



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

August 2012

## **Notice of Proposed Action**

### **Clear Addition Fuels Reduction and Aspen Enhancement Project**

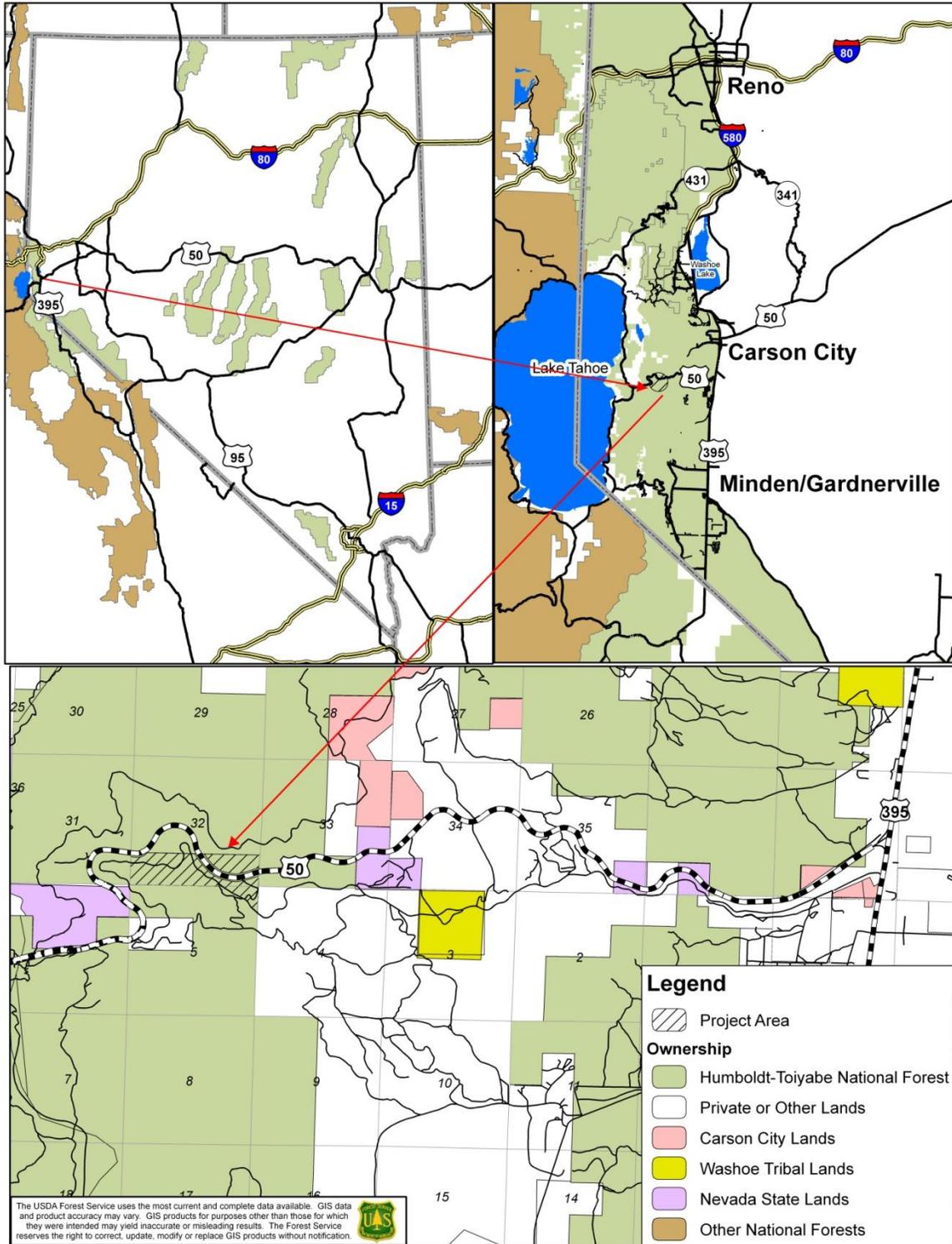
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Carson Ranger District  
Douglas County and Carson City, Nevada

### **Comments Welcome**

The Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is proposing to reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildland fire and improve forest health in the Clear Creek watershed near Carson City, Nevada. Figure 1 is a vicinity map of the project. This project, called the Clear Addition Fuels Reduction and Aspen Enhancement Project, contains approximately 155 acres within the analysis area. The proposed action includes thinning trees and shrubs, enhancing aspen, prescribed burning, road maintenance and road reconstruction. Within the analysis area, activities would occur on approximately 102 acres.

