

**File Code:** 2400; 3400**Date:** June 14, 2016**Route To:****Subject:** Request for Designation of Additional Insect & Disease Treatment Areas in North Idaho**To:** Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Region 1 is requesting additional designations of landscape-scale areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests (NP-CLW NFs) to address insect or disease threats under Section 602 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591a), as added by section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, known as the 2014 Farm Bill.

In March 2014, the Idaho Governor requested and received designation of 50 proposed treatment areas, covering approximately 1,815,864 acres across the Boise, Caribou-Targhee, Idaho Panhandle, Nez Perce-Clearwater, Salmon-Challis and Sawtooth NFs. The NP-CLW NF has five designated treatment areas totaling approximately 423,731 acres. These proposed treatment areas were selected because they met the criteria for designation and they covered areas already proposed for restoration activities/projects.

Federal forests cover over 20 million acres in Idaho, representing about 75 percent of the forested landscape and 38 percent of the entire State. Approximately 12.6 million acres of federal forest land is identified as suitable for some level of management. Of the suitable land base, 8.84 million acres (70 percent of the suitable land base) is at high risk of mortality and fire as defined by the criteria in the Farm Bill. The magnitude of the issue in Idaho requires action. The initial designation of 1.8 million acres represents a modest effort to begin addressing the forest health issues across the entire landscape of the National Forest System in Idaho.

Subsequent to the State's initial designated area request, the NP-CLW NF has conducted a more thorough evaluation of the insect and disease issues across the Forest. After consultation with Forest staff, entomologists, and pathologists, the Forest identified 185 watersheds at the 6th level HUC that are in need of designation (Attachment A Maps and Attachment B Spreadsheet). These watersheds encompass approximately 4.2 million acres (2.1 million acres administered by the NP-CLW NF), the majority of which are located in the roaded front country. Areas excluded from consideration include designated wilderness areas and Idaho Roadless Areas, with the exception of the Backcountry Restoration Roadless Area designation.

All proposed watersheds meet one or more of the criteria outlined in the 2014 Farm Bill. These watersheds are experiencing declining forest health based on annual surveys; are at risk of substantially increased tree mortality over the next 15 years due to insect or disease infestation, based on the National Insect and Disease Risk Map; and/or contain hazard trees that pose an imminent risk to public infrastructure, health, and safety. These watersheds are experiencing increased bark beetle activity, root disease and tree mortality and are subsequently increasing the potential for uncharacteristic wildfires, as experienced in fiscal year 2015.



To date, the NP-CLW NF has been engaged in project planning and implementation of six projects in the initial insect and disease designated areas: Lowell WUI, Tinker Bugs, SOB/Falls/Horse Creek, Race Cow, Center Johnson and Windy Shingle. Future projects within the designated treatment areas would address insect, disease and fire risks, especially where collaborative groups exist and have contributed to the proposed treatment areas. Successful implementation of projects in the initial designated treatment areas should serve as an example for future designation of additional landscape areas and move towards restoring forest resiliency across landscapes on the NP-CLW-NF.

The NP-CLW NF is committed to active restoration using tools available under the Farm Bill. Designation of these additional areas on a landscape-scale will be an integral part of their efforts to focus restoration work and add additional capacity to the vegetation restoration actions on the Forest. It will also allow them to more efficiently and effectively utilize the North Idaho NEPA Strike Team, the Region 1 Farm Bill Strike Team, and the Good Neighbor Authority.

For the reasons above, I am recommending these additional watersheds for designation as priority treatment areas under the 2014 Farm Bill. For additional information or to get the shapefiles associated with this request, please contact Joel Harrison, GIS Program Lead (208) 476-8364 or joelharrison@fs.fed.us, or Dan Hollenkamp, Vegetation Staff Officer (208) 935-4283 or danielhollenkamp@fs.fed.us.



LEANNE M. MARTEN
Regional Forester

cc: Tera Little, Christine Dawe, Carol McKenzie, Cheryl Probert, Dan Hollenkamp, Joel Harrison