Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project
Background

September 2010 - Initial request was made by former SD Representative Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin writing to the CEQ and FS requesting alternative arrangements.

2010 / 2011 - BHNF, WO, RO, and CEQ explores ways to address NEPA efficiency at a larger scale.

July 2011 - Representative Noem requests the alternative arrangements for NEPA compliance to address the mountain pine beetle epidemic on the BHNF.

September 2011 - The Forest Service and CEQ agree that the FS has the necessary NEPA authorities and alternative arrangements were not granted to address the on-going MPB epidemic.
Why Here, Why Now?

- Expansion of Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB), limitations of ‘traditional’ NEPA
- MPB is spreading faster than our collective capacity
- Research and experience, we know what works
- Work closely with nature, be at the right place at the right time
- Opportunity to leverage the high level of collaboration and interest from our Public
Western Bark Beetle Strategy

Human Safety, Recovery and Resiliency
U. S. Forest Service

7/11/2011

The Western Bark Beetle Strategy identifies how the Forest Service is responding to and will respond to the western bark beetle epidemic over the next five years. The extent of the epidemic requires prioritization of treatments, first providing for human safety in areas threatened by standing dead hazard trees, and second, addressing dead and down trees that create hazardous fuels conditions adjacent to high value areas. After the priority of safety, forested areas with severe mortality will be reforested with the appropriate species (Recovery). Forests will also be thinned to reduce the number of trees per acre and create more diverse stand structures to minimize extensive epidemic bark beetle areas (resiliency). This is a modest strategy that reflects current budget realities, but focuses our resources in the most important places that we can make a big difference to the safety of the American public. This strategy covers Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 through 2016.
2011 Western Bark Beetle Strategy

Safety

Recovery
2011 Western Bark Beetle Strategy

Resiliency

Goal 3: Prevent or mitigate future bark beetle outbreaks...
Incorporates:

• The WBBS
• On-going Scientific Research

Addresses the three prongs of the bark beetle problem:

• Human Safety
• Forest Recovery
• Long-term Forest Resiliency

Endorsed by the Black Hills NF Advisory Board
“Using the anticipatory, flexible EIS process provides the ability to act quickly when unexpected disturbance events (e.g., insects, disease, weather, fire) occur in the future... analysis will be completed across a large area, identifying areas where action can be taken quickly without the need for additional environmental reviews, and allowing for more focused and hence more expedited subsequent environmental reviews in remaining areas.”
How?

- Many discussions with the ID Team and others (CEQ, EPA, WO)

- Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA)

- Focused Purpose and Need
  - Reduce Mountain Pine Beetle and
  - Reduce fire hazard

- We know what methods work
  - Need to build in flexibility
Record of Decision

December 10, 2012, Record of Decision for the Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project signed by Forest Supervisor, Craig Bobzien.

Selected Action: Alternative C Modified
- Landscape treatment in advance of MPB infestation;
- 103,400 acres of commercial timber harvest;
- 18,600 Acres of non-commercial timber harvest;
- New road construction:
  - Up to 50 miles of FS System roads;
  - 160 miles of temporary roads; and
- Forest Plan amendment.
- Plan, Act, Monitor, and Evaluate
Recently infested MPB trees would be treated on portions of approximately 248,000 acres of high risk stands on NFS lands in South Dakota and Wyoming to reduce and slow the spread of MPB.

- 248,000 Acres of High Risk Stands
- 103,400 Acres Commercial Timber Harvest
- 18,600 Acres Non-Commercial Timber Harvest
- Forest Plan Amendment
- Responded to Scoping Comments
Alternative C Modified

- Utilize existing routes and roads
- New Road Construction
  - Up to 50 Miles System
  - 160 Miles Temporary
- Safety and access on roadways
The Fundamentals of adaptive Management: Monitoring and Evaluation

The Goal: Use what we have learned during implementation and monitoring, and science/research to guide our future actions.

MPBR Project Monitoring Report
   Mid-year
   Annual
Focuses on learning and adapting, through partnerships of managers, scientists, and other stakeholders who learn together how to create and maintain sustainable ecosystems.

Adaptive Management Process

- Focuses on learning and adapting, through partnerships of managers, scientists, and other stakeholders who learn together how to create and maintain sustainable ecosystems.
The basic framework to better understand the tools, techniques, purpose, scope/scale and various management evaluation points.

The IPM framework is based on our existing knowledge and adjustments made through implementation, monitoring and evaluation or other applicable research accruing during the life of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools and Techniques</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Scope/Scale</th>
<th>Management Evaluation Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timber Sale Contracts</td>
<td>Ground-based Logging</td>
<td>Reduce or remove the likelihood of trees being successfully attacked by the mountain pine beetle (MPB) either by reducing stand diameter or reducing stand density and fuels</td>
<td>Use of resiliency type treatments (e.g. thinning, uneven-aged management, sanitation) of high priority areas with mechanized equipment in stands with commercial size timber &gt;9 inches dbh using existing roads or constructing new temporary or system roads. Small sales are generally 20 to 250 acres and large sales 1000 acres to 4000 acres.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timber Sale Contracts</td>
<td>Cable Logging</td>
<td>Reduce or remove the likelihood of trees being successfully attacked by the mountain pine beetle (MPB) either by reducing stand diameter or reducing stand density and fuels</td>
<td>Use of resiliency type treatments (e.g. thinning) of high priority areas with mechanized equipment in stands with commercial size timber &gt;9 inches dbh using existing roads or constructing new temporary or system roads. Sales generally greater than 50 acres using or building system roads.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timber Sale Contracts</td>
<td>Helicopter Logging</td>
<td>Reduce or remove the likelihood of trees being successfully attacked by the mountain pine beetle (MPB) either by reducing stand diameter or reducing stand density and fuels</td>
<td>Use of resiliency type treatments (e.g. thinning, uneven-aged management, sanitation) of high priority areas with mechanized equipment in stands with commercial size timber &gt;9 inches dbh using existing roads or constructing new temporary or system roads. Sales generally greater than one million CCF.</td>
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A Good Problem to Have?

Ability to quickly assess and adapt our actions on the ground in a resourceful and proactive response to MPB

Larger landscape scale to efficiently utilize existing tools

Increases the efficiency of personnel (boots on the ground)

On-going collaboration with Federal, Tribal, State, and local officials, communities and adjacent landowners
Forest-wide Strategy

Role of FLT

Role of District Rangers

Role of the ID Team

Role of District Specialist

Role of NFAB and Conservation Leaders

Implementation Field Guides
Challenges

• Public/Community/FS Expectations
• Capacity internal/external
What We Learned?

Being Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

Leadership support

Keep ID Team engaged post-decision

Public eager to learn and adapt with us

Creating a springboard for further learning and innovation
• Three NFs (Flathead, Helena-Lewis & Clark, and Lolo)
• Three Ranger Districts
• Approximately 1.5 million acres in the Swan, Blackfoot and Clearwater River drainages in northwestern Montana.
• Southwest Crown of the Continent Collaborative.
• Reduce the risk of wildfire, conserve terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and wildlife habitat across the SWCC landscape;
• Reduce hazardous fuels within and adjacent to the wildland urban interface to provide for firefighter and public safety.
Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.