§ 6512. Authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects

(a) Authorized projects

As soon as practicable after December 3, 2003, the Secretary shall implement authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects, consistent with the Implementation Plan, on—

(1) Federal land in wildland-urban interface areas;

(2) condition class 3 Federal land, in such proximity to a municipal water supply system or a stream feeding such a system within a municipal watershed that a significant risk exists that a fire disturbance event would have adverse effects on the water quality of the municipal water supply or the maintenance of the system, including a risk to water quality posed by erosion following such a fire disturbance event;

(3) condition class 2 Federal land located within fire regime I, fire regime II, or fire regime III, in such proximity to a municipal water supply system or a stream feeding such a system within a municipal watershed that a significant risk exists that a fire disturbance event would have adverse effects on the water quality of the municipal water supply or the maintenance of the system, including a risk to water quality posed by erosion following such a fire disturbance event;

(4) Federal land on which windthrow or blowdown, ice storm damage, the existence of an epidemic of disease or insects, or the presence of such an epidemic on immediately adjacent land and the imminent risk it will spread, poses a significant threat to an ecosystem component, or forest or rangeland resource, on the Federal land or adjacent non-Federal land; and

(5) Federal land not covered by paragraphs (1) through (4) that contains threatened and endangered species habitat, if—

(A) natural fire regimes on that land are identified as being important for, or wildfire is identified as a threat to, an endangered species, a threatened species, or habitat of an endangered species or threatened species in a species recovery plan prepared under section 1533 of this title, or a notice published in the Federal Register determining a species to be an endangered species or a threatened species or designating critical habitat;

(B) the authorized hazardous fuel reduction project will provide enhanced protection from catastrophic wildfire for the endangered species, threatened species, or habitat of the endangered species or threatened species; and

(C) the Secretary complies with any applicable guidelines specified in any management or recovery plan described in subparagraph (A).

(b) Relation to agency plans

An authorized hazardous fuel reduction project shall be conducted consistent with the resource management plan and other relevant administrative policies or decisions applicable to the Federal land covered by the project.

(c) Acreage limitation

Not more than a total of 20,000,000 acres of Federal land may be treated under authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects.

(d) Exclusion of certain Federal land

The Secretary may not conduct an authorized hazardous fuel reduction project that would occur on—

(1) a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System;

(2) Federal land on which the removal of vegetation is prohibited or restricted by Act of Congress or Presidential proclamation (including the applicable implementation plan); or
(3) a Wilderness Study Area.

(e) Old growth stands

(1) Definitions

In this subsection and subsection (f):

(A) Applicable period

The term “applicable period” means—

(i) the 2-year period beginning on December 3, 2003; or

(ii) in the case of a resource management plan that the Secretary is in the process of revising as of December 3, 2003, the 3-year period beginning on December 3, 2003.

(B) Covered project

The term “covered project” means an authorized hazardous fuel reduction project carried out on land described in paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (5) of subsection (a).

(C) Management direction

The term “management direction” means definitions, designations, standards, guidelines, goals, or objectives established for an old growth stand under a resource management plan developed in accordance with applicable law, including section 1604 (g)(3)(B) of this title.

(D) Old growth stand

The term “old growth stand” has the meaning given the term under management direction used pursuant to paragraphs (3) and (4), based on the structure and composition characteristic of the forest type, and in accordance with applicable law, including section 1604 (g)(3)(B) of this title.

(2) Project requirements

In carrying out a covered project, the Secretary shall fully maintain, or contribute toward the restoration of, the structure and composition of old growth stands according to the pre-fire suppression old growth conditions characteristic of the forest type, taking into account the contribution of the stand to landscape fire adaptation and watershed health, and retaining the large trees contributing to old growth structure.

(3) Newer management direction

(A) In general

If the management direction for an old growth stand was established on or after December 15, 1993, the Secretary shall meet the requirements of paragraph (2) in carrying out a covered project by implementing the management direction.

(B) Amendments or revisions

Any amendment or revision to management direction for which final administrative approval is granted after December 3, 2003, shall be consistent with paragraph (2) for the purpose of carrying out covered projects.

