

# Honey Badger Project

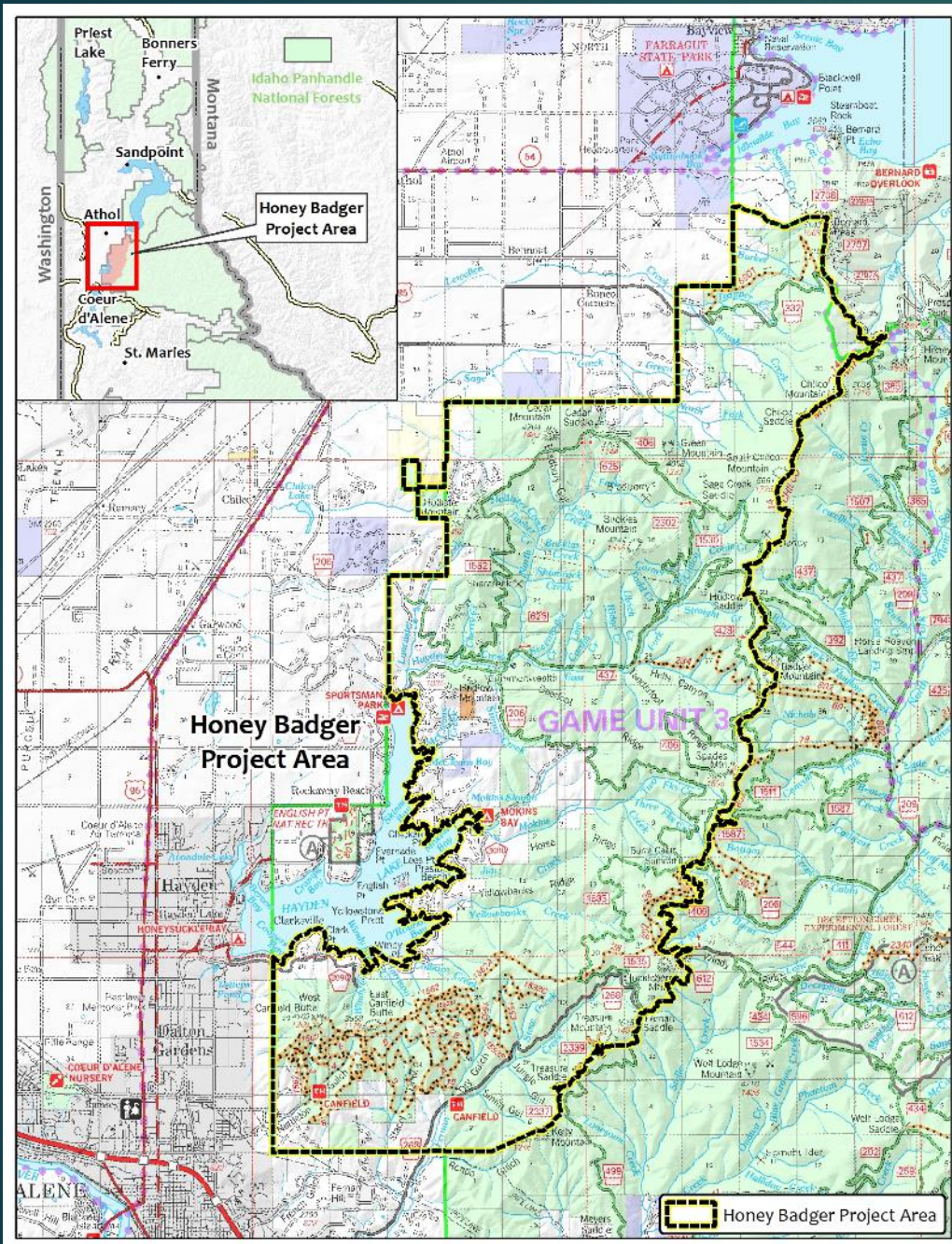
IDAHO PANHANDLE NATIONAL FORESTS  
Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

March 2020



# Project Location

- ▶ Project area encompasses approximately 52,800 acres, activities are currently being considered only within the 42,000 acres of National Forest System lands.
- ▶ The project is located entirely within Kootenai County.
- ▶ National Forest System lands are designated as General Forest (MA-6), with the exception of Canfield Mountain Recreation Area (MA-7, Primary Recreation).
- ▶ Approximately 85% (45,500 acres) of the project area is within the wildland urban interface ([WUI](#)).



# Land Ownership in the Project Area

▶ National Forest.....	42,000
▶ Private lands.....	10,000
▶ Industrial timber.....	600
▶ BLM.....	20
▶ TOTAL.....	52,600 acres

*All acreage figures are approximate.*



# Purpose and Need

- ▶ The purpose and need for the Honey Badger project is to implement direction described in the [IPNF Forest Plan](#). The Forest Plan is the guiding document for our activities.
- ▶ Activities would move some resources towards desired conditions and to help achieve goals and objectives described in the Plan (**the purpose**).
- ▶ Field reviews of resources in the project area found that some currently do not meet desired conditions described in the Plan, and unless action is taken, will continue to deteriorate (**the need**).



