



April 2024
FY 24 Quarter 3



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.

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: 24 projects

EISs (4) - one completed (forest plan revision), two ongoing, and one withdrawn EIS decision

EAs (5) - five ongoing

CEs (15) - one completed, three ongoing, and eleven new

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 fall 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: The 45-day objection period on the draft decision notice ends 4/15/2024.

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

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

Ashley National Forest - Forest Plan Revision EIS

COMPLETED!

We completed the **revision of our 1986 Forest Plan** to update our management framework for current natural resource conditions.

Next step: Implementation (final plan and record of decision signed 1/26/2024 and went into effect 2/26/2024)

See <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ashley/landmanagement/planning> for more information.

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

Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Restoration Project EA

IN PROGRESS

This project involves implementing 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: Address the objection reviewing officer's instructions and conduct an old growth review prior to signing the final decision (anticipated spring/summer 2024).

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



Photo: A. Selig. Night view from the Red Canyon Overlook, Flaming Gorge Ranger District, March 2023.

★ East Zone Vault Toilet Replacements CE

COMPLETED

Vault **toilet replacements** would occur at seven recreation sites on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District and six recreation sites on the Vernal Ranger District.

Next step: Implementation (decision memo signed 3/26/2024)

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

★ Highway 191 Shaded Fuel Break CE

IN PROGRESS

This project would establish a 760-acre **linear fuel break**, primarily along Highway 191, mostly on the Vernal Ranger District with a small portion on the northern end occurring on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District.

Next step: CE review form and decision memo (anticipated 4/2024)

Contact: Dixie Sadlier, 435-630-1259, dixie.sadlier@usda.gov

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 public meetings on the proposed action and alternatives (anticipated fall 2024).

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

Flaming Gorge NRA Management Plan EA

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

We are developing a new **management plan for the Flaming Gorge NRA**. The plan will include direction for all resources and resource uses in the NRA. We would incorporate this area management plan into our 2024 Forest Plan via a programmatic amendment under Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219.

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

Contact: Ryan Buerkle, 435-781-5204,
ryan.buerkle@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** under Black's Fork in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA) in Wyoming.

Next step: There will be a 45-day comment period on the draft EIS (anticipated June 2024).

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

★ Lowline Trail New Construction CE

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

This project would involve approximately 1/2 mile of new non-motorized **trail construction** to replace a section of the current Lowline Trail.

Next step: CE review form and decision memo (anticipated summer 2024)

Contact: Aaron Selig, 435-781-5244,
aaron.selig@usda.gov



Photos: A. Selig, USDA FS. Great horned owls, Flaming Gorge Ranger District, 2023.

D2 - Vernal Ranger District

★ Cart Creek Meadow Enhancement Project CE

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

This project would involve several **restoration treatments** in a 244-acre project area, including reconstruction of approximately 1/2 mile of the degraded water canal; lopping and scattering of conifer that are expanding into the wet meadow; and seeding and planting.

Next step: CE review form and decision memo (anticipated summer 2024)

Contact: Natasha Hadden, 435-781-5181, natasha.hadden@usda.gov

★ North Government Park Stream Restoration CE

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

Restoration treatments would improve a degraded stream and meadow and would include the installation of rock structures and check dams. We would also seed and do a biochar application on approximately 1 acre of upland to combat erosion.

Next step: CE review form and decision memo (anticipated spring 2024)

Contact: Ryan Mower, 435-781-5170, ryan.mower@usda.gov



D3/4 – Duchesne-Roosevelt Ranger District

Duchesne-Roosevelt Ranger District CEs

DEVELOPING PROPOSAL

Anthro Reentry Lop and Scatter CE. Removal of conifer encroachment in 7,820 acres of previously treated areas to maintain shrub habitat.

★ **Brown Duck Creek Crossing CE.** Relocation of flood debris to restore a safe stream crossing for users of the Lake Fork and Brown Duck Basin trails.

★ **Dry Ridge Communications Shelter Replacement CE.** Replacement of an existing shelter at the Dry Ridge communications site to meet design standards.

Harmston Canyon ATV Trail CE. New motorized trail construction to connect existing roads open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use along the Elkhorn Loop Road.

★ **Mill Park Mineral Exploration 2024 CE.** Small-scale exploration for valuable minerals near Mill Park.

★ **Moon Lake Campground Debris Flow Management CE.** Mitigation of debris flow hazards through construction of a gabion berm and riprapping drainage channel slopes.

★ **Moon Lake Water System Well CE.** Well construction to replace the existing spring water system at the Moon Lake recreation complex.

★ **West Zone Vault Toilet Replacements CE.** Vault toilet replacements at the Yellowstone, Bridge, Rock Creek, Upper Stillwater, Aspen, Avintaquin, and Iron Mine recreation sites, as well as a new toilet installation at the Uinta Guard Station administrative site.

Yellowstone ATV Trail CE. Reconstruction of the Yellowstone ATV Trail connections from 50 inches to 60 inches wide.

★ **Yellowstone Right-of-Way CE.** Right-of-way special use permit for an existing access road to private property in Yellowstone Canyon.

Contact for D3/4 CEs: Emilia Sopranzi, 530-647-5373,
emilia.sopranzi@usda.gov

Next step for D3/4 CEs: Finalize proposals and initial reviews, then complete the CE review forms and decision memos.

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: Address the objection reviewing officer's instructions and conduct an old growth review prior to signing the final decision for the Forest Service portion of the project (anticipated spring/summer 2024).

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

or

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

Uinta Basin Railway Project EIS

WITHDRAWN

Withdrawal of the Forest Service decision on this project on 1/17/2024 was in response to an 8/18/2023 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that vacated portions of the Surface Transportation Board's EIS for inadequate environmental analysis. The Forest Service decision would have authorized 12 miles of the proposed **railway** across National Forest System lands along Highway 191 in Indian Canyon.

Contact: Kristy Groves, 435-781-5101,
kristy.groves@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.

“Restoration is imperative for healing the earth, but reciprocity is imperative for long-lasting, successful restoration. Like other mindful practices, ecological restoration can be viewed as an act of reciprocity in which humans exercise their caregiving responsibility for the ecosystems that sustain them. We restore the land, and the land restores us.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass, 2013

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, Ashley National Forest 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.

Kristy Groves
ACTING FOREST SUPERVISOR

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