We welcome your comments on this proposal. Written, facsimile, hand delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication in the Reno Gazette Journal. For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the “Comment Process” section of this document.

Figure 1 – Vicinity Map



## **Background**

The project area, approximately 155 acres, is located west of Carson City in the Clear Creek drainage. The area is bisected by US Highway 50 and Forest Service Road 41112 (also called Old Clear Creek Road). Clear Creek flows through the project area. The project area is surrounded by National Forest Land previously analyzed in the Clear Creek Fuels Reduction and Ecosystem Environmental Assessment (EA) completed in December 2008. This parcel was acquired from a private landowner in 2009 subsequent to completion of the Clear Creek EA.

## **Purpose and Need**

The purpose and need for this project includes:

- The need for reduced wildland fire risk to the Clear Creek and Carson City communities and to reduce fuel loading and ladder fuels in forested and shrub areas adjacent to the wildland urban interface West of Carson City. Dense timber and shrub stands, high fuel loadings and excessive ladder fuels have created a high risk of uncharacteristic catastrophic wildland fires.
- Reduce dense vegetation in order to increase vigor, health and growth rates in the forested ecosystem. Competition from high tree densities has reduced stand vigor, thus increasing the possibility that insects, disease, or wildfire would kill the forested stands, including late and older successional trees. Improving the health of the forested ecosystem would reduce the long-term risk of loss and protect this ecosystem component while enhancing productivity.
- Aspen stands are in a declining condition because the encroaching conifer trees shade out and replace the sun-loving aspen regeneration; eventually eradicating the aspen stand completely. Removing encroaching conifers and some older decadent aspen from within the aspen stands would enhance the existing aspen stand, and removal of conifer within a tree and half height from the edge of the stand would allow the stand to expand. This action would restore an ecosystem component that has diminished in size and vigor. This would improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including migratory birds and mule deer.
- Help firefighters control and/or suppress potential wildland fires.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1986), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (USDA 2004) and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in those plans.

## The Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to meet the purpose and need within the Clear Addition Project area by implementing the following activities. This proposal is to treat approximately 102 acres. Some areas would receive multiple treatments, such as thinning and underburning. Figures 2 and 3 are maps indicating the proposed action.

**Brush and Tree Thinning.** On approximately 90 acres brush and small diameter trees would be thinned. Treatment methods would include mastication, hand cutting, piling, chipping, fuelwood removal and/or prescribed fire. Mastication would occur on approximately 24 acres and would be limited to slopes less than 30% and would occur mainly along Old Clear Creek Road. Mastication would not occur on slopes south of Clear Creek.

**Aspen Enhancement.** On approximately 12 acres, aspen stands would be enhanced and expanded through removal of encroaching conifers. Treatment would include removal of most encroaching conifers from within and approximately 100 to 150 feet (1 ½ times the tallest aspen tree) from the edge of the existing stand. Prescribed burning may also be utilized in aspen stands to stimulate regeneration. Prescribed burning would occur after conifer removal but prior to any aspen sprouting response. Commercial fuelwood sales and hand crews would be utilized to remove encroaching conifers.

**Prescribed Fire.** Prescribed fire, both understory and pile burning, would occur on a total of approximately 102 acres. Understory and pile burning would occur on approximately 19 acres to reduce shrub and small diameter tree densities, reduce surface and ladder fuels and treat activity fuels. Pile burning only would occur on approximately 71 acres to treat activity fuels. Understory burning only may also occur on approximately 12 acres to stimulate aspen sprouting.

**Maintenance.** Maintenance would include repeated treatments to remove ladder and surface fuels, remove conifer regeneration in aspen and maintain the treated areas. Maintenance may occur on any areas that received initial treatment and would be based on monitoring results. Maintenance may include brush and small tree mastication, invasive weed treatments, hand cutting and piling, chipping, removal and/or prescribed fire. Maintenance may occur within three years of the initial treatment and would continue, as needed, for at least 20 years.

**Road Maintenance and Road Reconstruction.** Old Clear Creek road through the project area would be repaired, including repair of wash-outs and improved drainage to accommodate runoff from the highway. Road reconstruction on the connector road from US highway 50 south to Old Clear Creek road also would be implemented, including installing culverts, modifying the grade in spots and installing a gate at US highway 50.

