BLM

Idaho Falls and Twin Falls District

Record of Decision

Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment

A Regional Assessment for Southeast
and South Central Idaho

U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho Falls and Twin Falls District

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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Introduction

The Idaho BLM administers approximately 5 million acres of public lands in southeastern and south-central Idaho (Figure 1) in the Upper Snake, Pocatello, Burley and Shoshone Field Offices. This area is hereafter referred to as the planning area, comprising portions of both the Idaho Falls and Twin Falls Districts.

The purpose of this planning effort is to amend 12 existing land use plans within the planning area to incorporate fire, fuels, and related vegetation management direction that is consistent with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. This approach will allow the BLM to continue to move toward resource conditions that:

- minimize risk to human life and property;
- allow for efficient and effective wildland fire suppression efforts;
- integrate fire's natural role into resource management decisions;
- maintain or restore vegetation that would support special status species (SSS) and healthy, diverse, and sustainable vegetation communities; and
- provide for other uses by managing vegetative conditions to achieve desired conditions

The Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this Record of Decision (ROD) for the *Proposed Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement, A Regional Assessment for Southeast and South Central Idaho* (henceforth Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS). This (ROD) includes a statement of the decision, synopses of alternatives considered, a description of the environmentally preferable alternative, an overview of public involvement in the decision-making process and the rationale for the decision and the Plan Amendment.

