



January 2024
FY 24 Quarter 2



Ashley National Forest QUARTERLY PROJECT PLANNING NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Ashley National Forest's latest project planning newsletter! Here are our current proposed projects and information on how to stay involved in the management of your National Forest System (NFS) lands.

Photo: L. Tullis, USDA FS. D. Bambrugh heading to the Forest Service ozone data collection station on Little Mountain, January 2023.

Note: The levels of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis referred to below are:

EIS = environmental impact statement

EA = environmental assessment

CE = categorical exclusion

★ = new listing in this issue

IN THIS ISSUE: 14 projects

EISs (3) - three ongoing (including forest plan revision)

EAs (7) - two completed last quarter, four ongoing, and one new

CEs (4) - one completed last quarter and three ongoing

On the Ashley and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache: National Forests:

High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep Analysis EIS

IN PROGRESS

This is an evaluation of the effects of continued **domestic sheep grazing** in the High Uintas Wilderness.

Next step: After consideration of comments submitted on the supplemental draft EIS, we will release the final EIS and draft record of decision (anticipated spring/summer 2024).

Contact: Paul Cowley, 801-999-2177,
paul.cowley@usda.gov

Soapstone Calcite Project EA

IN PROGRESS

This project would involve authorizing **small-scale hardrock mining operations** for decorative calcite near the headwaters of Iron Mine Creek on the Ashley NF. Approximately 1 mile of new access road would need to be constructed, which would cross both the Ashley and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NFs.

Next step: We plan to release the draft decision notice (along with the EA and finding of no significant impact) this winter (2024).

Contact: David Herron, 435-781-5218,
david.herron@usda.gov

Ashley National Forest - Forest Plan Revision EIS

IN PROGRESS

We are **revising our 1986 Forest Plan** to update our management framework for current natural resource conditions.

Next step: The objection period closed 6/20/2023. We expect to release the final plan and record of decision in early 2024. See <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ashley/landmanagement/planning> for more information.

Contact: Anastasia Allen, 406-270-9241, anastasia.allen@usda.gov

Ashley National Forest Aspen Restoration Project EA

COMPLETED

This was a programmatic evaluation of the **restoration of aspen stands** outside of designated wilderness.

Next step: Implementation (final decision notice signed 10/2/2023)

Contact: Kristy Groves, 435-781-5203, kristy.groves@usda.gov or
Emilia Sopranzi, 530-647-5373, emilia.sopranzi@usda.gov

Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Restoration Project EA

IN PROGRESS

The proposed project would authorize up to 24,000 acres of **fuels reduction treatments** across the Forest each year. Treatment boundaries would be designed to meet objectives and move areas toward desired conditions.

Next step: The 45-day objection period on the draft decision notice closed 11/13/2023. We anticipate completing the objection resolution process in early 2024.

Contact: Lars Christensen, 435-781-5126, lars.christensen@usda.gov

Photo: D. Bambrugh, USDA FS. Snowboard tracks descending from the Forest Service ozone data collection station on Little Mountain, January 2023.



D1 - Flaming Gorge Ranger District

★ Buckboard Marina Boundary Realignment EA

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

We are proposing to **adjust the boundary of the Buckboard Marina's special use permit** to remove water acreage and potentially add areas of land to the south and east.

Next step: We plan to have a 30-day comment period on the EA (anticipated spring 2024).

Contact: Jayson Roundy, 435-781-5281,
jayson.roundy@usda.gov

Dry Creek Trona Mine Project EIS

IN PROGRESS

The BLM is considering a **trona mine** proposal from Pacific and Atlantic Soda Company. A portion of the proposal involves construction of a **water pipeline** across the northern end of the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

Next step: We anticipate the draft EIS will be released for comment in early 2024.

Contact: Rhett Burkman, 435-781-5133,
rhett.burkman@usda.gov

Flaming Gorge NRA Management Plan EA

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

We are developing a new **management plan for the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA)**. The plan will include direction for all resources and resource uses in the NRA.

Next step: We plan to have a 30-day comment period on the EA in early 2024.

Contact: Ryan Buerkle, 435-781-5204,
ryan.buerkle@usda.gov

Henry's Fork Rock Art Interpretive Site EA

COMPLETED

This project will involve the development of a recreation and **interpretive site** to provide for public education, enjoyment, and protection of the Henry's Fork prehistoric rock art site.

Next step: Implementation (final decision notice signed 11/9/2023)

Contact: Jeffrey Rust, 435-781-5156,
jeffrey.rust@usda.gov

D2 - Vernal Ranger District

Ashley Karst Timber Stand Improvement CE

COMPLETED

We plan to **thin young lodgepole pine stands** across approximately 7,349 acres in the Ashley Karst National Recreation and Geologic Area.

Next step: Implementation (decision memo signed 10/12/2023)

Contact: Sam Nielsen, 435-781-5148,
samuel.nielsen@usda.gov



Photos: L. Tullis, USDA FS. Before and after views of thinning in a young lodgepole pine stand, Alma Taylor Plateau, Vernal Ranger District, September 2019.

D3/4 - Duchesne-Roosevelt Ranger District

Anthro Reentry Lop and Scatter CE

IN PROGRESS

We would re-enter approximately 7,820 acres of previously treated shrub communities with a hand crew using chainsaws to **remove the encroaching conifer**.

Next step: Decision memo anticipated April 2024

Contact: Bob Christensen, 435-781-5232,
robert.christensen@usda.gov

South Slope Fuels Reduction Project EA

IN PROGRESS

We are working with the Ute Tribe on a proposed cross-boundary **fuels management project** on the south slope of the Uinta Mountains. The project area generally encompasses the zone from Yellowstone Canyon to Uinta Canyon.

Next step: We anticipate the 45-day objection period on the draft decision for the Forest Service portion of the project will end mid-February 2024.

Contact: Emilia Sopranzi, 530-647-5373,
emilia.sopranzi@usda.gov

or

Joseph Williams, 435-781-5212,
joseph.l.williams@usda.gov

Harmston Canyon ATV Trail CE

IN PROGRESS

We would **construct a new portion of motorized trail** connecting with existing roads open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use to create a loop trail along the Elkhorn Loop Road.

Next step: Decision memo anticipated January 2024

Contact: John Titre, 505-388-8367, john.titre@usda.gov

Yellowstone ATV Trail CE

IN PROGRESS

We are proposing reconstruction of the Yellowstone ATV Trail connections from **50 inches to 60 inches** wide.

Next step: Decision memo anticipated February 2024

Contact: John Titre, 505-388-8367, john.titre@usda.gov



Ashley National Forest Projects

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ashley/landmanagement/projects/>

Check out this webpage for more details on each of these projects!



Ashley National Forest Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA)

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sopa/forest-level.php?110401>

The SOPA lists the projects in this newsletter as well as additional ongoing nationwide and multi-regionwide projects.

"It takes a village to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the forest and grassland ecosystems entrusted to our care while navigating challenges associated with climate change and differing stakeholder values. Working collaboratively with partners, we can continue to conserve biodiversity now and in the future."

*- Rob Harper, USDA Forest Service Director of Biological and Physical Resources,
October 23, 2023*

Please call or email any of the above contacts with questions on these projects!
And if you have any general questions regarding this newsletter, feel free to contact Lesley Tullis, Environmental Coordinator, at 435-781-5103 or at lesley.tullis@usda.gov.

Thank you for your interest and input and we look forward to continuing to work together to plan good work on the ground that will help sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Ashley National Forest to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Susan R. Eickhoff
FOREST SUPERVISOR

Supervisor's Office
355 N Vernal Ave, Vernal, UT 84078
435-789-1181
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/ashley>