# Project Initiation



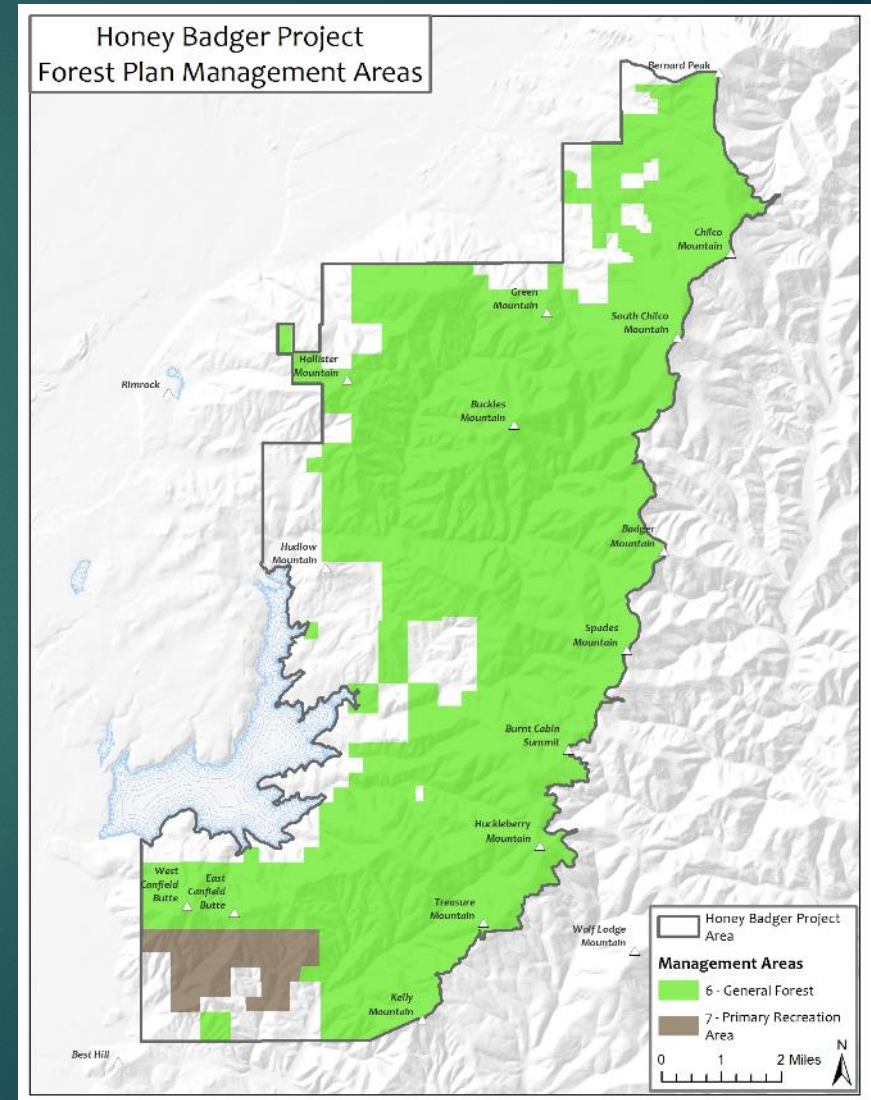
- ▶ Over the past two years, data has been collected to identify the potential for
  - ▶ • Vegetation treatment
  - ▶ • Fuels reduction
  - ▶ • Watershed/aquatic improvements
  - ▶ • Trail improvement



- ▶ The project team used the Transportation Analysis Process (TAP) to review existing roads and motorized trails as well as future access needs in the project area.

# Management Areas

- ▶ Management Areas (MAs) were established through an environmental effects analysis and public involvement process and adopted in the decision to approve the revised Forest Plan in 2015.
- ▶ Almost all of the Honey Badger project area, where activities are proposed, is Management Area 6 – General Forest (96%) or Management Area 7 – Primary Recreation (4%).
- ▶ General Forest (MA 6) is that area where a majority of active management occurs within the Forest. Approximately 60% of the entire Forest is within MA 6.
- ▶ Primary Recreation (MA 7) are areas where recreation is the predominant emphasis, Canfield Mountain in this case.



# Early Public Engagement

The planning area is important to a diverse number of user groups with different values, perspectives, and interests. Early in the project development process, we initiated open and ongoing communication with individuals and organizations interested in or affected by our actions.

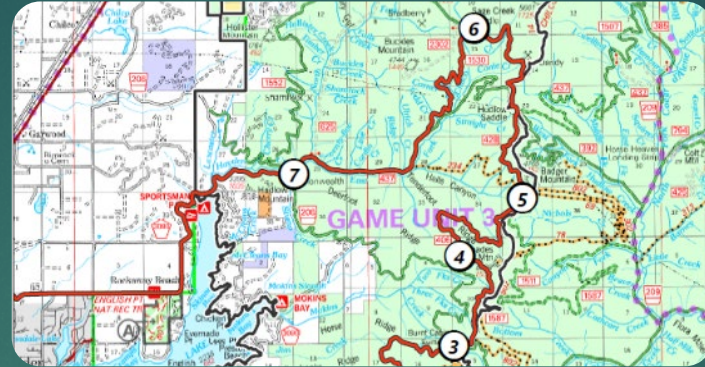
The intent of this early communication was to

- increase public awareness, interest, and engagement
- identify preliminary issues
- discuss development of the proposed action
- seek ideas for resolving specific concerns related to recreation uses



## ► Early Engagement

- We reached out to groups known to have an interest in similar projects on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, to share what we knew about the area and discuss ideas for potential solutions.
- Contacts included Panhandle Forest Collaborative; Coeur d'Alene Tribe; county commissioners, agencies, and organizations; state agencies; timber industry; watershed advisory groups; both motorized and nonmotorized recreation groups, and others.
- Tools included news releases, social media, an online Story Map, and a project webpage.



## ► Field Trips

- Multiple field trips were conducted in the area in July 2017, June 2019, and September 2019.
- Field trips varied by interest, but generally included stops at 7 observation points in the project area.
- Discussion topics included forest health and fire/fuels issues, trail issues, sustainable recreation, Canfield Mountain trail system, unmanaged recreation, and Hayden Creek shooting range, among others.



## ► Public Meetings

- Three “open house” public meetings were conducted in August 2019, in Athol, Hayden, and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with a total of over 80 attendees.
- Maps and photos helped describe current conditions in the project area. Additional materials described project objectives and its' timeline.
- Forest Service leadership and resource specialists were available to answer questions and discuss issues in the area.

For more information, refer to the [Pre-Scoping Overview](#)



A group of approximately ten people are gathered in a forest clearing. They are dressed in casual outdoor attire like t-shirts, plaid shirts, and hats. A white GMC pickup truck is parked on the right side of the frame. A dog is visible in the foreground near the truck. The background shows a dense forest of evergreen trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A vertical pinkish-red rectangular graphic is located in the top right corner of the image.

# Forest Health

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

# Forest Health



**An objective of this project is to establish and maintain resilient forest stand structure and species composition.**



**The Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan provides goals, desired conditions, and objectives for resilient vegetation communities on the landscape.**



**Insects and root diseases are a significant factor affecting current forest health and increasing tree mortality over time in the absence of management.**



**Conversion to more root disease-tolerant and resilient species (pine trees and western larch) would result in healthier forests.**

# Forest Health

***Objective: Establish and maintain resilient forest stand structure and species composition***

- ▶ Forest composition and structure throughout the Honey Badger project area are not within the desired range described throughout the Forest Plan.
- ▶ The change in composition and structure in the project area is a result of a combination of root disease, blister rust and historic selective harvest and other environmental factors. The widespread shift has reduced the diversity of the overstory and made the landscape less resistant to insects, diseases, drought and fire.



