

July 9, 2004

EXEMPTION AREA WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE PROJECT

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

In 2001, the South Dakota Field Office began preparing a plan to address hazardous fuels buildup in the wildland-urban interface in the Exemption Area. The Record of Decision was signed in May 2003.

ISSUES:

The Exemption Area, in the northern Black Hills in South Dakota, consists of 22,530 acres that were exempted from the Black Hills National Forest due to the complex mineral survey and public land configuration. The BLM administers federal lands (5,220 acres) within the Exemption Area. The rest of the area is private land.

Within the Exemption Area of the Black Hills are several “communities at risk” including Lead, Deadwood, Central City, Pluma, and Englewood as well as numerous rural subdivisions. There are 2,675 acres of BLM-administered forested lands within half a mile of these communities.

In 2003, the Wildland-Urban Interface Plan was completed and implementation began by treating the Fire Containment Zones – treatment buffers along existing roads or trails that would provide safe access for fire crews – and decreasing standing dead trees in the Grizzly Gulch fire area within half a mile of Deadwood, South Dakota.

Further treatments of commercial and non-commercial treatments will continue throughout this area to decrease the fuel loading. An additional issue is increased mountain pine beetle infestations related to the close proximity of the Exemption Area to the Beaver Park area on the Black Hills National Forest.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

Fuels reduction commercial sales began in the Nevada Gulch area in the fall of 2003 and continue through 2004. Many of these sales are adjacent to areas outside of the Wildland Urban Interface that are being treated commercially because of mountain pine beetle infestations.

In 2005, marking will begin for the next area of precommercial and commercial timber removal around Deer Mountain and the community of Englewood. Removal of fuels from this area should begin in summer/fall of 2005.

We should complete the first round of treatments in the Exemption Area by the end of 2008 with follow-up treatments of prescribed fire and other non-commercial means the following years.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

This planning process as well as the implementation is a collaborative effort among the BLM, Forest Service, South Dakota Division of Forestry, South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire Suppression, Lead and Deadwood city fire departments, Lawrence County Fire Board, and private landowners.

CONTACTS:

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