HONEY BADGER PROJECT

Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

February 2020

Overview

The Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District is in the initial stages of developing the Honey Badger Project, aptly named from local landmarks of Honey and Badger Mountains within the project area boundary.

Although the project area encompasses approximately 52,600-acres, activities are currently being considered only within the 42,000 acres of National Forest System lands. The project is located within Kootenai County. Approximately 85% (45,500 acres) of the project area is within the wildland urban interface (WUI). The project area also encompasses the Canfield Mountain Trail System, which is designated a Primary Recreation Area.

Project Vision

Intent of the project is to improve ecological and social conditions to meet desired conditions described in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land Management Plan, including but not limited to improving forest health, reducing high-intensity wildfire risk, maintaining/improving water quality and aquatic species habitat, and providing sustainable recreational opportunities.

Timing	Objectives
Spring-Fall 2019	Refine location/design of activities through data collection and pre-scoping recommendations by interested stakeholders. This is not a formal comment period—the intent is to share existing condition information, to hear ideas for improving conditions, and wherever possible to incorporate those ideas into the proposed action as it is developed.
March 2020	Present the preliminary proposed action for public review through a formal comment period.
Winter-Spring 2020	Analyze effects of implementing proposed activities.
Spring 2020	Present analysis findings in an environmental assessment (EA) through a formal comment period.
Summer 2020	Release of a draft decision notice subject to an administrative review (objection) process
Fall 2020	Release of a final decision notice

Land Ownership
(acres)

National Forest	**42,000**
Private lands	**10,000**
Industrial timber	**600**
BLM	**20**
State of Idaho	**1**
TOTAL	**52,600**

All acreage figures are approximate.

Contact Information

Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
2502 E. Sherman Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
Phone: 208-664-2318

Office Hours: 7:30 am - 4:00 pm
Monday-Friday

For more information

https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ipnf/home

Honey Badger Story Map Link
(using the QR Reader on your smart phone)

A map of the project is provided on the back of this handout.

Why Here, Why Now?

There is a need to establish and maintain resilient forest stand structure and species composition.

Throughout the Honey Badger project area, a combination of root disease, blister rust and historic selective harvest and other environmental factors has reduced the diversity of the overstory and made the landscape less resistant to insects, diseases, drought, and fire.

A combination of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial vegetation treatments will be proposed to help move forested ecosystems within the area toward improved health and increased resiliency to disturbances such as fire, insects, diseases, and drought.

There is a need to reduce the potential for high-intensity wildfire while promoting desirable fire behavior characteristics and fuel conditions.

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 that would likely be more expensive and more difficult (and dangerous) to suppress. Approximately 86% of the project area is within the wildland urban interface, with significant infrastructure that would be at risk, including homes, a powerline, and electronic communication sites.

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 also help return fire to the landscape, maintain or enhance forest resilience, and manage wildlife habitat.

There is a need to develop, restore and maintain recreation trails.

Outdoor recreation is the fastest growing use within the national forests and grasslands. Some trail segments and recreational resources in the project area were not designed for the types and amount of uses occurring, and cannot sustain such uses.

A variety of trail work will be proposed to improve long-term sustainability of trails, including rerouting, rehabilitation, development of loop trails, and decommissioning of unauthorized trails that are causing degradation of natural resources.

There is a need to maintain or improve hydrologic connectivity, water quality, and aquatic species habitat.

Unmanaged recreation and the existing road network in the Hayden Creek watershed are contributing factors to watershed health conditions that do not meet goals and desired conditions in the Forest Plan.

The Travel Analysis Process is being used to determine which roads pose a risk to resources. Some roads not needed for long-term management will be proposed for decommissioning to help reduce impacts to water quality and reduce maintenance costs. Roads identified as needed for long-term 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.

Where feasible, culverts on open travel routes that pose a barrier to aquatic organism passage (AOP) would be replaced with culverts that allow passage. AOP barriers located on stored or decommissioned roads would be proposed for removal by excavating the stream crossing and reconstructing the channel. Restoration activities will likely be proposed in several stream segments in the project area, and could include adding large wood (trees) to the stream and across the floodplain, bank stabilization, riparian planting, and the construction of meander lengths. These treatments help to reduce sedimentation, diversify streamflow and channel morphology, and accommodate flood flow in the riparian area, ultimately resulting in improved aquatic habitat and more resilient systems.

