads (roads closed to all use), old logging roads, and user created routes, thereby improving wildlife habitat and watershed condition. Approximately 16.7 miles of roads will remain closed to public use but will be retained as part of the transportation system for administrative use only. Routes not on the travel system will be rehabilitated, including user created routes that may develop in the future.

The result is 5.3 miles of new motorized trails and a 4.4 mile decrease in open roads; this is a 0.9 mile increase in open routes that can be used by the public.

An objective of this project is to complement fuel reduction efforts currently underway on private lands. Because of this, many of the proposed treatment areas are adjacent to private lands. Existing public access routes will be used by the Forest Service and its contractors where possible, but in some areas access across private land may be required. The Forest Service will pursue rights-of-way across private lands for this project. If rights-of-way are required, but are not granted by the landowner, the fuels treatment work may not be completed.
See Appendix A, B, C and D for a complete description of my decision, including design criteria and maps.

**Mitigations and Project Design**

Potentially detrimental effects of the selected alternative will be mitigated through project Design Criteria (see Appendix A). These design criteria are typical measures that have been routinely and successfully applied to similar past projects. One Mitigation Measure has been added, on page A-17, to exclude prescribed burning from above and adjacent to the Sylvan and Brinker Ditches to minimize the concern regarding potential sediment that may enter the ditch as a result of management actions. I also added one monitoring requirement, on page A-19, to review if negative effects, such as persistent off route motorized use, damage to ditch structures, or trespass or vandalism on private lands, occur as a result of opening the Timber Creek Road to public motorized use.

**Rationale for Decision**

My decision involved balancing several considerations, including reducing the impact from the MPB epidemic, reducing hazardous fuel accumulation in the WUI, providing for public and firefighter safety in the event of a wildfire, and preserving or improving the wildlife habitat in the long term in this area while providing public recreation and administrative access. I reached my decision after careful consideration of the environmental analysis of the effects of the alternatives discussed in detail in the EA, the associated planning record, the issues identified during the planning process, and public comments. My decision meets the requirements of NEPA, and best responds to the Purpose and Need for this project as described in Chapter 1 of the EA:

- Harvest of dead and beetle-infested trees in the analysis area described in Alternative 2 as modified meets the objective to reduce fuel accumulation in the area, reducing the potential magnitude and probability of a high intensity wildfire.
- The reduction in the build-up of hazardous fuels reduces the risks associated with wildfire to nearby Granby, Hot Sulphur Springs, the YMCA of the Rockies, and adjacent private land.

Alternative 2 was selected over Alternative 3 because its design provides for wildlife corridors and the use of fire to improve wildlife habitat, and best meets the wildlife emphasis of the Broken Rack Geographic Area.

My decision meets Forest Plan direction for Management Area 3.5 within the Broken Rack Geographic Area by:

- Maintaining or increasing habitat effectiveness, and protecting or maintaining critical or important wildlife habit, through road decommission and obliteration.
- Improving watershed conditions by stabilizing or closing old road networks in the upper Beaver and Little Muddy drainages.
- Increasing forage through prescribed fire.
- Providing future blocks of interior forest by removing remnant stands of ineffective habitat through vegetation management.
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- Increasing aspen habitat by enlarging existing stands through removal of adjacent dead, beetle-killed lodgepole pine.

In addition to the above rationale, I carefully considered the public comments received regarding the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project. I considered the concerns expressed regarding sediment potentially entering the Sylvan and Brinker Ditches as a result of the proposed prescribed burning, and have decided to eliminate the area above and adjacent to the ditches from the prescribed burning treatment.

I carefully considered the concerns expressed by some representatives from the Town of Hot Sulphur Springs regarding prescribed fire. While I cannot allay their fears or concerns in this decision, I do believe the prescribed fire planned in this decision best meets the wildlife management and fuel reduction objectives for the area, and prescribed fire can and will be conducted in a safe manner. We will work with Grand County and the Town prior to and during the implementation of prescribed fire to address as many of their concerns as is possible.