# Honey Badger Project Forest Health Report

The [Forest Health Evaluation Report](#) was completed in 2018 by the Forest Health Protection Coeur d'Alene Field Office:

- Root diseases are widespread across the project area, and root disease hazard ratings for the project area indicate the likelihood that root diseases exist on a site and are causing a significant impact.
- Approximately 8 percent (over 4,000 acres) were designated as high root disease hazard.
- Nearly 81 percent (over 40,200 acres) are designated as moderate root disease hazard with the potential for root disease to be an agent of change within the project area.
- Insect concerns include the fir engraver, Douglas-fir beetle, and mountain pine beetle infestations, which could further degrade current vegetation conditions if active management is not applied.

# Honey Badger Project Forest Health Report

- Stands are largely grand fir, Douglas-fir and western hemlock, which are highly susceptible to root disease.
- Root disease-tolerant species such as western larch, western white pine and ponderosa pine are no longer abundant in the project area.
- Areas already declining from root disease will continue to be the most prone to continued opening of the stand through a combination of root disease and wind-throw.



# Proposed Vegetation Treatments

- ▶ Vegetation treatments are proposed to help move forested ecosystems within the project area toward the desired conditions of improved health and increased resiliency to disturbances such as fire, insects, diseases, and drought.
- ▶ Approximately 12,000 acres of commercial timber harvest would occur, nearly all (98%) of which is even-aged silviculture systems, including clearcut, seed tree and shelterwood. Approximately 2% would be commercially thinned.
- ▶ Even-age systems are appropriate because the extent and severity of root disease, insect and storm damage precludes successful application of other options.
- ▶ Depending upon feasibility and actual site conditions, logging systems could include skyline cable yarding, skyline swing with tractor, and log forwarder, with a small amount of helicopter yarding possible.
- ▶ Varying amounts of snags and live green tree would be retained in all units, leaving healthy larch, western white pine, and ponderosa as seed trees.

For more information, refer to the [Proposed Action Map](#)





## Proposed vegetation treatments also include:

- ▶ Site preparation and prescribed burning, followed by tree planting of root-disease resistant species, including western larch, western white pine, ponderosa pine, and lodgepole pine (where appropriate) to mitigate future stand decline due to root diseases and insects.
- ▶ There is no proposed harvest in old growth forest; prescribed burning may occur in old-growth stands on dry sites, which would help increase the resistance and resiliency of the treated stands. Prescribed burning would not likely modify stand characteristics to the extent that the stand no longer meets the definition of old growth; however, root diseases are causing many stands to decline to the point that they will eventually no longer meet the definition of old growth.

# Over 40 acre Openings

- ▶ Forest Service policy normally limits the size of harvest openings to 40 acres or less in size; exceptions are allowed with Regional Forester approval. A request to exceed the size limit in the project area will be made in accordance with Forest Service policy.
- ▶ There are 91 harvest units proposed; 62 of these are expected to result in openings larger than 40 acres in size. Most would be under 300 acres in size, but several would be larger, with the largest opening being nearly 1,200 acres in size.
- ▶ Western larch, western white pine and ponderosa pine all require disturbances to create large openings that are full of sun and clear away shrubs and trees that compete with their seedlings. Activities which maintain and increase the presence of these species will increase the diversity of conifers in the project area, improve the health of the forest ecosystem and increase resiliency to disturbances such as fire, insects, diseases and drought.

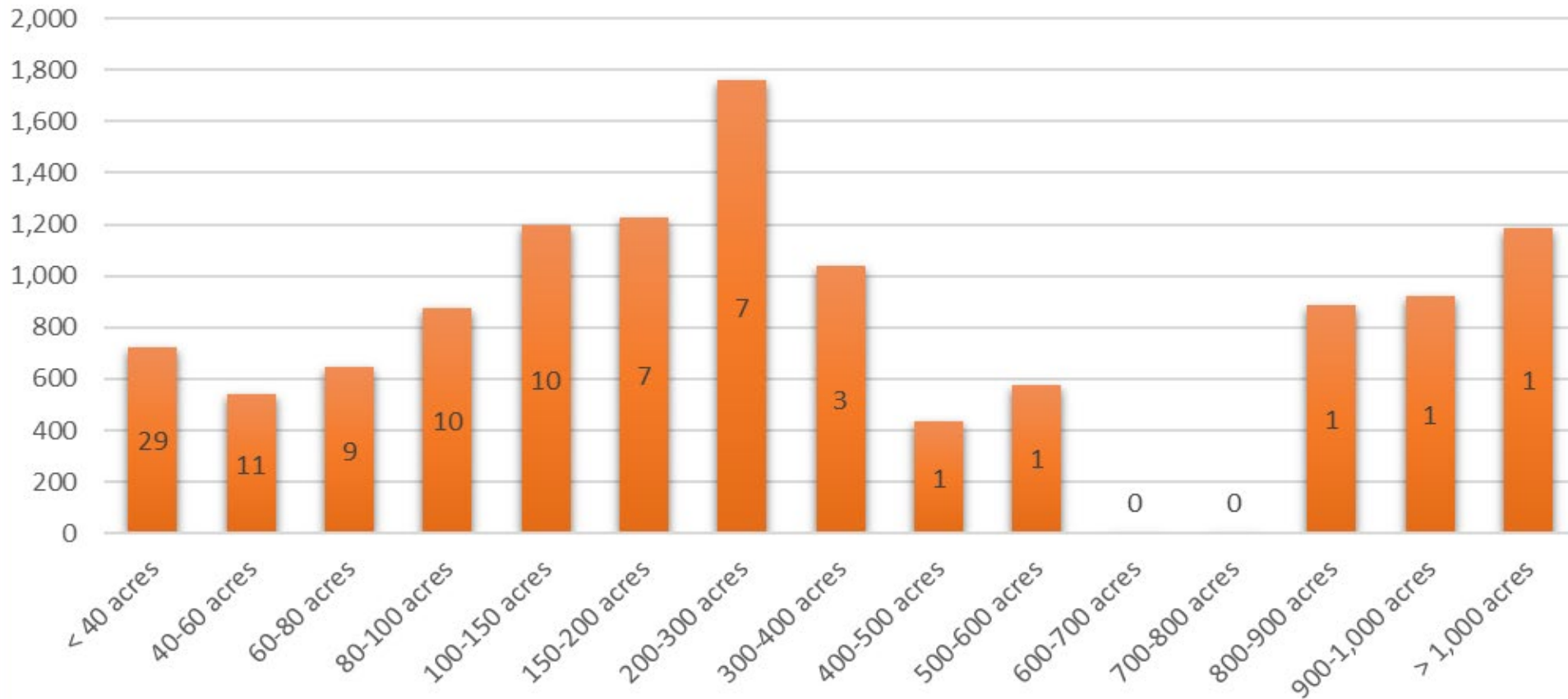
For more information, refer to the [Over-40 Acre Openings Map](#)





