



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Tally Lake  
Ranger District

1335 Highway 93 West  
Whitefish, MT 59937  
(406) 863-5400  
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Date: June 17, 2015

Dear Interested Party:

The Flathead National Forest (FNF) is holding a public open house to discuss the potential for a forest health project in the southeast area (Lost Beetle Project Area, Figure 1) of the Tally Lake Ranger District. The open house will take place on June 30<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-7:00 p.m. (Mountain) at the Flathead National Forest/Tally Lake District office located at 650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, Montana.

This project would occur in an insect and disease area designated under section 602 and 603 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA); therefore, one objective of this project will be to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase resilience to, insect and disease infestations within forested public lands.

The reasons for this initial meeting are to:

- Clarify how the Agriculture Act (also known as Farm Bill) of 2014 amended HFRA;
- Introduce the public to the potential project area;
- Give an overview of the potential collaborative process for developing and implementing this project.

This meeting is open to the public and the invitation to participate is intended to be non-exclusive. Please direct any questions to Deb Bond, Project Team Leader, at [dbond01@fs.fed.us](mailto:dbond01@fs.fed.us) or 406-758-5318.

**If you would like to continue to be involved and notified of updates about this project, choose any or all of the three options below. If we do not hear from you, we will remove you from the mailing list.**

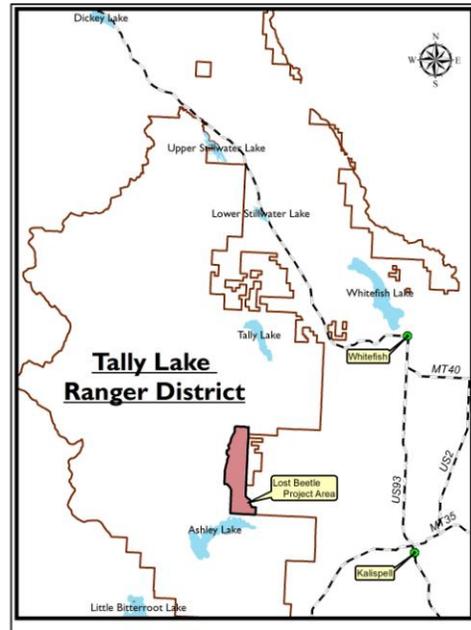


Figure 1: The project boundary for Lost Beetle Area.

- Email Deb Bond=[dbond01@fs.fed.us](mailto:dbond01@fs.fed.us) (Please include **Lost Beetle** in the subject line.)
- Return this form by following the instructions:
  - Fold so that this side is enclosed. Using the existing folds, **ensure the portion of the page with your address as the return address is on the outside.**
  - Tape the bottom edge. **Do not staple** as the post office no longer accepts stapled mailers.
  - Fill in your return address, stamp and mail.
- Call Deb Bond at 406-758-5318

Thank you.

Lisa A. Timchak  
Tally lake District Ranger



# Agenda for Lost Beetle Project Public Collaboration Meeting

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*June 30, 2015*

## **Introductions & Meeting Objectives**

- Introduce Responsible Official and Interdisciplinary Team Members
- Brief description of topics to be covered
- Desired outcomes:
  - Better understanding for the Responsible Official of who wants to participate in the collaborative process to develop and implement this project.
  - Better understanding for public of the potential project area and restoration needs, as well as how they can engage to collaboratively develop and implement the project.
  - Feedback to Interdisciplinary Team/Responsible Official on additional collaboration needs.