Public Involvement During Project Development

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

Interested members of the public were contacted through news releases, emails, telephone calls, and social media. Project team members attended the meetings of a variety of organizations for the purpose of introducing or providing an update on the Honey Badger project area and proposal.

On August 27-29, 2019, open-house meetings were held in Athol, Hayden, and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to share information and answer questions about the Honey Badger project. A total of approximately 80 people attended the three meetings. District Ranger Dan Scaife, Deputy Forest Supervisor Kim Pierson, and several members of the project team were available to share information and answer questions about forest health, fire and fuels, recreation, scenery, wildlife, hydrology and fisheries, and the project process and timeline. Displays of maps, photos, and other information helped describe current conditions in the project area.

The overwhelming majority of discussions were very positive. Many people said they understood the need to improve forest health through vegetation management, as well as the need for fuel reduction and protection from catastrophic wildfire. One individual was supportive of the need for prescribed burning, but had strong concerns with impacts of smoke in the Hayden Lake basin, stating logging residue should be chipped rather than burned.

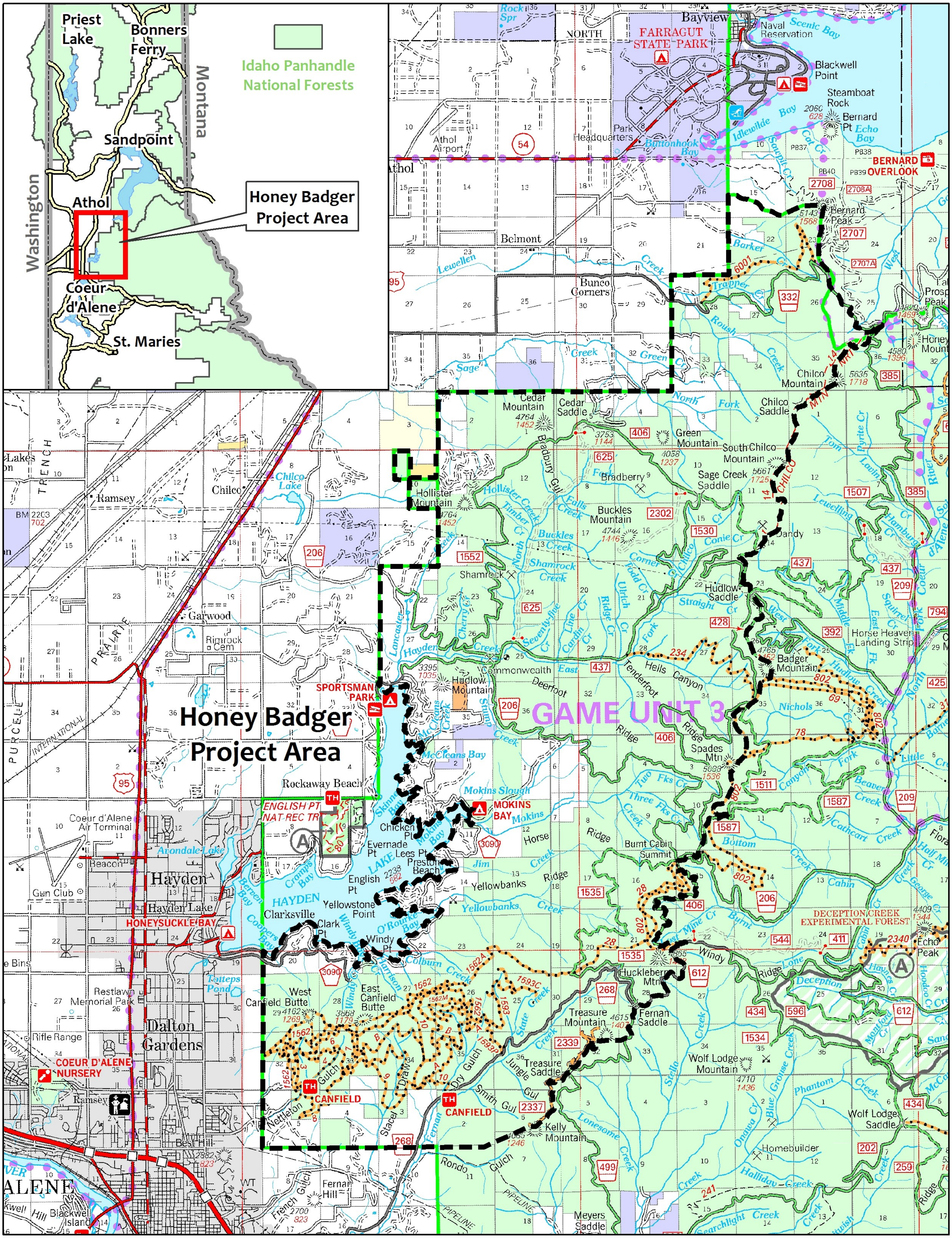
The predominant topic of interest was related to recreation, including management and maintenance of existing trails, potential new trail opportunities, and user conflicts. Some were concerned with water quality in the watershed, including effects of recreation/trail use and shooting along Hayden Creek Road.

