



Forest Service

**Medicine Bow-Routt National
Forests and Thunder Basin
National Grassland**

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File Code: 2400; 2470; 3400

Date: December 16, 2016

Route To:

Subject: Review Process for Healthy Forest Restoration Act Section 602(c), Additional Insect and Disease Landscape-scale Area Designations

To: Regional Forester, Brian Ferebee

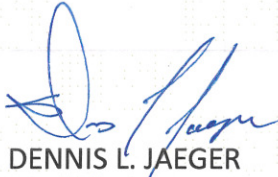
I am requesting an additional designation under Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, known as the 2014 Farm Bill, of an area that is at risk of or is currently experiencing an insect or disease epidemic. I recommend that the majority of the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming be designated as an 'Insect and Disease Landscape-Scale at Risk' area. I am asking that all areas greater than 20 percent basal area lost be designated under Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act, excluding two areas previously identified in 2014 as Insect and Disease areas, Wilderness Areas, and Wilderness Study Areas (see 'Basal Area Loss by Watershed' map and 'ListOfWatersheds_DesignationRequest' spreadsheet).

Over the last couple of decades, the Medicine Bow National Forest has experienced widespread beetle epidemics. These are large landscape-scale events that have affected over 1 million acres to date (see attached Cumulative Insect Mortality map). Total tree mortality across the Forest has already exceeded 75% and has impacted 84 of 125 6th level Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) watersheds (see attached spreadsheet: Watersheds with Beetle kill resulting in >20% basal area loss). These impacted watersheds cover 78% of the forest, and other watersheds contain individual stands of trees that are at risk of significant basal area loss. These events pose a substantial risk to public infrastructure, health, and safety. It is critical that we expand the use of the National Environmental Policy Act tools on the Medicine Bow National Forest to accelerate our management response to these major forest health events.

Enclosed is the justification for the additional designation per the criteria in the 2014 Farm Bill, a 2015 Forest Health Protection Insect and Disease Activity map showing cumulative insect mortality on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests from 2006-2015, a map showing predicted tree mortality by 6th level HUC watershed based on National Insect and Disease Forest Risk Assessment data, a shapefile of the forest administrative boundaries, a shapefile of currently eligible Section 602 areas, a shapefile of the cumulative insect mortality 2006-2015, and a shapefile of predicted tree mortality by 6th level HUC watershed (field "MEAN_STD"). Please note that I have included watersheds with greater than 20% BA loss for consideration, as these watersheds contain individual stands of trees that are at risk of basal area loss and are adjacent to watersheds that contain predicted basal area losses of greater than 25 percent, putting them at increased risk of further BA loss.



Please contact Melissa Martin, Planning and Information Program Manager, at 307-745-2371 or mmmartin@fs.fed.us should you have any questions.



DENNIS L. JAEGER
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures (5)

cc: Jake Donnay; David Gwaze; Cherie Hamilton; Rick Cooksey; Roy Mask; Robert Cain; Jeffrey Underhill; Sharon Paul; Melissa Martin; Kelle Reynolds; Mark Westfahl