I considered the comments regarding public use of the Timber Creek Road (NFSR 868.1) as an alternate access to a campsite in the upper end of Long Park. I have decided to open the road up to the north east edge of Long Park (on the southwest boundary of the analysis area) to access an established campsite. Successfully opening this road requires the cooperation of Grand County and the people who use the area. A four-wheel drive club has expressed their desire to adopt this road and assist in eliminating unauthorized use off of designated motorized routes and educate visitors to stay on designated routes with motorized equipment. In addition, Grand County has expressed an interest in having the Timber Creek Road reopened and in assisting in repairs and maintenance of the road. Because of these interests I am opening this 0.9 miles of previously closed road. In addition, opening the 0.9 mile road will promote public cooperation and assistance in curtailing use on the much larger network of ATV trails that have developed by users over time in the area. The net effect will be an improvement in wildlife habitat effectiveness in the area. If past practices of driving off of designated motorized routes persists, and unacceptable impacts to the Sylvan and Brinker ditches or adjacent private land occurs, I may again close this road to all motorized use not associated with the administrative requirements of maintaining the Sylvan Ditch.

**Other Alternatives Considered**

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered the No Action alternative and an additional action alternative. Complete descriptions of these alternatives can be found in the EA on page 15 (No Action Alternative) and pages 21 through 24 (Alternative 3). A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 38 through 40.

**Alternative 1, No Action:** Under the No Action alternative current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. No vegetation treatments would be implemented to accomplish project objectives. Hazardous fuel accumulations would not be treated. MPB killed trees would not be removed.
**Alternative 2, Proposed Action, Habitat Management, Salvage and Fuels:** This alternative responds to the MPB infestation that has caused extensive mortality in dominant and co-dominant lodgepole pines, with an emphasis on maintaining or improving wildlife habitat in the long-term while conducting salvage and fuels reduction actions. Proposed actions include salvaging beetle killed lodgepole pine (1,525 acres), reducing hazardous fuels accumulation (844 acres), use of prescribed fire (12,645 acres), closing roads (including decommission) (72.1 miles), and converting roads to trails (5.3 miles).

**Alternative 3, Salvage and Fuels:** This alternative responds to the MPB infestation that has caused extensive mortality in dominant and co-dominant lodgepole pines, with an emphasis on salvage and fuels reduction. Proposed actions include salvaging beetle killed lodgepole pine (1,655 acres), reducing hazardous fuels accumulation (844 acres), closing roads (including decommission) (72.1 miles), and converting roads to trails (5.3 miles).

**Public Involvement**

- The Forest Service first presented the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project to the public at the August 16, 2005 Front Range Fuels Roundtable meeting in Grand Lake.
- The Forest Service discussed the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project at the Grand County Board of County Commissioners meeting on August 23, 2005.
- December 6, 2005: Doreen Sumerlin, Wildlife Biologist, Paul Mintier, Fire Management Officer, and Jim Gerleman, Silviculturist, met with Wes and Lisa Palmer, local landowners and ranchers who manages a cattle allotment in the Blue Ridge area, to discuss potential impacts to the allotment.
- August 2, 2006: Craig Magwire, District Ranger, and members of his staff met with Mike Miniat, local landowner and rancher, to discuss potential fuels treatments and beetle mitigation adjacent to his land, and provided him with a copy of the proposed action. This meeting was followed be several more meetings with Mike Miniat and other adjacent landowners or their representatives.
- The Forest Service discussed the project at the County Realtor meeting at the Grand County Library on November 13, 2006.
- The Forest Service discussed the project at the Grand County Board of County Commissioners meeting on January 13, 2007.
- A Scoping/Comment letter was sent out on January 23, 2007 for the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project, with the legal notice published in the **Sky-Hi News** on March 15, 2007. Fourteen letters were received during the scoping/comment periods that pertained to the project.
- The Forest Service discussed the project at the Hot Sulphur Springs Town Board of Trustees meeting on March 18, 2007; at the Fraser Town Board of Trustees meeting on March 21, 2007; at the Grand Lake Town Board of Trustees meeting on March 26, 2007; at the Granby Town Board of Trustees meeting on March 27, 2007; and at the Winter Park Town Board of Trustees meeting on April 3, 2007.
- March 29, 2007: Craig Magwire met with the Mountain Metal Mashers, a local four-wheel drive club, in Kremmling to discuss the project and the Timber Creek road. The Metal Mashers were provided a detailed copy of the transportation proposal and asked to study it and provide comments and concerns.
October 3, 2007: Craig Magwire and Forest Service staff met on-site with Gary Baumgardner, Grand County Commissioner, Ken Haynes, County Road and Bridge Supervisor, and Monte Linke, representing Mike Miniat, to review and discuss resource issues on the Timber Creek Road.