In regard to potential effects to scenery, some people supported the need for forest management and felt that activities could be designed to reduce effects to scenery. Some were concerned with the appearance of harvested areas adjacent to private lands. It was also suggested that harvest could help open some viewpoints from trails in the area. There were few questions about wildlife habitat in the area, and those were primarily related to the effect on public motorized access.

Open communication will continue throughout the process, with formal opportunities to comment during scoping, review of the environmental assessment, and the administrative review (objection) period.

Through events such as briefings, field trips, and open house meetings, the project team has initiated open and ongoing communication with interested individuals and many local and regional organizations, such as:

- Panhandle Forest Collaborative
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Trails Working Group
- Panhandle Backcountry Horseman
- Panhandle Trail Riders Association
- Hayden Lake Watershed Association
- Hayden Lake Watershed Improvement District
- American Forest Resource Council
- National Forest Foundation
- The Lands Council
- Four County (4-C) Natural Resource Committee
- Kootenai County Board of Commissioners
- Kootenai County Natural Resource Advisory Board
- Kootenai County Office of Emergency Management
- Avista
- Stimson Lumber
- Vaagen Bros. Lumber
- Boise Cascade
- Office of Congressman Fulcher
- Officer of Senator Crapo
- Office of Senator Risch


Priest Lake
Bonners Ferry
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Montana
Sandpoint
Washington
Athol
Honey Badger Project Area
Coeur d'Alene
St. Maries
Bayview
FARRAGUT STATE PARK
Naval Reservation
Scenic Bay
Blackwell Point
Steamboat Rock
Bernard Pt
Echo Bay
Idlewilde Bay
Buttonhook Bay
Park Headquarters
Athol Airport
BERNARD OVERLOOK
Bernard Peak
Belmont
Bunco Corners
Chilco Mountain
Cedar Mountain
Cedar Saddle
Green Mountain
South Chilco Mountain
Sage Creek Saddle
Bradberry
Buckles Mountain
Hollister Mountain
Ramsey
Chilco
Chilco Lake
Garwood
Rimrock Cem
Shamrock
Dandy
Hudlow Saddle
Horse Heaven Landing Strip
Badger Mountain
Commonwealth
Hudlow Mountain
SPORTSMAN PARK
Honey Badger Project Area
GAME UNIT 3
Hells Canyon
Spades Mtn
Rockaway Beach
McCleans Bay
Mokins Slough
MOKINS BAY
ENGLISH PT NAT REC TR
Coeur d'Alene Air Terminal
Chicken Pt
Evernade Pt
Lees Pt
Preston Beach
English Pt
Yellowstone Point
HAYDEN LAKE
Hayden
Hayden Lake
HONEYSUCKLE BAY
Clarksville
Clark Pt
Windy Pt
Yellowbanks
Burnt Cabin Summit
DECEPTION CREEK EXPERIMENTAL FOREST
Echo Peak
Huckleberry Mtn
West Canfield Butte
East Canfield Butte
Treasure Mountain
Fernan Saddle
Treasure Saddle
Wolf Lodge Mountain
Restlawn Memorial Park
Dalton Gardens
Rifle Range
COEUR D'ALENE NURSERY
CANFIELD
Kelly Mountain
Wolf Lodge Saddle
Homebuilder
Best Hill
Fernan Hill
Blackwell Island
Meyers Saddle