

Northern Red Mountain Forest Health Improvement Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated November 9, 2023

- Q1. What is the height of the shaded fuel break? (6 or 8 feet?).
- A1. The primary constraint on limbing height of shaded fuel breaks is the maximum 40% canopy removal and then the reach of the contractor's cutting equipment. The environmental assessment covers limbing "up to the maximum reach of cutting tools", which could technically be a masticating head, so it's whatever is feasible for the contractor based on their equipment. However, we also understand that a higher limbing height increases costs, so contractors should consider the requirement to be a minimum of 6-feet and a maximum of the reach of their equipment, but in no case shall more than 40% of the canopy be removed from any one tree.
- Q2. Is it required that masticator equipment be tracked if going off established roads (including skid roads)?
- A2. Per the North Red Mountain Forest Health and Fuels Reduction EA# DOI-BLM-CA-N030-2020-0015-EA Document:
- For archeologically sensitive areas (see maps), equipment such as masticators should have rubber tracks (rather than metal) to reduce ground disturbance wherever feasible.
 - For all other cases, both metal tracked and wheeled masticators are acceptable. The biggest concern is soil disturbance and compaction when using large equipment off established roads, so using low PSI tires is important; however, chains may be needed to get sufficient traction.
- Q3. Is it ok to masticate the areas off the road?
- A3. Yes, as per the environmental assessment "Heavy equipment, including feller-bunchers, masticators, and tracked chippers, will be used where slope and soil conditions permit, generally slopes <35-45% depending on equipment."
- Q4. Can manual piling occur in water course areas?
- A4. Piles cannot be located within 50-feet of ephemeral and intermittent streams, and within 100-feet of perennial streams.
- Contractors are referred to the North Red Mountain Forest Health Fuels Reduction Final Environmental Assessment document APPENDIX B – Project Design Features for more information on working within water course areas.
- Q5. What is the DBH snag retention rate?
- A5. Because the job site is considered NSO habitat, all snags > 20" DBH should be retained in unsurveyed areas (unless approved by a wildlife biologist). In general, a snag retention rate of 5 trees per acre is a good target.
- Q6. Can contractors masticate archeological sites?
- A6. As of now, all sensitive resource sites must be completely avoided (see updated maps for these locations) – no equipment use, hand treatment or piling is allowed. In the future, a decision may be made to allow for hand work in some of these areas if a monitor is present, but this is still under discussion.

- Q7. Can 6" DBH down logs be left on ground? Do they need to have full contact with the ground to be left?
- A7. Material > 6" can be left on the ground and should have as much contact with the soil as possible given the site's conditions.
- Q8. Is lop and scatter allowed?
- A8. Yes, however:
- Mastication, hand thinning and chipping is required in all accessible areas and will be enforced as part of the contract.
 - Lop and scatter may be a good option in a few, small, hard to reach areas, such as a one-acre patch that is over 100-feet from the road and doesn't have a lot of material.
 - In all cases, lopped material should be ideally less than 4" deep, but in no case more than 8" deep.
- Q9. Scratch line around burn piles – steep slope is a concern.
- A9. Scratch lines are not allowed. Piles are not allowed on slopes > 80% for safety reasons.
- Q10. Does BLM intend to use a prescribed burn practice as part of the long-term treatment plan within the Noble Fire burn scar area?
- A10. Due to the high stand density, multiple treatment plans will likely be implemented on this site over time to restore the area to a healthy forest.
- Q11. Is acreage including slope or is it a flat acreage?
- A11. All acreage and distance measurements are calculated using **horizontal distance**. This will be enforced during review and sign-off of completed acreage measurements.
- Q12. Can work crews camp on BLM during the project? If work crews can camp, are they considered local?
- A12. There are no designated campsites at Red Mountain but most BLM land does technically allow dispersed camping (following fire restrictions of course). There are 14-day limits on camping, so workers would need to move sites once that limit is reached. Generally, no permits are required except for stoves during fire season.
- Q13. Can a CAP (Compressed Air Phosphorus) replace water truck?
- A13. Due to the number of limitations on the use of foam fire suppressant in and around riparian areas and waterways, we recommend that contractors avoid including the use of foam suppressants within 200' of any watercourse in their proposals. However, outside of the 200' watercourse limitation, the use of foam as a suppressant is allowed.
- Q14. Is a water truck required seasonally (i.e., during fire season, but not in non-fire season months)?
- A14. It is required that one (1) tank truck or trailer containing a minimum of three hundred (500) gallons of water, and with three hundred (300) feet minimum of hose, and with a nozzle acceptable to the Authorized Office, and a mounted or portable pump in good operation conforming to the standards set forth in California Law and any rule promulgated pursuant to those statutes, be placed within 500-feet of all active operations and during all periods of operations. All hose couplings shall have the standard thread adopted by the State Fire Marshall pursuant to California Law as amended or be provided with suitable adapters.

Q15. What other fire-suppression requirements do we need to be aware of, and adhere to, while on the job site?

A15. Communication: On-site supervisors should have serviceable radio or telephone equipment able to provide prompt and reliable communication between the contract area and Arcata, Ca. Such communication shall be available during periods of operation including the time watch-service is required.

End of Day: At the close of each working day, all equipment and tank trucks shall be filled with fuel and made ready for immediate use. All tank trucks and portable tanks shall be filled with water and made available for immediate use.