Figure 2 – Proposed Action, Map 1 of 2  
Vegetation treatments

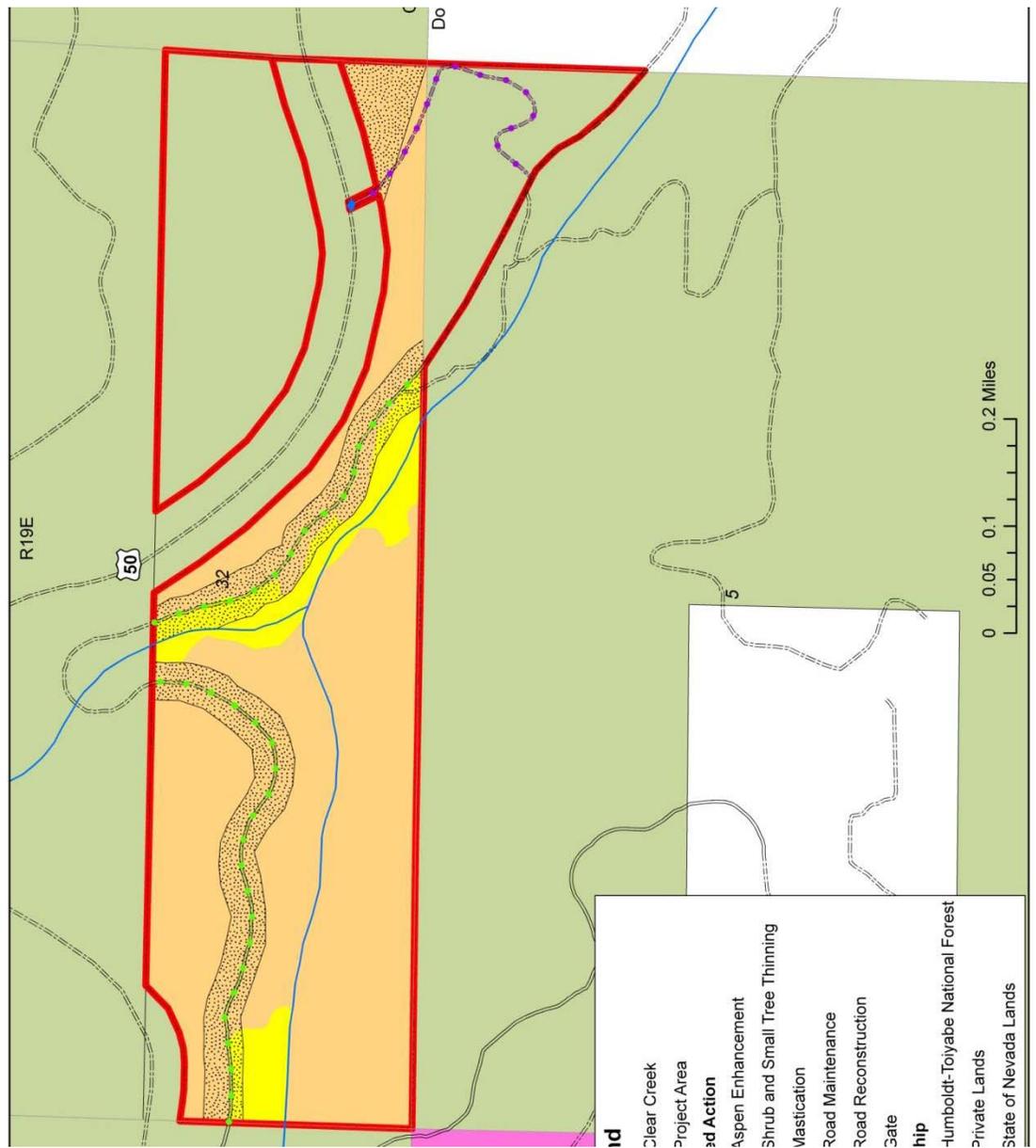
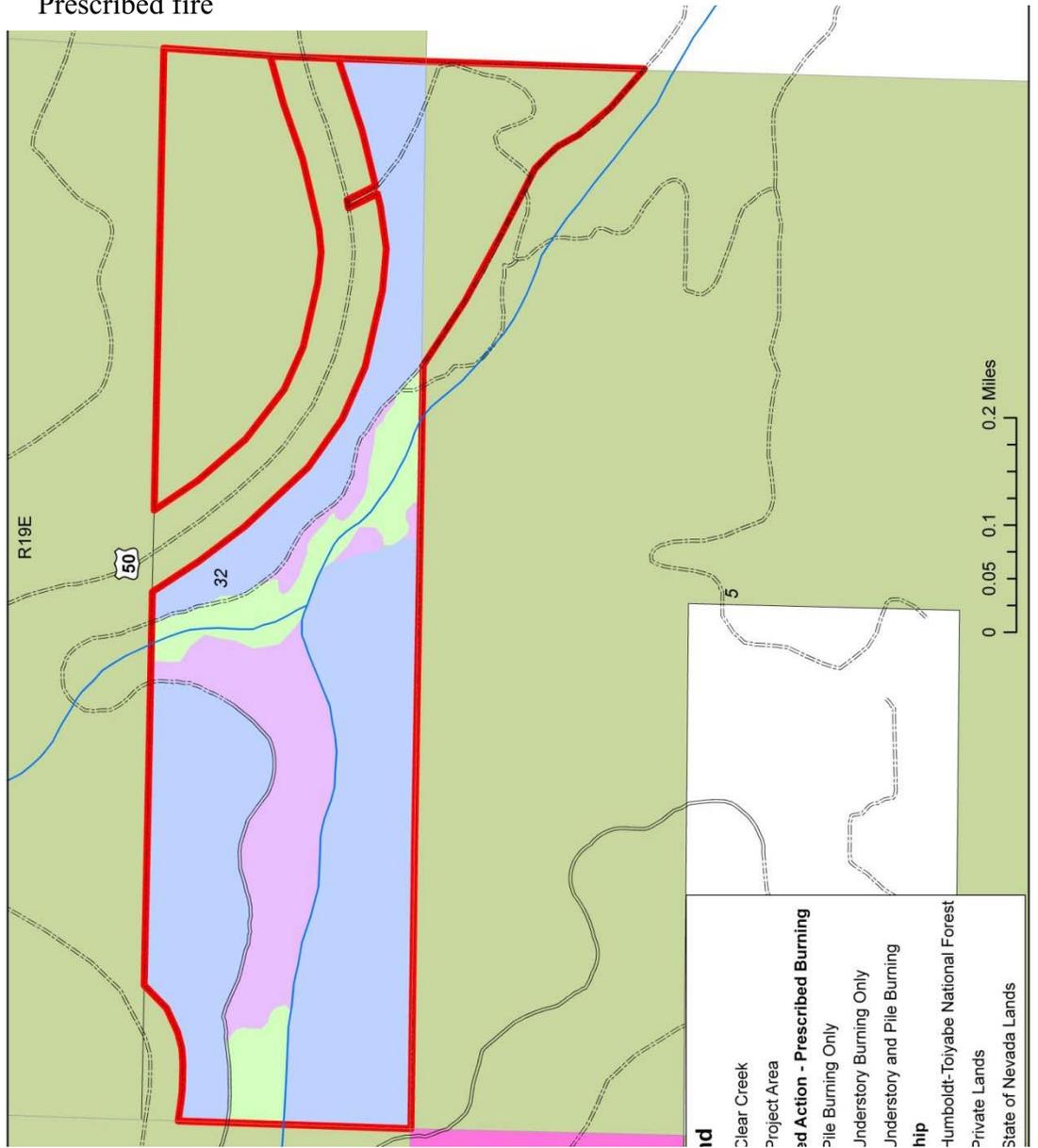