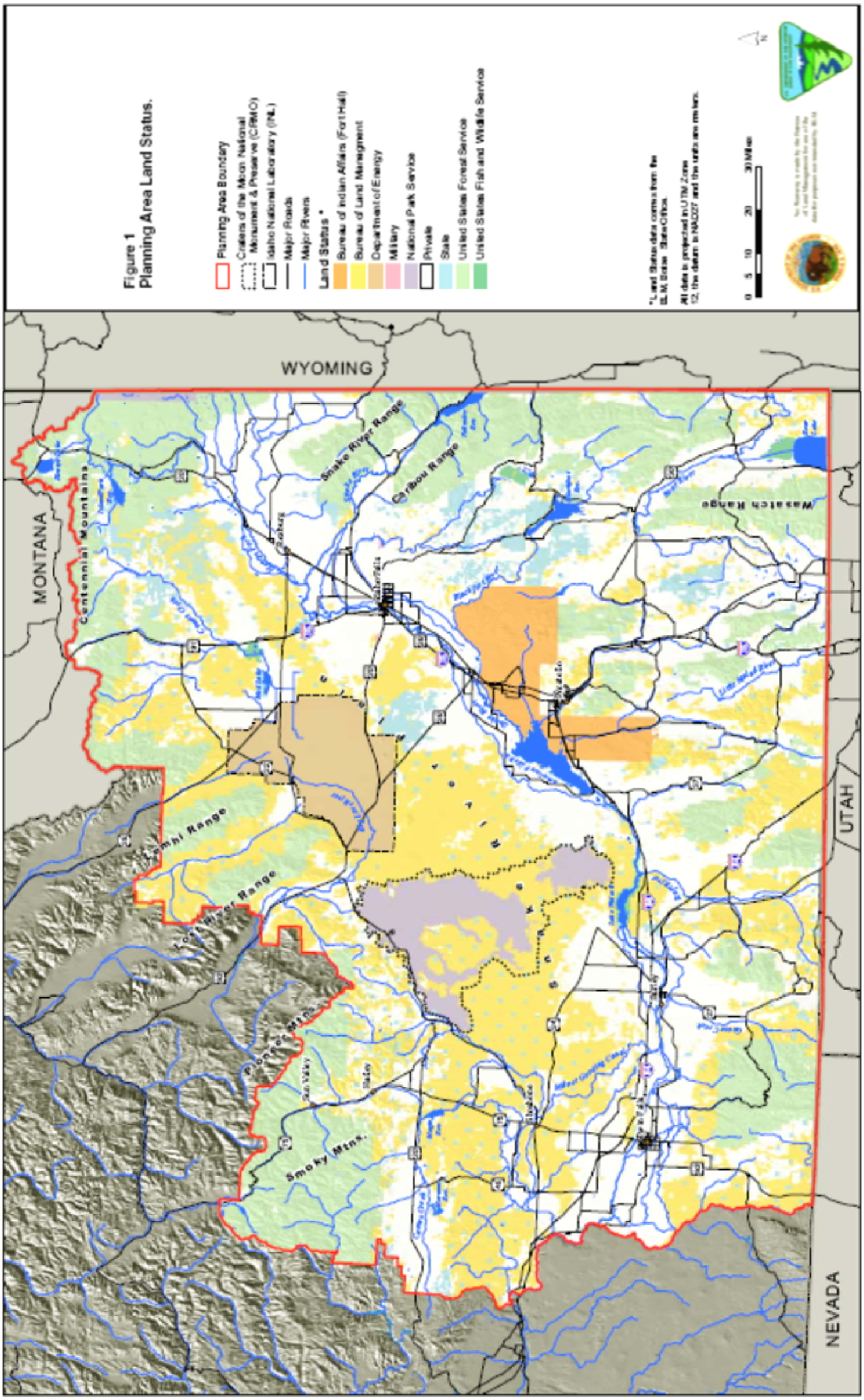


Figure 1
Planning Area Land Status.
Planning Area Boundary
Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve (CRMO)
Idaho National Laboratory (INL)
Major Roads
Major Rivers
Land Status *
Bureau of Indian Affairs (Fort Hall)
Bureau of Land Management
Department of Energy
Military
National Park Service
Private
State
United States Forest Service
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
0 5 10 20 30 Miles
WYOMING
MONTANA
UTAH
NEVADA
Centennial Mountains
Snake River Range
Caribou Range
Wasatch Range
Lemhi Range
Lost River Range
Pioneer Mtns.
Smoky Mtns.
Sun Valley
Idaho
Pocatello

Decision

The decision of the BLM is to adopt the management direction described in Alternative E from the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS (February 2008) and amend the 12 current land use plans identified in Table 1. This ROD and Plan Amendment will provide the overall fire management direction for BLM-administered public lands within the planning area.

Table 1. Land Use Plans (LUPs) Currently Directing Resource Management in the Planning Area, with Dates of Implementation

Year, Land Use Plan	FO[1]	Year, Land Use Plan	FO
1975, Magic MFP	SH	1982, Twin Falls MFP	BU
1976, Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP	SH	1983, Big Lost MFP	US
1981, Big Desert MFP	US	1985, Cassia RMP	BU
1981, Little Lost-Birch Creek MFP	US	1985, Medicine Lodge RMP	US
1981, Malad MFP	PO	1985, Monument RMP	SH/BU
1981, Sun Valley MFP	SH	1988, Pocatello RMP	PO

[1] Field Offices (FO): BU = Burley, US = Upper Snake, SH = Shoshone, PO = Pocatello/Malad

The Plan Amendment was prepared by the BLM in accordance with BLM planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610). An environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared for the Plan Amendment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The EIS assessed the possible environmental and social effects of implementing the Plan Amendment and other alternatives. The Plan Amendment is identical to Alternative E of the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS published in February 2008. Alternative E was created by combining the sagebrush steppe vegetation direction of the Preferred Alternative, Alternative D, with the forested vegetation direction from Alternative C of the Draft Plan Amendment EIS published in November 2004.

Protests

A 30-day protest period was provided by the BLM on the proposed plan amendment decisions in accordance with 43 CFR Part 1610.5-2. One protest letter was received. Upon the careful review and analysis of that protest letter, issues requiring resolution were identified. These issues were grouped and addressed based upon the following general areas:

- Old Outdated Data Used
- Methodology
- Range of Alternatives
- Lack of Analysis
- Livestock
- Habitat Fragmentation
- ESA
- Monitoring & Mitigation

After consideration of all points raised in the protest, the BLM Director concluded that the planning team and decision-makers, including the Idaho State Director, followed all applicable laws, regulations, policies and pertinent process and resource considerations in developing the

Plan Amendment. Based upon the protest issues identified, no changes were required to be made to the plan amendment.

