

# Pioneer Fire Recovery and Restoration Update



June 16, 2017



*Salvage operations within the Beaver Creek North Roadside Hazard area*

## Emergency Situation Determination (ESD)

The Boise National Forest has received Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell's approval through an Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) for the North and South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Environmental Assessments.

The ESD approval allows the Forest to award salvage sale contracts immediately following issuance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions, expediting the public health and safety work and avoiding loss of commodity value that would jeopardize accomplishment of project objectives. The area to be salvaged is about 8 percent of the total 194,000 acres affected by the 2016 Pioneer Fire. "The first priority has always been public health and safety" said John Kidd, Lowman District Ranger. "The Chief's approval of the ESDs increases our ability to remove hazards, recoup timber value, and then invest this value in recovery and reforestation activities".

An Emergency Situation Determination, 218.21(b) is defined as: A situation on National Forest System (NFS) lands for which immediate implementation of a decision is necessary to achieve one or more of the following:

- 1) Relief from hazards threatening human health and safety
- 2) Mitigation of threats to natural resources on NFS or adjacent lands

- 3) Avoiding a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the agency's ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to resource protection or restoration.

*Authority to authorize Emergency Situation Determinations (ESDs) rests solely with the Chief and Associate Chief of the Forest Service. Current regulations concerning authorization of an ESD exempt a project from the administrative review (objection) process.*

For more information visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/boise/home/?cid=fseprd530485>

## **Stewardship versus Conventional Timber Sales**

### **Stewardship Contracts**

Stewardship Contracts trade goods for services and bundle a variety of service work into one contract to accomplish resource management objectives with a focus on restoration. The selected contractor conducts both the commercial removal of timber (goods) as well as the restoration activities and necessary safety mitigations, such as hazard tree falling, road decommissioning, etc. (service work). The Forest Service retains any funding above and beyond the cost of the service work that can be used on other stewardship areas throughout the Pioneer Fire area. Excess funds collected on the Pioneer stewardship projects will be used to complete hazard tree felling work within the fire area.

### **Conventional Timber Sales**

Conventional Timber Sales can also address hazard trees through the collection of KV (Knutson-Vandenburg) deposits. KV money is collected for the protection and improvement of the sale area and can be used to plant trees, fell hazard trees in the areas that were not commercially treated, decommission roads, and other activities within the sale area boundary. KV public safety and restoration activities would be implemented in separate service contracts or by Forest Service crews, during and following completion of commercial harvesting. Conventional timber sales expand the Forest Service's capacity to treat the land and provide opportunities for a wider range of purchaser's to bid and operate on Forest Service sales.

### **Why are we doing both, and where?**

The Forest Service is proposing a mix of stewardship contracts and conventional timber sales within the Pioneer salvage area to treat the land through 1) bundling service items on large, economically viable areas and 2) expanding our capacity to treat the area by marketing projects that are attractive to a variety of operators. Funding generated through KV or retained receipts would be used to fell hazard trees in non-commercially viable areas as well as address reforestation requirements.

### **Proposed contracts available**

- Stewardship contracts available: 3
- Conventional contracts available: 11



*Aerial mulching operation in the Clear Creek drainage*

## **Achievements**

- Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)
  - Aerial mulching operations in the Clear Creek drainage are complete
  - Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) for noxious weeds has begun and will last throughout the summer
- Pine Flats campground was opened for the season on the Memorial Day weekend

## **Environmental Assessment Comments**

### **North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project**

The **North** Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project received 20 comments from diverse groups including: Industry, State Agency, County, Organizations and individuals. To read submitted comments for the **North** Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project visit:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50789> and select the Public Comment/Objection Reading Room.

### **South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project**

The **South** Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project received 50 comments from diverse groups including: Industry, State Agency, County, Organizations and individuals. To read submitted comments for the **South** Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project visit:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694> and select the Public Comment/Objection Reading Room.

## Next Steps

- Finding of Non-Significant Impacts (FONSI) and Decision Notice for the North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project is anticipated by the end of June.
- FONSI and Decision Notice for the South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project is anticipated by the end of June.
- Pioneer Fire field tour scheduled for July 13.

## 2017 Mushroom Season Update



*Morel mushrooms growing through the forest floor*

About 93 out of 400 commercial permits have been sold in early June 2017.

Road Closures impacting area: weather has had negative effect on some roads and travel conditions.

- 312 – Still closed.
- 351 – Inaccessible for passenger vehicle.
- 385 – Still closed.
- 380H – Gated this weekend for safety.
- 397 – Travel restrictions due to heavy equipment operations.
- 588C – inaccessible for passenger vehicles.

Safety gating on roads—where necessary roads will be gated and may not be reported before the next update.

For the most current updates on road closures and conditions visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/boise/alerts-notice>

While recreating within the Boise National Forest and especially when picking mushrooms in burned areas it is important to recognize the following safety considerations:

- **Safety**—be aware of your surroundings and tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- **Mud and flood conditions**—many NFS roads have been impacted by this spring’s weather events, use caution while traveling throughout the forest. Fire weakened trees are more susceptible to fall, potentially blocking road systems.
- **Streams and rivers**—local tributaries are running high, fast and cold. Take extra precautions with children and pets.
- **Be Bear aware**—maintain clean camp with proper food storage and remove garbage.
- **Mines**—there are subsurface holes from old mining activities.
- **Be Prepared**—bring extra food and water and ensure that someone knows where you are going and when you will return.

For the most current and additional information on 2017 mushroom picking on the Boise National Forest, please visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/boise/home/?cid=stelprdb504289>