Figure 3 – Proposed Action, Map 2 of 2  
 Prescribed fire



**Design features within the proposed action include:**

- All Federal, State and local regulations pertaining to prescribed burning would be followed. A Region 4 approved burn plan would be completed and followed.
- Archeological sites would be flagged and avoided during project implementation. Trees would be directionally felled away from identified archeological sites, and no slash piles would occur in identified archeological sites.
- Fire lines would be constructed around cultural sites with wooden elements prior to implementation.
- Where available, three of the largest snags per acre would be retained. Large woody debris would be retained, at least 3 pieces per acre, greater than 12" dbh or the largest available.
- In aspen stands, harvest activities would not occur April to July during migratory bird breeding season.
- Rare plant populations would be flagged and avoided.
- Ground based equipment would operate on slopes less than 30%.
- No trees would be removed where they provide stream bank stability and ground based equipment would stay on established stream crossings.
- Pile burning would be minimized in riparian conservation areas and would not occur within aspen stands.
- Contract equipment would be washed and inspected prior to entering National Forest System lands to remove any soil and debris that may harbor noxious weed seeds.
- Known occurrences of noxious weeds would be managed. If road surface material is needed to repair roads, sources would be inspected and determined to be weed free.

**Public Involvement**

This project has been posted on the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in 2012. Further information about this project can be found on our website located at [www.fs.usda.gov/htnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/htnf).

**Comment Process**

The Forest Service encourages your comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Reno Gazette/Journal.

Comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Carson Ranger District, 1536, S. Carson St., Carson City, Nevada 89701 fax 775 884-8199. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to: *comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-carson@fs.fed.us*. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual, comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For further information contact Sally Champion, Project Manager at 775-882-2766.

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