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(S.D.)-Forest Service Releases Impact Statement On Pine Beetles

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 09/21/2012 10:16 AM

(Custer)- Black Hills National Forest Supervisor, Craig Bobzien, announces the release of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Mountain Pine Beetle Response project.

Bobzien said this is a collaborative, large scale environmental project that uses new approaches to address the mountain pine beetle epidemic. Over the past fifteen years, the mountain pine beetle (MPB) has infested over 406,000 acres of the 1.2 million acres of land on the Black Hills National Forest and continues to expand. He stated it's their most widespread public concern. Recent projects have treated over one hundred thousand acres but new means are needed to keep the forests resilient. Bobzien said this project identifies the areas they anticipate mountain pine beetles to occur, then allows them to act quickly using a variety of tools.

This project proposes treatments on portions of approximately 242,000 acres of high risk forest that are predicted to be affected by MPB. This project would manage the vegetation to reduce the threat to ecosystem components from the existing MPB epidemic and to reduce hazardous fuels in order to minimize the potential for large-scale wildfires.

Three alternatives are considered in detail. Alternative A is the No Action Alternative. Alternative B is the proposed action. Integrated Pest Management techniques are proposed for areas at high risk and most susceptible to MPB infestation, with the objective of treating and removing infested trees before beetles can disperse. Alternative C responds to comments received during scoping. It includes treating in advance of the MPB, treating more areas, and addresses concerns about safety and access on roadways (ingress/egress). The preferred alternative is Alternative C with modifications which would include reducing new system road construction and focused treatments in portions of MA 4.2A located within Spearfish Canyon.

For more information on this project contact Craig Bobzien at (605) 673-9200. The MPBR Project FEIS is available on the Black Hills National Forest website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/blackhills/landmanagement/projects>

The Mountain Pine Beetle Response project is authorized by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). For more information on the Black Hills National Forest, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills>

(Story courtesy of US Forest Service)