

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
PO Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459
Grand County, CO**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-120-2009-0039-CX

PROJECT NAME: Inspiration Point

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 1 S. R. 81 W, Sections 5, 7, 8, 17, and 18

APPLICANT: USDI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The purpose of this proposal is to improve area vegetation diversity and wildlife habitat, and reduce wildland fuel loads within the Inspiration Point project area. The vegetative composition of the landscape includes mature stands of pinyon-juniper and Douglas-fir, with small pockets of sagebrush intermixed with grass and forbs. The lack of wildland fire or other disturbance events have allowed large woody plants with limited vigor and composition to increase across the project area. In addition, the reintroduction of Bighorn sheep, by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), occurred during the fall of 2008. Bighorn sheep favor open steep ridges devoid of heavy woody vegetation. Implementation of this prescribed fire will promote this environment and assist the introduction of sheep.

The BLM is proposing to use prescribed fire to remove timber encroachment and alter the landscape on BLM-administered public lands in the Inspiration Point area off of Grand County Road #1. The treatment area also includes a small portion of CDOW land in the far southern corner of the project (approximately 30 acres). Treatments on gentler slopes (<20%) would utilize prescribed fire treatments to promote grass and forb quantity for wildlife forage. Treatments on steeper slopes (>20%) would utilize prescribed fire to open closed stands of timber, to favor bighorn sheep habitat. The preferred time of year for implementation of this project is during the late winter or spring when snow covered or moist conditions exist on the higher elevations of the project area. Depending upon the availability of BLM staff, treatments would be completed by the BLM or interagency resources.

The total project area proposed for fuel treatments would be approximately 364 acres (see map 1 below for general project area). The proposed treatments would have a planned start in spring 2009. If prescribed fire project windows are not available, the project would carry into the future

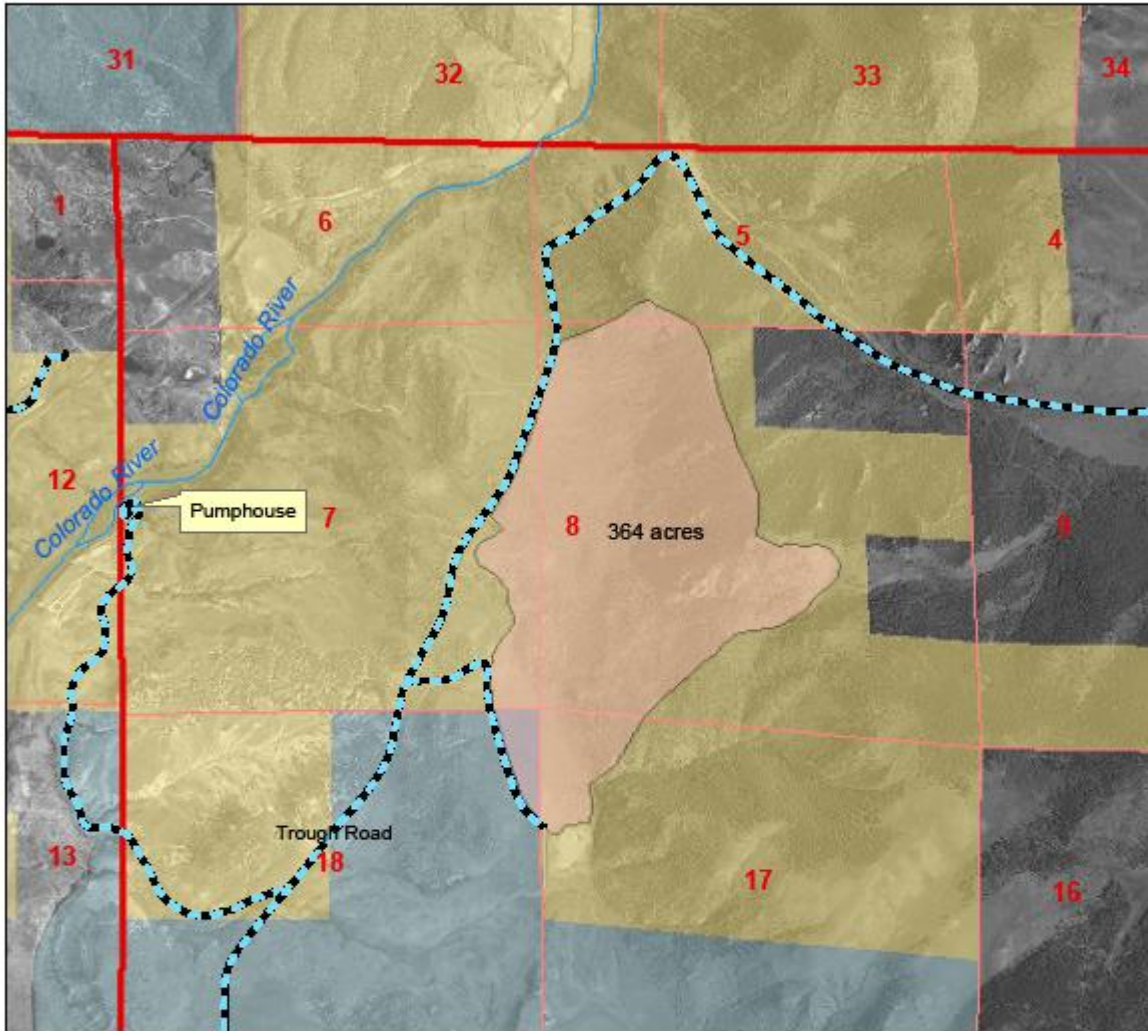
until an implementation opportunity is met. Upon completion, vegetation in the project area would have a mosaic appearance over 60-80% of the area treated.