Governor's Consistency Review

The State of Idaho Governor's consistency review was initiated on February 16, 2008 by the BLM. The Governor's office and associated state agencies were provided 60 days to review the plan amendment for consistency with state agency plans. This consistency review by the Governor's office revealed no inconsistencies and no changes to the plan amendment were necessary.

Alternatives

The Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS presented five alternatives: No Action and four Action Alternatives. Based on public comment on the Draft EIS, Alternative E, the Proposed Plan Amendment, was created and was analyzed in the Final EIS/Proposed Plan Amendment.

Alternative A - No Action would continue past fire and fuels management across the planning area. Alternative A would treat about 25,000 annually.

Alternative B - This alternative would increase broad treatment levels about 3 times greater than the No Action alternative or to about 64,000 acres annually.

Alternative C - This alternative was developed to address the Cohesive Strategy issue. This alternative would attempt to return wildland fire to its natural fire regime by increasing broad treatment levels about 7 times greater than the No Action alternative or to about 168,700 acres annually. Resources would be manipulated to achieve wildland fires within the historical range of variability in 12 vegetation cover types.

Alternative D - This alternative was developed to address the Sagebrush Steppe issue. This alternative would increase broad treatment levels about 6 times greater than the No Action alternative or to about 152,000 acres annually. Alternative D focuses on maintaining or improving sagebrush steppe habitats across the planning area. The alternative does not propose treatments in the forested vegetation types though these cover types may be treated under direction in other program areas.

Alternative E - Alternative E was created by combining the sagebrush steppe portion of Alternative D with the forested vegetation portion of Alternative C thereby creating an alternative that addresses the needs of both sagebrush steppe and forested vegetation types. It addresses both the Cohesive Strategy issue and the Sagebrush Steppe issue as described at Alternatives C and D above. Alternative E would increase broad treatment levels about 6 times greater than the No Action alternative or to about 153,800 acres annually.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Environmentally preferable is defined as "the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act." Section 101 states, "…it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to…

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.
- Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources."

In comparison with the other alternatives analyzed, Alternative E, identified as the Proposed Plan Amendment, best meets the national environmental goals identified above. Alternative E provides a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources, while providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. This alternative surpasses the other alternatives in realizing the full range of national environmental policy goals in Section 101.

Public Involvement

This Plan Amendment has been prepared with input from and coordination with interested tribal governments, federal and state agencies, organizations, and individuals. Public involvement is a vital component of NEPA for vesting the public in the decision-making process and allowing for full environmental disclosure. Guidance for implementing public involvement is identified in 40 CFR 1506.6, thereby ensuring that federal agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public in preparing NEPA documents.

Public involvement for the draft plan amendment/EIS was conducted in two phases:

- Public scoping to obtain public input on issues prior to NEPA analysis.
- Public review and comment on the Draft EIS, which included analyzing environmental impacts and identifying the Proposed Plan Amendment.

In summary, during the scoping period between April and May 2002, 279 unique comments were submitted to the BLM. Comments submitted consisted of specific action items, general directions to take, complaints, monitoring actions, positions on issues, concerns around issues, questions, and other ideas and comments.

Draft and Final EIS/Plan Amendment

The Draft EIS/Plan Amendment was available for review beginning in November 2004. At the conclusion of the 90-day public comment period, a Response to Comments report responding to all comments was written (See Appendix P of the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS). Based on this report, the Draft EIS/Plan Amendment was revised and the Final EIS/Proposed Plan Amendment was published and released in February 2008. The availability of this Final EIS/Proposed Plan Amendment was announced in the *Federal Register (Vol. 73, No. 41) on* February 29, 2008 with a 30-day public protest period.

Section 7 Consultation

A biological assessment was prepared and submitted to the USFWS. A concurrence letter was received from the USFWS on June 20, 2007 and can be found in Appendix O of the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS - Final Biological Assessment and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Concurrence Letter.