Fire Fighting Hand Tools:

- Tools shall be kept at each landing or at such other place as the Authorized Officer shall designate whenever people are working on the contract area.
- All fire-fighting tools shall be kept in a sturdily constructed box which shall be painted red and lettered on the front or top in large letters "FOR FIRE ONLY."
- The box shall have a hinged lid and a hasp by which the lid can be sealed.
- One (1) box may serve two landings, not over six hundred (600) feet apart.
- When filled, the box shall not weigh over two hundred (200) pounds.
- The fire tools shall be in good condition, be tight on strong handles, and have sharp cutting edges.
- There shall be not less than four (4) tools in each box nor less than one (1) tool for each person working on the contract area. Three-fourths (3/4) of all fire tools shall be shovels, McLeod's, or other scraping tools.
- The fire tools shall be used only for fighting fire.

Backpack Pumps: Two (2) backpack pumps full of water and in good operating condition are to be kept at each active landing if water tank is not present.

Fire Extinguisher: A chemical fire extinguisher of at least eight (8) ounces minimum capacity of a type approved by the California State Forester and a size 0 or larger shovel shall be carried during the closed fire season or periods of fire danger by each falling crew and each buckler using a power saw on the contract area. Such fire extinguisher shall be filled and in effective operating condition and shall at all times be immediately available to the operator when the saw is being fueled or the motor of the saw is running.

Re-Fueling: Any fueling of a power saw shall be done in an area which has first been cleared of all flammable material. Power saws shall be moved at least twenty (20) feet from the place of fueling before the engine is started. Each power saw shall be equipped with an exhaust system and a spark arresting device.

Project Activity Levels (PALs): All operations shall conform to the limitations or requirements of "Project Activity Levels." (PAL) "Activity Level" is the measure of fire weather conditions. Activity Levels applicable to this project shall be for the Six Rivers National Forest Mad River Ranger District. The phone number is (707) 441-3665, and the website is <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/srnf/passes-permits/forestproducts/?cid=fseprd756386>

Q16. Is Avenza accurate? Since the project flagging and acreage treated is based off of Avenza, it is important that the app is accurate to properly reflect the contractor's work.

A18. To the best of our ability, we have verified that the Avenza maps are accurate to within 15' of the true landscape.

- Q17. Will the project be pulled if bids come in too high?
- A19. If there is a significant gap between proposed acres treated and funds available, then we will revisit this with CAL FIRE. In that situation it is likely we would request a contract amendment. This would delay, but not cancel, the project.
- Q18. When does it usually start snowing?
- A20. Snow usually starts falling in December and can range from a few inches to several feet. Snow can last until early spring.
- Q19. Can contractors manually pull from more than 100 feet?
- A21. Yes, contractors can pull material up from as much as 300-feet, as long as the depth of chipped materials remains compliant with the Chip / Mastication specifications noted in the RFP.
- Q20. Will contractors be responsible for road repair post-work?
- A22. Yes, contractors must leave the road in as good of shape as they found it (or better).
- Q21. What is the billing cycle?
- A23. Contractors can bill monthly for completed acreage; however, completed acreage must be verified by the MCRCD prior to payment. Acreage verifications will occur on the last day of the month, or earlier if the last day falls on a weekend. It typically takes MCRCD staff two days to complete the GIS analysis of completed acreage and to inform the contractor of the billable amount.
- Q22. Is hazardous tree removal over the road important?
- A24. Trees deemed hazardous by the contractor, or the RCD, should be identified in advance and flagged. If a tree is over the size limitations in the contract (i.e., trees $\geq 16''$ DBH are reserved from cutting), it will require BLM approval prior to removal. Pre-approval may be done remotely (with photos and info), or with a site visit by BLM personnel.
- Q23. Will the MCRCD retain any percent (10%) of payment on invoicing?
- A25. There are no references to retention of payment to the contractor(s) in the RFP.
- Q24. Are there NEPA set asides for NSO/other restrictions?
- A26. There is no set-aside for NSO or other seasonally limited treatment areas. If contractor cannot complete the treatments in these areas during the LOP, then they will need to come back and treat during the appropriate time period.
- Q25. If there is non-operating due to NSO, is there other acreage available to treat to make up for lost acreage?
- A27. Depending on the treatment unit, there are some areas of the road that are not under a LOP restriction. This is also not a loss in acreage since it can still be treated at a later date (outside of the LOP).
- A28. Are bonds required for all subs as well?
- Q26. We only require bonds for the contract holder with the Mendocino County RCD. It is up to the lead contractor and the subcontractors to determine any subcontractor bond requirements between their organizations.
- Q27. Why is there such an emphasis on chipping? Is there any flexibility on this part? In my experience, chipping always costs A LOT more/per acre.

- A29. Due to the large amounts of biomass within the project area, chipping is the most effective way to get this fuel on the ground where it can decompose relatively quickly (compared to lop and scatter methods). While some amount of piling is also acceptable (such as areas > 100' from locations accessible by tracked chipper or masticator on slopes between 60% and 80%), piling and subsequent burning is considerably more expensive when you factor in burn crew costs. Therefore, piling is also not a preferred fuel treatment method. If a contractor wishes to propose an alternative form of mechanical treatment, this will be taken into consideration during the proposal review process.
- Q28. With exception of special treatment areas, all residues under 6" diameter that are cut from within 100' of areas accessible by tracked chipper will be chipped." Can you elaborate on what and where the special treatment areas are?
- A30. We have published a map of sensitive treatment areas, which can be found here:
<https://mcrpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/RFP-Sensitive-Areas-Map.pdf>
- Q29. How much emphasis is on owning a chipper? Are rentals not allowed?
- A31. We prefer contractors own their own equipment, or partner with sub-contractors who own their own equipment, in order to avoid delays due to lack of rental equipment availability and/or breakdowns.