



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Los Padres
National
Forest

Monterey Ranger District
406 S. Mildred
King City, CA 93930
(831) 385-5434

File Code: 1950
Date: August 13, 2001

Dear Interested Party:

The Monterey Ranger District of the Los Padres National Forest is proposing to implement a defensible fuel profile zone (DFPZ) project (**Monterey DFPZ Project**) on National Forest system lands. Forest Service personnel are preparing to conduct an analysis of the proposed project area within the boundary of the Monterey Ranger District on selected lands outside the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness areas. Please see the enclosed map for a general location of the proposed project.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in the analysis process by providing your comments and any concerns you may have about this proposed project. To encourage your informed participation in this planning process, this letter includes a description of the proposed action and the purpose and need for action.

PROPOSED ACTION

Trained specialists with the Forest Service are planning to apply fuels reduction treatments to establish defensible fuel profile zones (DFPZs) within ten identified units that cover a total of approximately 18,760 acres. Primary focuses for this project are travel corridors (roads and trails), campgrounds, National Forest System Lands adjacent to private property, administrative sites, and existing firelines. Treatments used to establish DFPZs include:

- Pruning, clearing and chipping hazardous fuels;
- Burning of fuels using broadcast and spot burning methods;
- Establishment of shaded areas by planting native tree species; and
- Managing for native grasses.

Implementation would begin in the fall of 2001 and continue over the next ten years. Individual areas would be prioritized for burning to achieve desired results. Burning would be applied when moisture and air quality conditions meet prescription criteria. Prescription criteria are most likely to be met after fall season rains when moisture levels would limit fire severity and still be low enough to achieve desired levels of fuel consumption.

In general, fuel profiles would be changed to:

- Break-up horizontal and vertical continuity;
- Reduce fire prone live fuels by managing for: younger vegetation, native grasses, and trees;
- Reduce quantity of dead fuels; and
- Use Forest Service facilities (campgrounds and administrative sites) to create models of defensible space.



Defensible Space

DFPZs would be created on either side of roads, and around administrative and special use facilities to serve as safety zones, pre-attack zones, and escape routes during fire situations. A variable width buffer not to exceed 1,000 feet on each side of the road would be created by removing dead fuels, pruning live brush and trees, planting native trees, and managing for native grasses where appropriate. Treatments would vary depending on position on slope, soils conditions for plant establishment and growth, and aspect.

Fuels around campgrounds would be managed so they could serve as safety zones in the event of fire. A 1,000-foot buffer would be created by removing dead fuels, pruning live brush and trees, and managing for native grasses where appropriate. Measures would be taken to ensure that unlawful access to open areas is controlled around campgrounds.

Native grasses would be managed by burning and seeding where appropriate. This would be implemented in small (15 to 20 acre) areas over time in coordination with a qualified botanist. Natural seeding would be encouraged whenever possible. Where prescribed fire and/or reestablishment of native grasses are proposed, maintenance burning would be implemented about every seven years.

Shaded DFPZs would be established by planting native tree species. Species mix for tree planting would be based on types of trees found presently or historically in the vicinity. Species to be considered would be: ponderosa pine, incense-cedar, sugar pine, Santa Lucia fir, and madrone. Any seeding or planting that occurs would be done using locally collected seed.

The Forest Service would work with State and County Fire Departments in a cooperative effort to create safety zones around private homes and facilities.

Treatment Units

The following table describes proposed actions by treatment unit.

UNIT	ACRES	PROPOSED ACTION
Arroyo	1,630	Establish variable width DFPZs up to 1,000 feet on each side of road. Apply prescribed fire at regular intervals and reestablish native grasses around the Horse Bridge/Santa Lucia Creek area. Establish variable width DFPZs along trails outside of wilderness.
Carmel	165	Prescribed fire would be applied to provide buffering between the wilderness and private property.
Cone	2,605	Establish variable width DFPZs up to 1,000 feet on each side of road. Plant trees to develop shaded DFPZs as part of roadside corridor where appropriate.
Manuel	400	Manage dozer lines and safety zones to favor native grasses. Fuels profiles would be managed so line could be used without repeated dozer entry. At specific locations where conditions are favorable, reestablish native grasses and/or plant trees to create a shaded DFPZ over ¼ mile segments.
Park	2,630	Create and maintain 1,000-foot DFPZs around campgrounds. Use prescribed fire to discourage the spread of noxious weeds.
Piney	1,710	Burn on a regular basis in the winter after the road has been closed.

UNIT	ACRES	PROPOSED ACTION
Reliz	5,160	Continue on-going coordination with property owners to apply prescribed fire across ownership boundaries.
Ridge	1,975	Manage segments of existing dozer line for native grasses and shaded DFPZ. Establish a variable width DFPZ up to 1,000 feet on each side of road.
Skinner	700	Manage existing dozer line and safety zones as a long-term strategic facility. This would be achieved by treating small patches over time. Treatments include discouraging growth of non-native grasses through periodic burning, brush cutting, and reintroduction of native grasses.
Tassajara	1,785	Create variable width DFPZs up to 1,000 feet wide each side of road outside the wilderness area using a mix of the following methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 100 acre prescribed fire projects, thinning, and brush piling; • Create a variable width road corridor with reduced amounts of large fuel by offering fuelwood sales for areas within 300 feet of the road; and • Manage for native grasses through periodic burning and seeding small areas where appropriate.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of this project is to meet the following objectives:

- Protect highly valuable real estate within and adjacent to the National Forest boundary;
- Protect watershed values in the Carmel and Arroyo Seco watersheds;
- Reduce risk to private property;
- Reduce potential for damage to resources by reducing potential for high intensity fires;
- Implement small, strategically located projects that can provide anchor points, pre-attack zones, and areas of reduced intensity during unplanned fire events;
- Create corridors and safety zones around public use facilities such as roads, campgrounds, and special use permit sites;
- Provide evacuation routes to forest users and residents in the event of wildfire;
- Lower risk of fire ignition, reduce intensity once ignition occurs, and break-up continuity to inhibit and slow spread of wildfires;
- Limit the intensity of unplanned fires at strategic locations;
- Protect historic structures;
- Reduce risk of establishment and spread of noxious weeds; and
- Reduce risk of large fires by managing for younger vegetation and broken continuity.

COMMENTS

The proposed action will be fully analyzed prior to any decision on final project design. For this project to result in the best possible outcome for people and the environment please send us any issues, concerns, suggestions or information you may have relating to this proposal. Opinions and values will be noted, but the intent of the process is not to serve as a public opinion poll.

Purpose of This Letter:
To identify the range of issues and determine their significance.

An issue is:
A point of discussion, dispute or debate about the environmental effects.

Issues are Used:
To focus the analysis and determine if any alternatives to the proposed action need to be developed.

The Los Padres National Forest has hired Forest Service Environmental Assessment specialists located in Happy Camp, California to work closely with the local specialists, guiding the analysis and preparing the decision document. If you would like additional information please contact one of the following people:

Names	Address	Phone	Fax	email
Annie Buma	c/o Happy Camp Ranger District	530-493-1725	530-493-1775	abuma@fs.fed.us
Judy Hahn	P.O. Box 377	530-493-1721		jhahn@fs.fed.us
Fran Smith	Happy Camp, CA 96039	530-493-1788		fsmith@fs.fed.us

Please send any issues or written comments to one of the individuals listed above at the indicated address by August 24, 2001. Comments are a matter of public record and as such may be provided to interested parties upon request.

Thank you for your participation in this process.

Sincerely,



JOHN S. BRADFORD
Acting District Ranger

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