



United States Department of Agriculture

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# News Release

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## **North Fork fuels reduction, timber, and restoration project seeks second round of public comment**

*A virtual public meeting is scheduled for July 16*

**Kalispell, MT** — Today the Flathead National Forest Glacier View District announced the next step in a forest management project in the North Fork with the release of an environmental assessment for a 30-day comment period.

The project, called Frozen Moose, addresses wildland-urban interface fuel loading, diversifies plant and tree communities, provides a mix of forest products for local economies, and improves aquatic ecosystems.

The project proposes commercial timber harvest on 3,377 acres, and noncommercial vegetation treatments including thinning and burning on 4,818 acres. Some roads would be temporarily constructed or reconstructed to provide access to project areas, though public motorized access would not change. Some treatments in the wildland-urban interface would require activity in inventoried roadless area and the Wild and Scenic Flathead River Corridor.

The records show a history of fire starts west of residential development along the North Fork Road that burn to the east. In the past, those fires have threatened and destroyed residences and infrastructure. Fuel reduction proposed in this project would make the area more resilient to wildfire and provide for firefighter access and safety as wildfires do occur.

“We received helpful comments from the public in January, and we were able to make adjustments to the project based on that information,” said Hungry Horse Glacier View District Ranger Rob Davies. “We look forward to hearing from folks what they think about these

changes, the project benefits, and the potential effects to the resources that are presented in the environmental assessment.”

In addition to the timber harvest and fuel reduction work, some culverts would be upgraded or removed to improve aquatic ecosystems. Culverts must be properly sized and maintained to allow upstream fish passage, and to prevent floods from washing out roads and causing road sediment to wash into streams. In this project area, Red Meadow, Whale, and Trail Creeks are designated as Critical Habitat for bull trout, which is a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act.

In higher elevation areas within recommended wilderness, the Forest proposes burning and other whitebark pine restoration activities. Whitebark pine is a declining species. It is fire adapted. That means it benefits from area burning to remove competitor tree species, and because bird species like Clark’s nutcracker that typically disperse its seeds prefer more open areas.

The district will hold a virtual public meeting on July 16 from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm to share information about the project and answer questions.

The public can find maps, other project information, links to the public meeting, and instructions for how to provide comment on Flathead National Forest’s [website](#) under the “analysis” tab. Public comments on the project are due to the Forest by August 6.