Management Restrictions

Management Restrictions are presented in the Plan Amendment section as wildland fire suppression restrictions and fire and non-fire vegetation treatment restrictions. These management restrictions will be implemented under the Plan Amendment as appropriate. They will be applied to suppression activities and vegetation treatment actions with the intent of protecting sensitive resources.

All restrictions are intended to prevent significant impacts to natural and human resources and to meet current BLM state or federal policy. The Plan Amendment describes in detail the management restrictions to be applied. The restrictions are organized according to the resource discipline they affect. Because it is assumed that these restrictions would be applied, they were considered in the analysis of all alternatives and will be applied as appropriate during the implementation of the Plan Amendment.

Plan Monitoring

The Plan Amendment includes a detailed monitoring plan that will guide monitoring during Plan Amendment implementation. Accomplishment of management objectives outlined in the Plan Amendment would be determined through the collection of data at a programmatic level. Data used in this analysis to determine current conditions and analyze effects would be used to confirm that management actions are leading toward desired future condition (DFC) and other Plan Amendment objectives. Evaluation of monitoring results will focus on management objectives. If management objectives are being met, implementation will continue as directed in the Plan Amendment. If management objectives are not being met, the objectives set forth in this analysis will be re-evaluated to determine if it is necessary to change management actions or revise or amend the management direction.

Implementation of the Plan Amendment

This Fire Direction Plan Amendment provides direction and will guide implementation through several venues: Fire Management Plans (FMPs), appropriate management response (AMR) to wildland fire, Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plans (NFRPs) for Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR), County Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) and site specific NEPA efforts.

The FMPs outline, for each Fire Planning Unit (FPU), the area's priorities for suppression and outline AMR strategies to be implemented within specific areas. FMPs also outline the area's priorities for managing fire for resource benefit, and ESR actions, fuels treatments and community assistance actions. FMPs are based on the Land Use Plan (LUP) guidance (including this amendment), current resource conditions and coordination. When FMPs are updated they will be consistent with this Plan Amendment.

County Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) include, for each county, priorities for protection of the Wildland Urban Interface, ways to increase cooperatively firefighting capacities and efficiencies, and fuels treatment projects that could be implemented cooperatively. When CWPPs are updated and signed by BLM as a partner, BLM actions outlined in the plan will be consistent with Plan Amendment direction.

Due to the emergency nature of wildland fire suppression actions, no further NEPA analysis is required prior to initial attack/wildland fire management. Suppression actions and management objectives applied to all wildland fires will be consistent with National Policy. Wildland fires may be managed for more than one objective based on Plan Amendment direction. Every wildland fire will receive an AMR considering public/firefighter safety, values at risk, and suppression costs. Management Restrictions described in the amended Plan, will be implemented, as appropriate, to minimize adverse impacts from suppression actions.

Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plans have been developed to guide Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation actions which are taken subsequent to wildland fire and suppression activities. The Plan Amendment changes portions of the guidance from previous LUPs that were used to develop some NFRPs. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) includes a description of these changes and provides the associated analysis to describe the effects of these changes within the planning area. This direction and associated analysis will be incorporated into tiered NEPA documents, such as NFRPs, and documented in a DNA.

Site-Specific NEPA will also be required prior to managing wildland fire for resource benefit, prescribed fire and non-fire fuels treatments. Management Restrictions, as described in the Plan Amendment, will be implemented as appropriate, based on the project site, to minimize adverse impacts when designing and implementing these actions.

Rationale for the Decision

In reaching the decision to approve the Proposed Plan Amendment the BLM considered the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other laws, policies and regulations. The Proposed Plan Amendment/FEIS served as the principal source of information used in the decision making process. The agencies also carefully considered public comments received during the planning process.

Following the November 2004 release of the Draft EIS, based on public comment and internal discussions, Alternative E was created, analyzed and identified as the Proposed Plan Amendment in the Final EIS. It is the result of combining the sagebrush steppe portion of Alternative D with the forested vegetation portion of Alternative C.