October 11, 2007: Craig Magwire and Brad Orr, District Recreation Staff, met with the Mountain Metal Mashers to review the proposed transportation proposed action and the Timber Creek Road.

Numerous articles in the local papers (Sky-Hi News and Manifest) referencing the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project appeared during the scoping period.

Using the comments from the public and other agencies (see the Issues section on pages 12 through 14 of the EA), I identified several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. Main issues of concern included:

1. Mountain Pine Beetle Infestation: The beetle population reached epidemic levels in the Analysis Area and on neighboring lands, and the majority of mature lodgepole pine trees have been killed by the beetles. There is concern that if salvage of the beetle-killed trees is not done the hazardous fuels within the project area would increase to a dangerous level. Salvage efforts must be taken soon to be cost effective.

2. Fuels/Fire Hazard and Intermix: The analysis area is within the Granby/Hot Sulphur Springs WUI. Access to some NFS land may only be possible across private land. The beetle epidemic ignored ownership boundaries, and many landowners are taking steps to reduce the effects of the MPB epidemic on their property and want to see the Forest Service complement their efforts by taking similar steps on NFS lands. Some private property owners cannot create defensible space for wildfire around their property without treating adjacent NFS land. If action is not taken to reduce the current and potential forest fuels accumulation resulting from the MPB infestation, the fire hazard will increase in this WUI.

3. Wildlife: As lodgepole pine trees die from MPB infestation, forest stands that provide hiding and security cover from human disturbance for wildlife become less effective. timber harvest and fuel reduction projects would further open these forest stands, widening the disturbance corridors along roads and trails, and likely increase access by recreationists into wildlife habitats. Habitat effectiveness for many wildlife species is expected to decline as the cumulative effects of recreation use, MPB infestation, and timber/fuel treatments interact in the analysis area, and a decrease in use by these species is likely. It is important to maintain, at a minimum, the wildlife habitat effectiveness that exists today even with implementing the proposed vegetation treatments.

4. Recreation: Extensive tree mortality from the MPB epidemic may degrade the forested setting that recreationists enjoy. Salvaging dead timber and reducing the fire hazard may affect the Roaded Natural forest character of the recreation setting of trails, roads, campsites, and vistas. Closing motorized routes may displace recreationists.
5. Scenic values: Efforts made to salvage beetle-killed trees within the analysis area may detrimentally affect the views from US Highway 40 and the neighboring communities.

To address these concerns, the Forest Service created the alternatives described above.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA and the project record, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). The disclosure of effects in the EA and project record found the actions limited in context. The project area is limited in size and the activities are limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and they are not likely to have a significant effect on regional or national resources. Thus, an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. Impacts associated with the project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA and the project record. The impacts are within the range of those identified in the Forest Plan EIS and Record of Decision. Alternative 2 as modified will not have significant impacts on other resources identified in the EA. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.