## **How the Agriculture Act (Farm Bill) of 2014 Amended the Healthy Forest Restoration Act**

- *See pages 1 and 2 of your handout*

## **Introduction to the Potential Lost Beetle Project Area**

- *See page 3 of your handout*

## **Discuss Potential Future Collaborative Needs for Developing and Implementing this Project**

## **Open Discussion with Specialists and Ranger**

***Please contact Deb Bond, Project Team Leader, if you would like to provide additional feedback or have further questions. (406) 758-5318 or [dbond01@fs.fed.us](mailto:dbond01@fs.fed.us)  
(Please include Lost Beetle in the subject line when sending emails)***

***Thank you!***

# Agriculture Act (Farm Bill) of 2014

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## *Amendments to the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003*

### **2014 Farm Bill, Section 8204 , Insect and Disease Infestation**

Amends Title VI of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591 et seq.) by adding section 602 (Designation of Treatment Areas) and section 603 (Administrative Review) to address qualifying insect and disease infestations on National Forest System lands.

### **HFRA, Section 602, Designation of Treatment Areas**

- Not later than 60 days after enactment, if requested by a Governor of a State, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture was required to designate as part of an insect and disease treatment program at least one landscape area (such as a sub-watershed - 6th level Hydrologic Unit Code) in at least one national forest in each State that is experiencing an insect and disease epidemic. (The Secretary may designate additional areas to address insect and disease threats after the initial 60 day period.)

- Areas were designated on May 20, 2014. Information on areas designated by state can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/farmbill/areadesignations.shtml>.

#### **Insect & Disease Area Designations in Montana**

- Nearly 5 million acres designated on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Bitterroot, Custer-Gallatin, Flathead, Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai and Lolo National Forests in Montana.
- Approximately 563,000 acres designated on the Flathead National Forest.
- Approximately 213,000 acres designated on the Tally Lake Ranger District.

- An area may be designated as part of an insect and disease treatment program if it meets at least one of the following criteria. The area is:
  - Experiencing forest health decline based on annual forest health surveys;
  - At risk of experiencing substantially increased tree mortality based on the most recent Forest Health Protection Insect and Disease Risk Map; or
  - Contains hazard trees that pose an imminent risk to public infrastructure, health, or safety.
- Under section 602(d), priority projects that reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, insect or disease infestation may be carried out in designated areas in accordance with sections 102(b)(c)(d), 104, 105 and 106 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, which provides for expedited NEPA reviews, pre-decisional objection review, and guidance on judicial review. This authority is available for projects for which scoping has been initiated by September 30, 2018.
- Authorizes, *but does not appropriate*, up to \$200 million annually through 2024 to carry out projects under section 602.

## HFRA, Section 603, Administrative Review

- Under section 603, an insect and disease project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement and exempt from pre-decisional objections.
- In order to use this Categorical Exclusion (CE), projects must:
  - Maximize old growth and large trees to the extent the trees promote stands that are resilient to insect and disease threats;
  - Consider the best available scientific information; and
  - Be developed through a collaborative process that:
    - Includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests.
    - Is transparent and non-exclusive, *or* meets the requirements of a resource advisory committee under subsections (c) through (f) of section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.
  - *Projects that carry out part of a proposal that complies with the eligibility requirements of a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program have already been determined to meet the above requirements.*
- Section 603 imposes limitations on the use of the section 603 CE. A project that uses this categorical exclusion:
  - May not exceed 3,000 **treated** acres;
  - Shall be located in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), or if outside the WUI in an area in condition classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III; and
  - May not include the establishment of permanent roads, but may allow for necessary maintenance and repairs on existing permanent roads and may allow for the construction of temporary roads (where not otherwise prohibited) for the purposes of carrying out this section. Temporary roads would have to be decommissioned no later than three years after the date of project completion.
- The section 603 CE may not be used in areas that are:
  - Congressionally designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas;
  - Areas where the removal of vegetation is restricted or prohibited by statute or by Presidential proclamation; and
  - Areas where the activities described above would be inconsistent with the applicable Land and Resource Management Plan.

### What is a

### Categorical Exclusion?

The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations provide for categorical exclusions (CEs) to implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the purpose of reducing delay and paperwork. CEQ regulations allow Federal agencies to exclude from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. Based on the Agency's experience and knowledge, the responsible official can conclude that if the action fits within an identified category and analysis shows there are no extraordinary circumstances, then the action would not have significant

# Lost Beetle Area

The Lost Beetle area encompasses approximately 4000 acres, approximately 2200 acres are National Forest System (NFS) lands. An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists are currently conducting field surveys and gathering data to review the current condition of the various resources within the project area. The results of each specialist's review will be used to develop a proposal for treatment.