# Proposed Openings

Total Acres and Number of Openings by Opening Size



A photograph of a forest fire. In the foreground, a large, dark tree trunk stands on the left. The ground is covered in dry, charred brush and branches, with bright orange and yellow flames rising from the undergrowth. In the background, more trees are visible, some with smoke rising from them. On the right side, a red fire sign is mounted on a wooden post. The overall scene is dark and smoky, with the fire providing the primary light source.

# Fire and Fuels

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

# Fire and Fuels

**Objective: Reduce the potential for high intensity wildfire while promoting desirable fire behavior characteristics and fuel conditions.**

- ▶ Fire suppression in the absence of prescribed fire has caused an increase in the amount and continuity of the living and dead material that fuels fires.
- ▶ The continued loss of species such as ponderosa pine and western larch has led to forests that are less resilient to fire, with an increased probability of crown fires.
- ▶ These fires would likely be more expensive and more difficult (and dangerous) to suppress.
- ▶ Approximately 86% (45,500 acres) of the project area is within the WUI, with significant infrastructure that would be at risk.



# Values at Risk

- ▶ Values at risk in the project area include homes, a powerline, utilities, electronic communication sites, and popular recreation sites.



# Proposed Fuels Activities

- ▶ Approximately 12,000 acres of proposed harvest treatments followed by prescribed burning would reduce ladder fuels.
- ▶ Approximately 4,000 additional acres of prescribed landscape burning is proposed on dry sites where harvest is not feasible.
- ▶ Coordination and communication with local resources will provide air quality education and alerts to communities for potential smoke impacts.

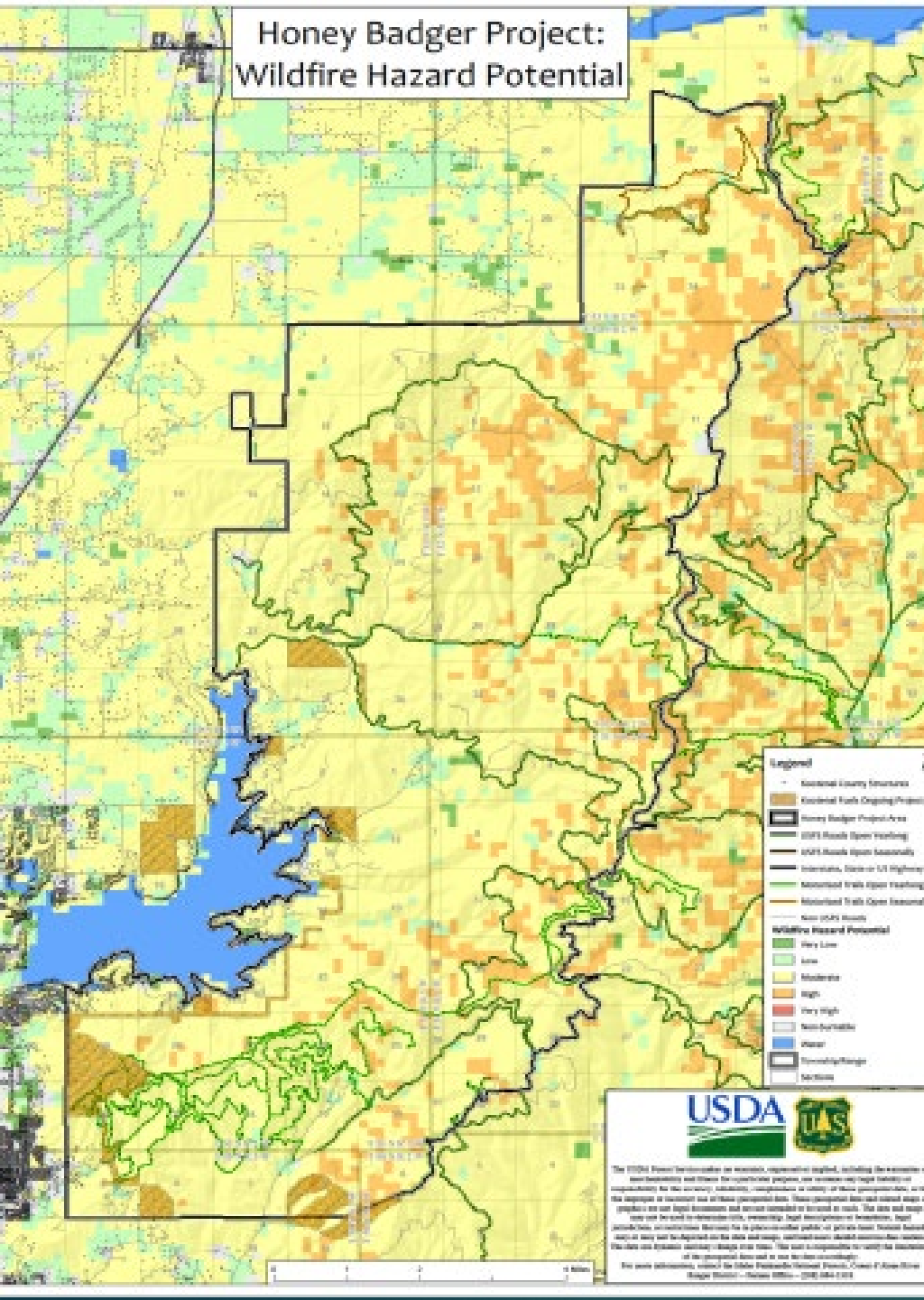
*Poor forest health conditions have led to an accumulation of dead material leading to an increased risk for catastrophic wildfire.*



# Desired Outcomes

- The proposed prescribed burning and timber harvesting would help to reduce flame lengths and lower fire intensity, resulting in the type of fire behavior that can be more easily controlled or suppressed, with safer conditions for firefighters and the public.
- Prescribed burning (in both harvested and unharvested areas) would help meet the Forest Plan desired condition to return fire to the landscape, maintain or enhance forest resilience, and help manage wildlife habitat; complementing work that has already been approved and is occurring under the Deerfoot and Kootenai Fuels Reduction projects.

