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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TIMBER SALVAGE OPERATION UNDERWAY

CUSTER COUNTY – Timber salvage operations are currently underway in the Moon Creek and Swain Coulee area, the scene of wildfires during the 2003 fire season. This is the largest timber sale for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Miles City Field Office in eastern Montana.

Approximately 1,300 acres are planned for salvage and up to 1.4 million board feet may be harvested by Neiman Timber Company of Hulett, Wyo. Around 300 acres of adjacent green stands are scheduled for thinning to reduce the possibility of extreme fire behavior in those areas.

The objective of the harvest is to reduce the hazard fuel levels of the remaining woody debris and to recover the economic value of the commercial timber. By doing so, the threat of future fires and accompanying high fire severity levels will be reduced in the immediate area.

Neiman Timber Company made the proposal to harvest the sale last March after prolonged efforts to initiate the sale met with no interest. The timber sale was initially prepared based on inquiries from out-of-state mills in September of 2003.

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One mill initially expressed interest in the timber but later declined in November after they purchased another fire killed timber sale closer to their mill. Various mills and loggers, including out-of-state loggers were contacted. With the exception of Neiman Timber Company, none showed interest.

The haul distance for the Neiman Timber Company is almost 200 miles where large saw logs will be processed. The company has also developed markets at other locations for smaller logs and “blue-stain” logs. Blue-stain logs are the result of a fungus transported by Pine Beetles, which reduces the aesthetic marketability of the wood.

An analysis was completed to deal with the Moon Creek and Swain Coulee fires of August 2003. The Environmental Assessment for the Moon Creek/Swain Coulee Fire Hazard Abatement and Restoration Project was signed on March 17th.

Current logging operations are employing a highly mechanized logging side, consisting of a feller buncher, a stroke de-limber and a grapple skidder.

For additional information about the salvage operations in the Moon Creek and Swain Coulee area, please contact BLM Miles City Field Office Forester Ray Smith at 233-2854.

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