## Brief Area Description

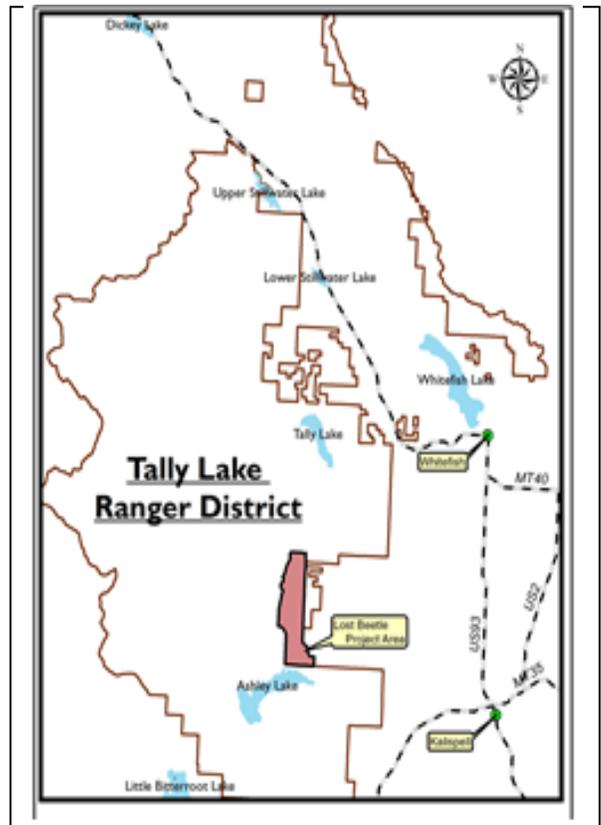
The Lost Beetle project area is located approximately 10 miles west of Kalispell. The southern boundary is just north of Ashley Lake. Much of the project area is surrounded by private and state timber land.

Lands that could be treated in the project area are within Management Area (MA) 15 of the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986). MA 15 emphasizes cost-efficient production of timber while protecting the productive capacity of the land and timber resource. The project area is located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Douglas-fir trees in the area are affected by root disease and Douglas-fir beetle. Mortality has been building over the last several years and fuel loads have been increasing in some stands.

Several of the stands in the area have been identified as Old Growth Habitat. Other stands provide habitat for numerous wildlife species, including the Canada lynx.

Access to and from NFS lands is limited. Temporary roads will likely be needed to treat stands.



# Overview of Potential Collaborative Process

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## What are the objectives of the collaborative process?

- Looking for participants who are interested in *engaging in a focused, results-oriented collaborative process* to develop and implement the project.
- Process will be *transparent, non-exclusive and include multiple interested persons representing diverse interests*.
- Open and respectful sharing by participants that will give the Responsible Official options and reasons to consider when developing the project and making the final decision.
  - The Responsible Official equitably values insights from each participating individual and organization and *will not rely solely on any single individual or group perspective* when making agency decisions; *not seeking a consensus decision/recommendation* from those who choose to participate.

## What is the role of participants in the collaborative process?

- Participants would *provide input for the Responsible Official to consider* regarding development of the purpose and need and proposed action.
  - This includes helping define the project area, treatments, design features/mitigation measures etc. as informed by local knowledge/experience and incorporation of best available science.
- Provide the rationale/reasoning behind suggestions or options presented.
- Assist with monitoring needs (as identified throughout the collaborative process).

## What constrains/guides the decision space throughout the collaborative process?

- The project *must be in compliance with all laws, regulations and policies*, to include the Forest Plan.
  - Forest interdisciplinary team members can provide clarification on the feasibility/legality of suggestions and options presented.