## Honey Badger Project: Wildfire Hazard Potential

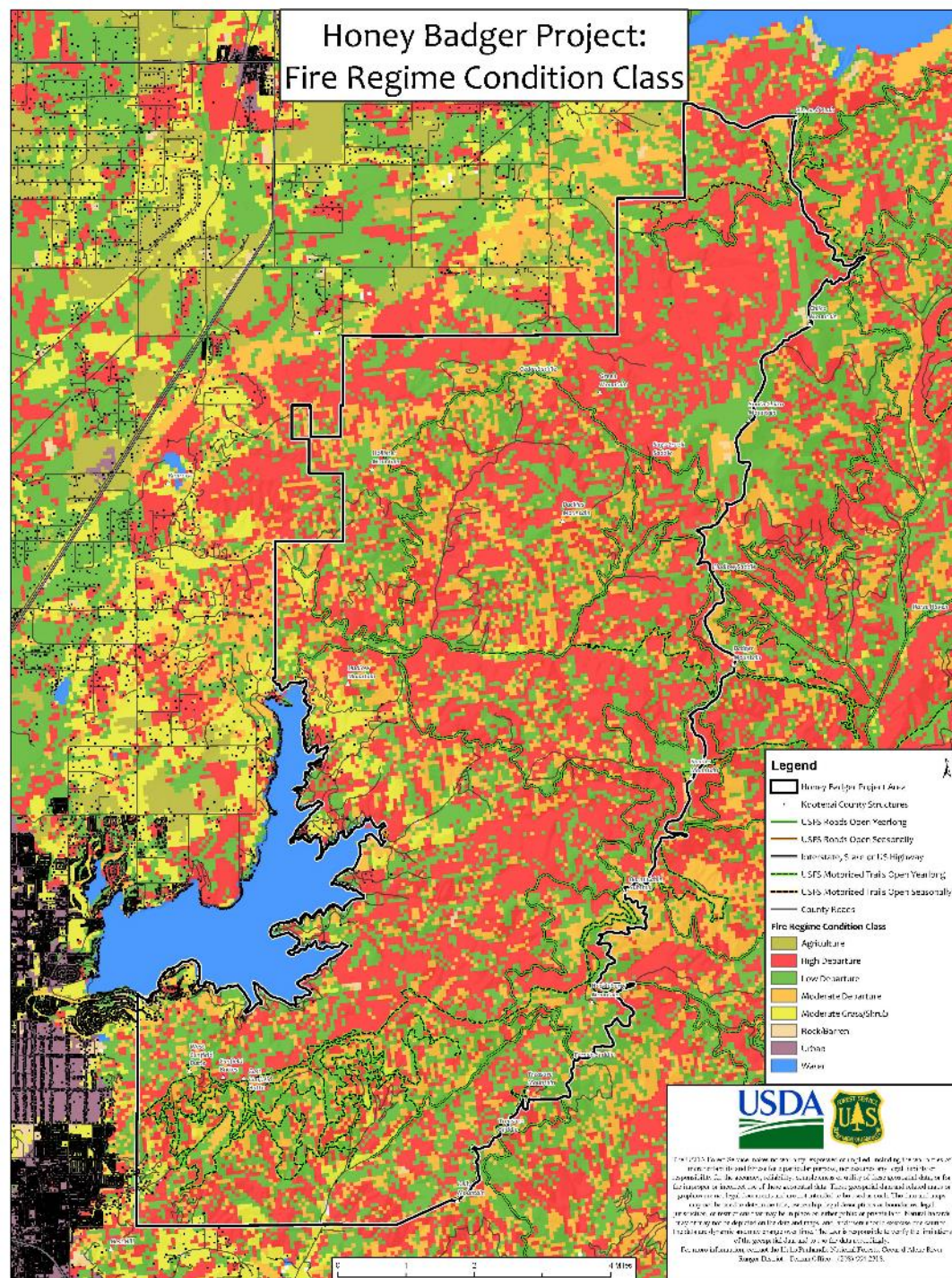


# Wildfire Potential

- ▶ Depicts the relative potential for wildfire that would be difficult for suppression resources to contain.
- ▶ Areas mapped with higher values represent fuels with a higher probability of experiencing torching, crowning, and other forms of extreme fire behavior under conducive weather conditions, based primarily on landscape conditions at the end of 2012.