(4) Older management direction

(A) In general

If the management direction for an old growth stand was established before December 15, 1993, the Secretary shall meet the requirements of paragraph (2) in carrying out a covered project during the applicable period by implementing the management direction.

(B) Review required

Subject to subparagraph (C), during the applicable period for management direction referred to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall—
(i) review the management direction for affected covered projects, taking into account any relevant scientific information made available since the adoption of the management direction; and

(ii) amend the management direction for affected covered projects to be consistent with paragraph (2), if necessary to reflect relevant scientific information the Secretary did not consider in formulating the management direction.

(C) Review not completed

If the Secretary does not complete the review of the management direction in accordance with subparagraph (B) before the end of the applicable period, the Secretary shall not carry out any portion of affected covered projects in stands that are identified as old growth stands (based on substantial supporting evidence) by any person during scoping, within the period—

(i) beginning at the close of the applicable period for the management direction governing the affected covered projects; and

(ii) ending on the earlier of—

(I) the date the Secretary completes the action required by subparagraph (B) for the management direction applicable to the affected covered projects; or

(II) the date on which the acreage limitation specified in subsection (c) (as that limitation may be adjusted by a subsequent Act of Congress) is reached.

(5) Limitation to covered projects

Nothing in this subsection requires the Secretary to revise or otherwise amend a resource management plan to make the project requirements of paragraph (2) apply to an activity other than a covered project.

(f) Large tree retention

(1) In general

Except in old growth stands where the management direction is consistent with subsection (e)(2), the Secretary shall carry out a covered project in a manner that—

(A) focuses largely on small diameter trees, thinning, strategic fuel breaks, and prescribed fire to modify fire behavior, as measured by the projected reduction of uncharacteristically severe wildfire effects for the forest type (such as adverse soil impacts, tree mortality or other impacts); and

(B) maximizes the retention of large trees, as appropriate for the forest type, to the extent that the trees promote fire-resilient stands.

(2) Wildfire risk

Nothing in this subsection prevents achievement of the purposes described in section 6501 (1) of this title.

(g) Monitoring and assessing forest and rangeland health

(1) In general

For each Forest Service administrative region and each Bureau of Land Management State Office, the Secretary shall—

(A) monitor the results of a representative sample of the projects authorized under this subchapter for each management unit; and

(B) not later than 5 years after December 3, 2003, and each 5 years thereafter, issue a report that includes—

(i) an evaluation of the progress towards project goals; and

(ii) recommendations for modifications to the projects and management treatments.

(2) Consistency of projects with recommendations
An authorized hazardous fuel reduction project approved following the issuance of a monitoring report shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be consistent with any applicable recommendations in the report.

(3) **Similar vegetation types**

The results of a monitoring report shall be made available for use (if appropriate) in an authorized hazardous fuels reduction project conducted in a similar vegetation type on land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

(4) **Monitoring and assessments**

Monitoring and assessment shall include a description of the changes in condition class, using the Fire Regime Condition Class Guidebook or successor guidance, specifically comparing end results to—

- pretreatment conditions;
- historical fire regimes; and
- any applicable watershed or landscape goals or objectives in the resource management plan or other relevant direction.

(5) **Multiparty monitoring**

(A) **In general**

In an area where significant interest is expressed in multiparty monitoring, the Secretary shall establish a multiparty monitoring, evaluation, and accountability process in order to assess the positive or negative ecological and social effects of authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects and projects conducted pursuant to section 6554 of this title.

(B) **Diverse stakeholders**

The Secretary shall include diverse stakeholders (including interested citizens and Indian tribes) in the process required under subparagraph (A).

(C) **Funding**

Funds to carry out this paragraph may be derived from operations funds for projects described in subparagraph (A).

(6) **Collection of monitoring data**

The Secretary may collect monitoring data by entering into cooperative agreements or contracts with, or providing grants to, small or micro-businesses, cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, Youth Conservation Corps work crews, or related State, local, and other non-Federal conservation corps.

(7) **Tracking**

For each administrative unit, the Secretary shall track acres burned, by the degree of severity, by large wildfires (as defined by the Secretary).

(8) **Monitoring and maintenance of treated areas**

The Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, develop a process for monitoring the need for maintenance of treated areas, over time, in order to preserve the forest health benefits achieved.