Design features of Proposed Action

- A 50-foot vegetative buffer (from ground disturbing activities) around all wetland areas and drainage bottoms to reduce water quality impacts.
- Vegetative litter produced by mechanical treatments would be scattered across the slopes whenever practicable to help provide soil protection.
- Any survey monuments (brass cap monuments, bearing trees, private monuments) that may exist in the project area would be located, flagged and protected.
- Disturbed areas would be inspected for noxious weeds for two growing seasons after the project is completed. If weeds are found in areas where completed treatments, the BLM would treat the weed infestations and monitor effectiveness.
- Disturbed areas will be monitored to insure successful re-vegetation by the end of the third growing season. If monitoring dictates, the area would be seeded with a native seed mix to attain the desired vegetation community.
- Following the burn, a field review would be conducted to determine if any areas of more intense burn occurred that could impact the downstream wetland and the two private ponds located outside the project area. Erosion control practices would be applied as needed to keep any sediment from travelling offsite and reaching these areas.
- Treatment areas would be monitored for paleontological resources during and after treatments. If fossil resources are discovered, they would be recorded, evaluated for their significance, and avoided or mitigated for any future ground disturbing activities.
- Visual impacts would be mitigated by avoiding cutting or clearing areas along straight lines, repeating natural vegetation patterns where possible, and attempting to mimic the existing vegetative patterns in the area.

Map 1- Project Map

Inspiration Point Prescribed Fire Project Map



Location: T 1 S, R 81 W

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles

1:21,607



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the Accuracy, Reliability, or Completeness of this Data for Individual Use or Aggregate Use with Other Data.

Maps:
BLM, Kremmling FO XX/XX/2007

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

NAME OF PLAN: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

DATE APPROVED: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

This Proposed action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan (RMP), even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following RMP objectives: Page 7 of Wildlife Habitat Management. This is stated as: Manage public land habitat to support optimum wildlife population levels as determined by the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Strategic Plan.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11, Number: 11.9 (D) (10), *Vegetation management activities, such as seeding, planting, invasive plant removal, installation of erosion control devices (e.g., mats/straw/chips), and mechanical treatments, such as crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, mowing, and prescribed fire when the activity is necessary for the management of vegetation on public lands. Such activities:*

(a) Shall not exceed 4,500 acres per prescribed fire project and 1,000 acres for other vegetation management projects;

(b) Shall not be conducted in Wilderness areas or Wilderness Study Areas;

(c) Shall not include the use of herbicides, pesticides, biological treatments or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure;

(d) May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and

(e) Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment, by artificial or natural means, of vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.

None of the following extraordinary circumstances in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

| Extraordinary Circumstances | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety | | X |
| 2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. | | X |
| 2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section | | X |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| 102(2)(E)]. | | |
| 2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. | | X |
| 2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. | | X |
| 2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. | | X |
| 2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office. | | X |
| 2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. | | X |
| 2.9 Violate a Federal Law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. | | X |
| 2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898). | | X |
| 2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007). | | X |
| 2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112). | | X |

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

| Name | Title | Area of Responsibility | Date Review Completed |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Paula Belcher | Hydrologist | Soil, Water, Air & Riparian | 3/10/09 |
| Richard Johnson | Rangeland Management Specialist | Vegetation, Invasive, Non-Native Species, Livestock Grazing | 3/27/09 |
| Bill B. Wyatt | Fire Archaeologist | Cultural Resources and Tribal Consultation | 2/27/2009 |
| Frank Rupp | Archaeologist | Paleontology | 3/26/2009 |
| Megan McGuire | Wildlife Biologist | T&E Species and Wildlife | 3/27/09 |
| Andy Windsor | Recreation | Visual Resources | 3/25/09 |
| Susan Cassel | P&EC | NEPA Compliance | 3/27/09 |

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: A cultural inventory report #CR-03-18 was completed for the project. The Class I was for 669.64 acres for prescribed fire. The project is a no effect.

Native American Religious Concerns: Tribal consultation was initiated on February 23, 2009, and to date no Native American Tribe has identified any area of spiritual concern.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There would be no impacts to threatened or endangered species.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11, Number 11.9 (D) (10), due to the size and nature of the project. The application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly effect the environment and none of the exceptions apply. These extraordinary circumstances are contained in 516 DM, Appendix 2.

NAME OF PREPARER: Justin Kincaid, Fire Management Specialist NWCFMU

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Susan Cassel

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have decided to implement treatments in the Proposed Action within the project area delineated on the attached maps. These treatments will meet the purpose and need for the project area. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

DATE: This project will be implemented on or after April 1, 2009.

ATTATCHMENTS: None

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

_____/s/ David Stout_____
Manager

David Stout, Field Office

DATE SIGNED: 4/15/09