<https://www.firelab.org/project/wildfire-hazard-potential>

# Honey Badger Project: Fire Regime Condition Class



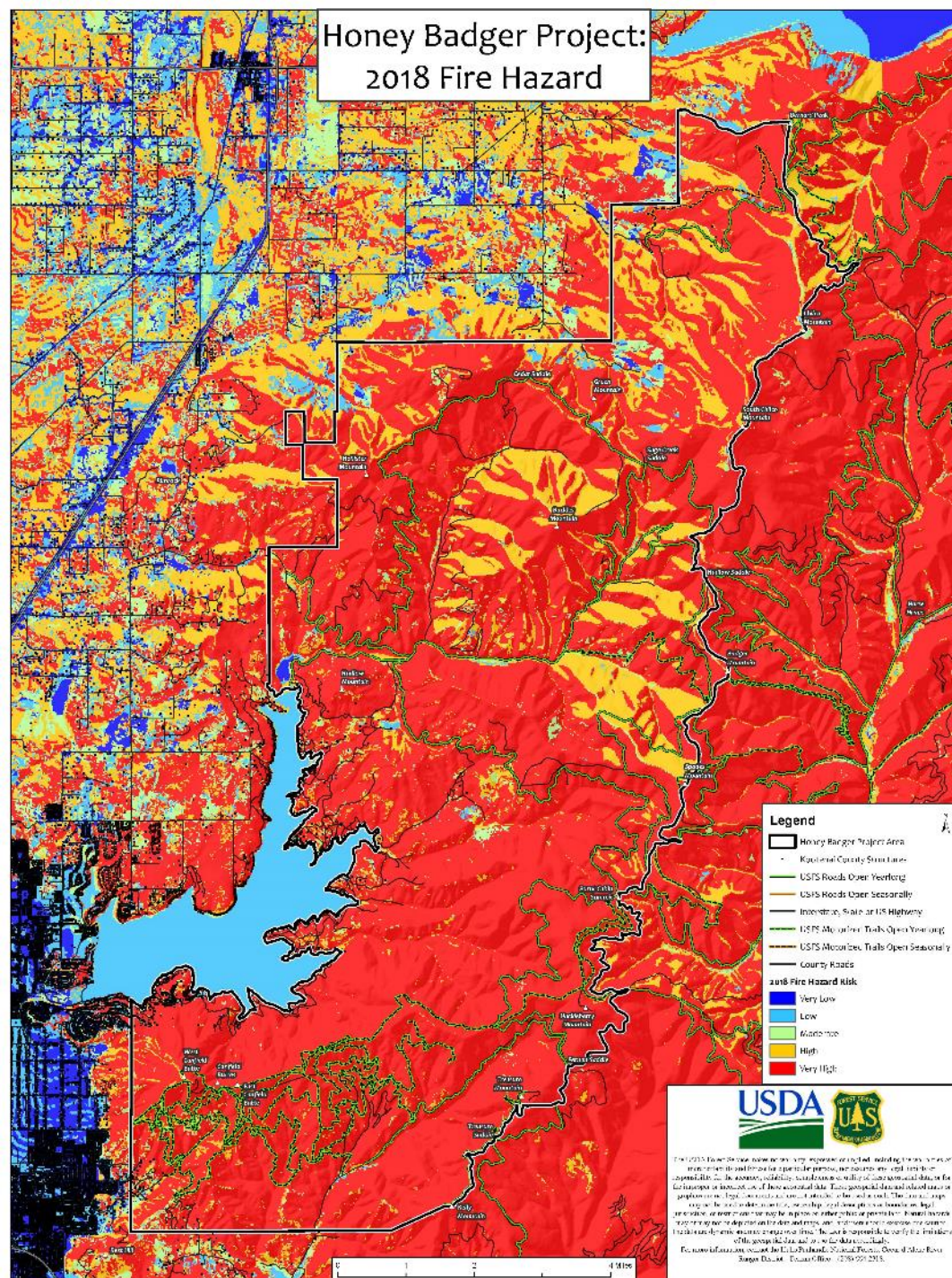
## Fire Regime Condition Class

Fire regime condition class (FRCC) is an interagency, standardized tool for determining the degree of ecological departure from historical (or reference) vegetation, fuels, and disturbance regimes.

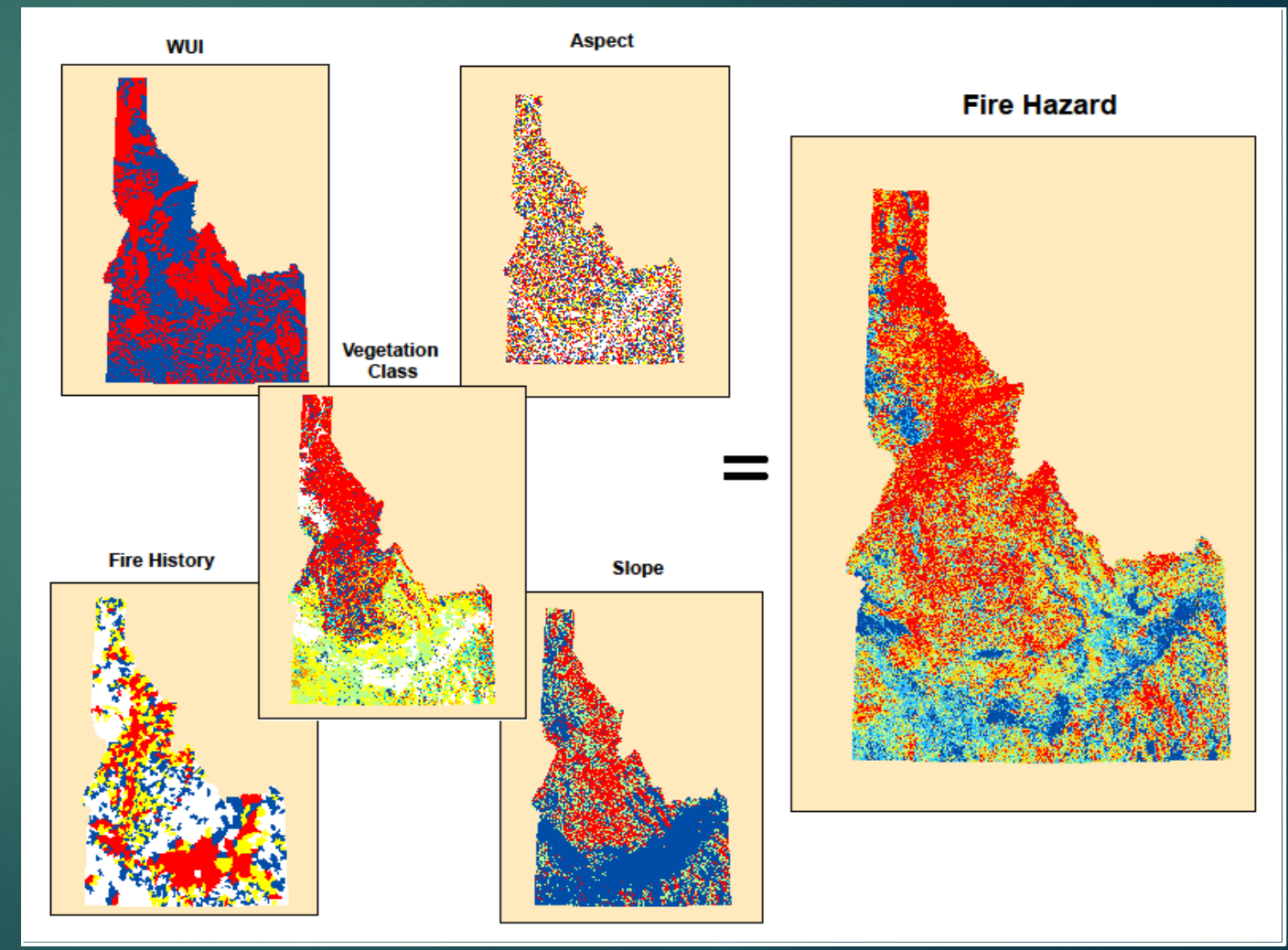
- **Low Departure** = Ecosystem Maintenance: Low risk of losing key ecosystem components after fire
- **Moderate Departure** = Ecosystem Alteration: Moderate risk of losing key ecosystem components after fire
- **High Departure** = Ecosystem Degradation: High risk of losing key ecosystem components to stand-replacing wildfire