2. Proposed activities will not significantly affect public health and safety. Vegetation management and burning activities will be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public. Similar actions have not significantly affected public health and safety. A minor impact for a short period may occur to local air quality from the burning of slash. However, burning will be completed in accordance with State air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the State of Colorado. Prescribed burning can present a risk of escaped fire. Agency experience with similar projects and conditions indicate these risks are low. This is due in part to the design of the project and fire management expertise.

3. As disclosed in this decision, the EA and project record, the activities described in Alternative 2 as modified will not significantly affect any unique characteristics of the project area such as historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Affects to historic properties will be mitigated (EA pages 26 – 27 and 35 – 36). There is no parkland, prime lands (forest, farm or range), or wild and scenic rivers in the project area, therefore there will be no effect to these lands. There are no adverse effects to wetlands within the affected area due to implementation of the Forest Standards and Guidelines, the Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook standards, and site-specific mitigation and design including buffers for streamside management zone protection measures (EA page 31). Ecologically critical areas will not be adversely affected by the project due to the implementation of site-specific mitigation and design criteria.

4. The activities described in Alternative 2 as modified do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial. Public comment regarding this
project focused primarily on access issues, reduction of fuel accumulation, and the effects to area resources from vegetation management activities including prescribed burning. Although there is some minor dispute about the effects of the proposed treatments, pertinent scientific literature supports my conclusion that there are no highly controversial effects.

5. The activities described in Alternative 2 as modified will not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Pertinent scientific literature has been reviewed and incorporated into the analysis process and the technical analyses conducted for determinations on the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, and professional judgment (EA Chapter 3). Impacts are within limits that are considered thresholds of concern. Issues of public concern and possible environmental effects of the proposed action have been adequately addressed in the analysis and in the design criteria included in Appendix A. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

6. My decision to implement the activities included in Alternative 2 as modified does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. I have made this decision based on the overall consistency of the proposed activities with Forest Plan standards, guidelines and management practices, the capabilities of the land, and my experience with similar projects in the past.

7. The EA includes all connected, cumulative, and similar actions in the scope of the analysis. The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions are considered and disclosed in the EA and there are no significant cumulative effects.

8. The actions will not cause the loss or destruction of significant districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Affects to historic properties will be mitigated as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.5 (see EA pages 26 – 27, 35 – 36 and 140 – 142). There will be no effect to scientific resources.

9. The proposed action will result in a “may affect but not likely to adversely affect” determination for the Canada lynx, a species listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was initiated by the Forest Service on April 19, 2000 for National Forest activities in the Rocky Mountain Region. On May 30, 2001, the USFWS issued a programmatic concurrence for projects with “not likely to adversely affect” determinations that meet certain conditions and stipulations (ref # MS-65412-LK). The continued use of the 2000 programmatic concurrence was reaffirmed by USFWS on July 1, 2004 (ref # MS 65412 GJ). This project meets the conditions and stipulations and therefore is concurred on by the USFWS. The proposed action will not have an adverse affect on the Canada lynx and complies with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The proposed action will have no affect on other Threatened or Endangered Species.
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. The action is consistent with the 1997 revision of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan. Applicable laws and regulations are considered below.

Finding Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Clean Air Act – Prescribed fire activities will be in accordance with provisions of the Clean Air Act as administered by the State of Colorado

Clean Water Act – The Clean Water Act requires Federal Agencies to comply with all Federal, State, interstate and local requirements, administrative authority, and process and sanctions with respect to the control and abatement of water pollution. Executive Order 12088 also requires the Forest Service to meet the requirements of the Act. Water quality should not be adversely affected with implementation of resource protection and mitigation measures incorporated into the project design, including stream buffer widths and Best Management Practices identified in the Design Criteria section of Chapter 2 (pages 24 – 36) of the EA. These specified practices are expected to be fully effective in maintaining the identified beneficial uses.

Environmental Justice – Executive Order 12898 requires federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. My decision will not have a disproportionately adverse effect on any minority or low-income population or community. This determination is based on the remote location of the project and lack of human communities in the project area.

Floodplains and Wetlands – There are minor floodplains and wetlands associated with the project area. Increased water yield is expected under the No Action alternative due to extensive MPB induced lodgepole pine mortality, and similar water yield increases are expected under Alternative 2 as modified as a result of effects of the MPB infestation and the proposed treatments.

Invasive Species – Weed increases associated with overstory die-off of insect infested stands and wildfires, if wildfires were to occur, would add to the cumulative amount and presence of weeds in the planning area. In the absence of wildfire, implementation of the No Action alternative would be anticipated to result in an increase in the presence and spread of weeds across the project area over what exists now, but this increase would be less than would result from implementation of the action alternatives. In the event of a wildfire, the implementation of the No Action alternative would be anticipated to result in relatively more presence and spread of weeds across the project area than would be anticipated to result from implementation of the action alternatives. Ground disturbance, pile burning, and vehicular activities associated with the action alternative has the potential to add to the cumulative spread of noxious weeds in the project area, but all feasible and prudent measures will be taken to minimize the risk of harm due to invasive species (Appendix A, Design Criteria). The Sulphur Ranger District has an ongoing program to control and reduce the spread of invasive species that will be applied in this area.
National Forest Management Act – This decision to implement salvage, hazardous fuels reduction and prescribed fire in the Blue Ridge analysis area is consistent with the intent of the 1997 Revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (Forest Plan). The project was designed in compliance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for meeting the stated purpose and need.

Management Indicator Species (MIS) for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests were identified and considered in the analysis for the Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project. The effects on nine wildlife and three aquatic MIS were evaluated in the EA (see pages 57 through 82 for a complete discussion on the effects of this project on MIS and sensitive species). The Blue Ridge Salvage and Fuels Reduction Project will not affect the viability of any Forest Plan identified MIS.

Administrative Review Opportunities

A 30-day, pre-decisional comment period on the Proposed Action (36 CFR 215.5) began on March 16, 2007 and ended on April 16, 2007. Fourteen comments were received. The comments were summarized and are included in the Project Record on file at the Sulphur Ranger District office in Granby, Colorado.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to Federal regulations at 36 CFR 215.7 (b). Appeals must be in writing and filed (regular mail, fax, e-mail, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the Appeal Deciding Officer (§ 215.8) within 45 days following the date of publication of the legal notice of this decision in the Sky-Hi News (Granby, Colorado). The publication date of the legal notice in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal (§ 215.15 (a)). Those wishing to appeal should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.13, only those individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period may file an appeal.

For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the appeal, it is the sender’s responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. The Forest Service will accept electronically mailed appeals only in the following formats: Microsoft Word, RTF, or PDF.

Where to File an Appeal:

USDA, Forest Service, Region 2
Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer
POB 25127
(740 Simms Street, Golden, CO 80401)
Lakewood, CO 80225-25127

If you fax an appeal, please include a cover page stating how many pages you are faxing.
Fax: 303-275-5134

Email: appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us

It is an appellant’s responsibility to provide sufficient activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official’s decision should be reversed. An appeal submitted to the Appeal Deciding Officer becomes part of the appeal record. At a minimum, an appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, "Appeal content,” and include the following:

1. Appellant’s name and address (§ 215.2), with a telephone number, if available;

2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);

3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant (§ 215.2) and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;

4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;

5. The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either this part or part 251, subpart C (§ 215.11(d));

6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;

7. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;

8. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official’s decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and

9. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

Notices of Appeal that do not meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14 will be dismissed.

**Implementation Date**

If an appeal is not received on this project, the project can be implemented 5 days after the close of the 45-day appeal period. If an appeal is received, this project can be implemented 15 days after appeal disposition.
Further Information and Contact Person

The Environmental Assessment is available for review at the Sulphur Ranger District. For further information concerning this project or this decision, please contact:

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/s/ Craig A. Magwire
CRAIG A. MAGWIRE
Responsible Official
District Ranger, Sulphur Ranger District

October 17, 2007
Date

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