# Honey Badger Project: 2018 Fire Hazard



# Fire Hazard



# Fuel Mitigation Methods



Commercial  
timber harvest



Prescribed  
burning



Machine and  
Hand Piling



Mastication/chip  
ping

How it works:

- ✓ Reduce Canopy Density
- ✓ Increase Canopy Base Height (reduce ladder fuels)
- ✓ Reduction in surface fuel loading and continuity
- ✓ Restores fire adapted ecosystem

Results are lower predicted flame lengths and lower intensities resulting in safer and more easily managed wildfire.

Machine  
Piling



A stand 5 years following  
harvest and prescribed fire



Prescribed  
Fire





# Prescribed Burning



Landscape Burning



Post-burn Condition



Untreated Fuels

Fuels Treated

A photograph of a forest path with a red flag in the top right corner. The path is dirt and leads through dense green foliage and tall trees. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Recreation

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

# Recreation

## Objective: Develop, restore and maintain recreation trails

- ▶ Outdoor recreation is the fastest growing use within National Forest System Lands.
- ▶ Given the amount of population growth and development in northern Idaho/greater Spokane area and predicted future growth, demand for recreational opportunities will continue to rise.
- ▶ 2019 IPNF [Sustainable Recreation Strategy](#) provides direction and guidance in delivering a sustainable recreation program.
- ▶ Sustainable trails must be carefully located and designed to accommodate existing and future uses while only allowing appropriate uses and recreation experiences.





# Trails

- ▶ The highly visited 1,835-acre Canfield Mountain Recreation Area has many trails in poor conditions and are in need of minor to major rerouting, rehabilitation, or heavy maintenance.
- ▶ The IPNF collaborated with the Trails Working Group and others on opportunities for developing loop trails and expanding recreation and decommissioning those unauthorized trails that are causing resource degradation.
- ▶ An [overview](#) and maps of the proposed changes to the trail system in the Canfield Mountain Recreation Area and the entire [Honey Badger project area](#) can be found on the project website.
- ▶ Proposed actions would help achieve forestwide desired conditions for sustainable access and recreation.



# Proposed Activities for the Canfield Trail System



**RENAME, REPLACE  
AND UPDATE SIGNS IN  
THE CANFIELD TRAIL  
SYSTEM**



**PARKING LOT  
IMPROVEMENTS AND  
CONSTRUCT A NEW  
PARKING AREA NEAR  
JUNGLBERRY TO  
EXPAND TRAIL  
ACCESS**



**IMPROVE ACCESS  
FOR EMERGENCY  
SERVICES TO THE  
CANFIELD TRAIL  
SYSTEM**



**REALIGN POPULAR  
TRAILS FOR FUTURE  
SUSTAINABLE USE  
AND ENHANCE TRAIL  
EXPERIENCE**



**CONSTRUCT NEW  
TRAILS, LOOP TRAILS,  
TRAIL REROUTES, AND  
OBLITERATE  
RESOURCES  
DAMAGING TRAILS,  
TO IMPROVE TRAIL  
CONDITION AND  
USER SAFETY.**



**INCREASE NON-  
MOTORIZED AND LESS  
THAN 50" TRAILS TO  
DEVELOP AND  
DISPERSE TRAIL USERS**



**PARTNER WITH USER  
GROUPS TO HELP  
FUND, CONSTRUCT  
AND MAINTAIN THESE  
PROPOSED TRAILS IN  
THE CANFIELD TRAIL  
SYSTEM**



# Water Resources

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

# Water Resources

**Objective: Maintain or improve water quality, and aquatic species habitat**

- ▶ Unmanaged recreation and the existing road network in the project area, specifically in the Hayden Creek watershed are contributing factors to watershed health conditions.
- ▶ Restoration activities would reduce sedimentation, diversify streamflow and channel morphology, and accommodate flood flow in the riparian areas, ultimately resulting in improved aquatic habitat and more resilient systems.



# Proposed Water Resource Activities

- ▶ Barriers to aquatic organism passage (AOP) have been identified at multiple stream crossings (culverts) in the Honey Badger project area. Those culverts on open motor vehicle travel routes would be replaced with AOP culverts. AOP barriers located on stored or decommissioned roads would be proposed for removal by excavating the stream crossing and reconstructing the channel.
- ▶ Many of the roads and trail in the project area are in need of maintenance or require surface work and drainage improvements to reduce or prevent sediment from entering streams.
- ▶ Management of unauthorized or pioneered routes is an ongoing effort under the Travel Management Plan for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District.

# Road Systems

The project team used a Travel Analysis Process (TAPs) to determine which roads pose a risk to resources and are not needed for long-term forest management, and where additional routes may be needed for long-term management.

- ▶ Some roads will be proposed for decommissioning to help reduce impacts to water quality and reduce maintenance costs.
- ▶ Other roads identified for long-term forest management, but not having any foreseeable use anticipated in the next 20 years, will be proposed for storage.
- ▶ Other activities will be proposed to stabilize and decommission illegal user-created motorized routes.



# Proposed Road Activities

- ▶ Proposed road construction to support project activities and provide long-term administrative access to the area for forest management and fire suppression
  - ▶ Approximately 35 miles of permanent road construction
  - ▶ Approximately 20 miles of temporary road construction
  - ▶ Construction would occur on existing road prisms where feasible
- ▶ Proposed decommissioning and storage
  - ▶ Approximately 50-80 miles of road decommissioning (physical removal)
  - ▶ None of the roads proposed for decommission/long term storage are currently available for public motorized use
  - ▶ Roads identified as needed for long-term management (but not having any foreseeable use anticipated in the next 20 years) are proposed for storage
- ▶ Mileages are based on current proposed activities, and may change as a result of the analysis findings



# SCENERY

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES



# Scenic Resources

- ▶ The Forest Plan describes how scenic resources complement the recreation settings and experiences while reflecting health and sustainable ecosystem conditions.
- ▶ The Forest Plan provides guidance to design the location, size, shape and visibility of harvest units and road work, striving for consistency with mapped scenic integrity objectives (which serve as the desired conditions for the scenic resources).
- ▶ For additional information, refer to [Scenic Viewpoints](#) on the Honey Badger project webpage.



# Project Design

- ▶ Forest Plan guidance (standards, guidelines) and contract provisions (clauses) will be used to design activities to ensure protection of cultural resources, rare plants, wildlife, fisheries habitat, and other resources.
- ▶ Additional design features will be identified based on site-specific conditions.
- ▶ Design features are applied on the ground through physical design as instructed in silvicultural prescriptions, marking guides, and cruise plans.

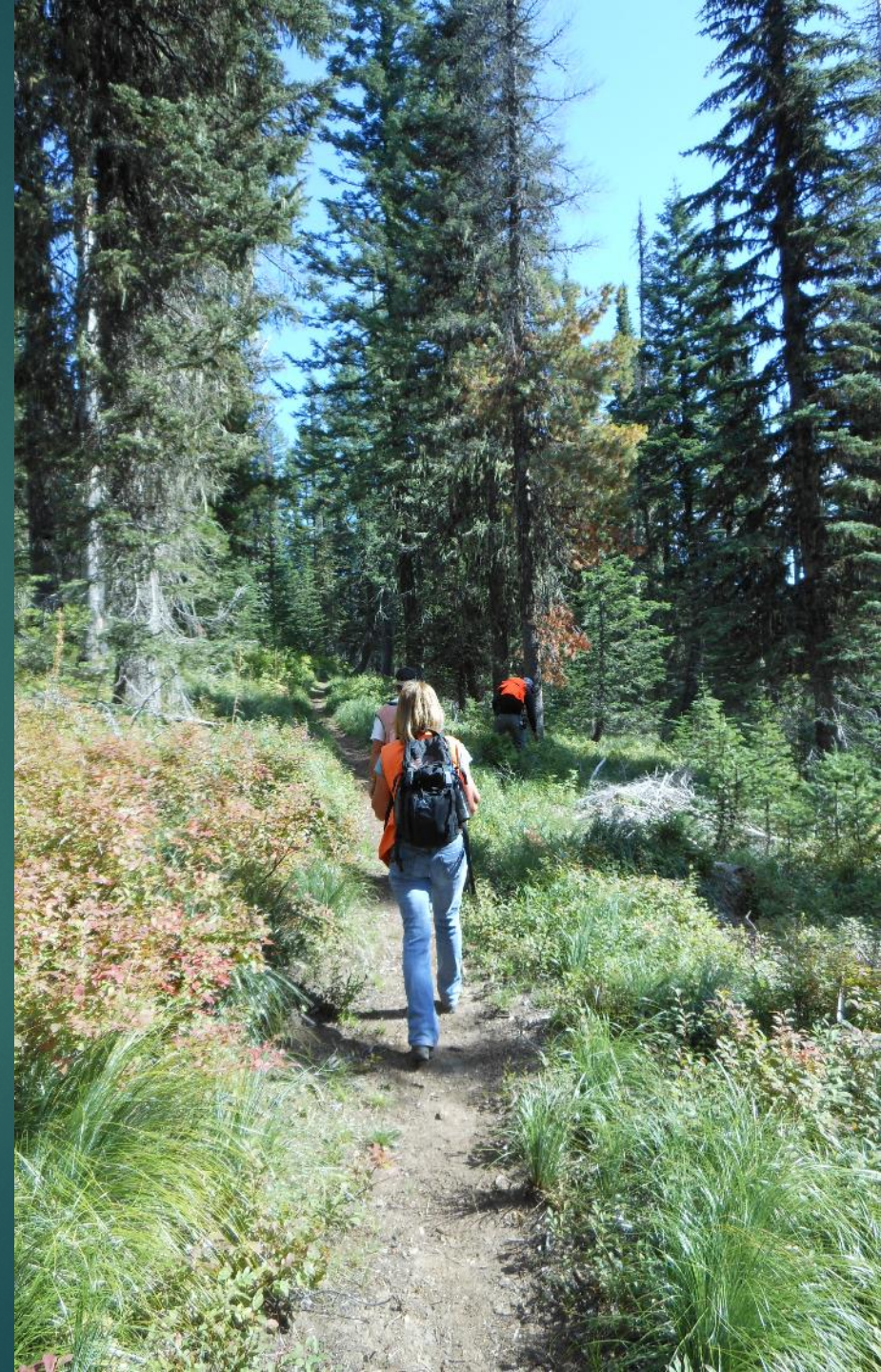
# Project Timeline

(as of March 2020)

Timing	Objectives
March 2020	Present the preliminary proposed action for public review and comment (scoping).
March-May 2020	Analyze effects of implementing proposed activities
May-June 2020	Present analysis findings in an environmental assessment (EA) for public review and formal comment.
July-August 2020	Release a draft decision notice subject to an administrative review (objection) process
November 2020	Release of a final decision notice

# Help Us Design and Refine the Project

- ▶ Your comments specific to the project are valuable in helping identify issues and concerns, refining the proposed action, developing alternatives to the proposed action, and refining the environmental analyses.
- ▶ Comments that are factual in nature and solution based are the most helpful in this process. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider (36 CFR 218.2).
- ▶ Written comments can be mailed to Honey Badger Project, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, 2502 East Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814. Electronic comments can be submitted by email on the Honey Badger project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56220>.
- ▶ We can best use your comments in refining the proposal if they are received by April 30, 2020.



# Additional Project Information

## Contact Information:

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[Honey Badger Project Website](#)

[Honey Badger Story Map](#)

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