Based on the information and analysis contained in the Final EIS and coordination and consultation, the Plan Amendment best addresses the needs of both forested vegetation and sagebrush steppe vegetation cover types; best addresses both the Cohesive Strategy and the Sagebrush Steppe issues; and will best move toward resource conditions that:

- minimize risk to human life and property;
- allow for efficient and effective wildland fire suppression efforts;
- integrate fire's natural role into resource management decisions;
- maintain or restore vegetation that would support special status species (SSS) and healthy, diverse, and sustainable vegetation communities; and
- provide for other uses by managing vegetative conditions to achieve desired conditions

This Decision will amend 12 land use plans in the planning area and provide for public and fire fighter safety and fuels reduction; will maintain and restore the sagebrush steppe ecosystem and its associated wildlife species, including sage grouse; will maintain and restore forested vegetation types; and integrate fire’s natural role into resource management decisions. The Plan Amendment provides a basis for sage grouse conservation, thereby reducing the potential for listing the sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

RECORD OF DECISION APPROVAL:

After having considered a full range of reasonable alternatives, associated effects, and public input, I approve the Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment.

Thomas H. Dyer

July 25, 2008

Thomas H. Dyer
Idaho State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Date

Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction
Plan Amendment
A Regional assessment for Southeast and South Central Idaho

Goals and Objectives

Several overarching or broad goals and objectives were identified as a basis for the Plan Amendment. These broad goals and objectives are identified as follows:

- Protect and enhance sage grouse source habitats.
- Protect and enhance key ecological components in plant and animal communities.
- Considered mechanical and/or chemical treatments first where fire is not an appropriate tool due to risk to life, property, or resource impacts.
- Move all vegetation types toward Desired Future Condition (DFC).

Desired Future Condition

DFC is considered a management objective. For the purposes of this Plan Amendment, DFC indicates the desired proportional distribution of vegetation age classes/successional stages across the landscape. Each vegetation age class represents different vegetation species composition. Attaining a DFC within a vegetation type promotes a healthier and more diverse vegetation structure and composition, and returns the currently altered fire regimes to a fire regime that more closely parallels the historical fire regime.

In this analysis, DFC was determined by considering historical fire frequency, vegetation response time following disturbance, and the current condition of the vegetation. Uncharacteristic vegetation (e.g., cheatgrass [*Bromus tectorum*], invasive species and noxious weeds) which compose portions of the DFC would be treated but is expected to remain a part of vegetation cover types.

Because the attributes used to determine DFC were modeled and estimated using scientific literature and local expertise, the age class distribution for a given DFC should not be viewed as a target. The DFC age class percentage, when compared to the current age class percentage, indicates a desired trend. For example, if it is identified that approximately 20 percent of a vegetation type is dominated by shrub/grass (>30 years old), and the DFC indicates 50 percent, the desired trend is to create more shrub/grass (>30 years old) over time with the proposed management actions. The primary objective of action is to meet the management goals.

Assumptions and calculations made to determine DFC are discussed in Appendix C of the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS (February 2008). DFC varies among vegetation cover types. Management goals and DFC for the vegetation cover types in the planning area are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Management Goals and Desired Future Conditions (DFC) for Vegetation Cover Types in the Upper Snake, Pocatello, Burley and Shoshone Field Offices.

Management Goals	Desired Future Condition (DFC)	
	Vegetation/Fuels Age Classes	Percent in DFC
Low-elevation Shrub, Perennial Grass, and Invasive Annual Grass		
Increase the number of acres with a native/placeholder shrub-grass mix. Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Perennial Grass: <15 years old Grass/shrub mix: 15-30 years old Shrub/grass mix: >30 years old	14% 14% 52%
Decrease the number of acres with more than 10% cheatgrass cover and/or weeds.	Cheatgrass/weeds	<20%
Mid-elevation Shrub (Including Juniper Encroachment Acres)		
Increase the number of acres with a native/placeholder shrub-grass mix. Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Perennial Grass: <5 years old Grass/shrub mix: 5-15 years old Shrub/grass mix: >15 years old	23% 45% 23%
Decrease the acres of Mid-elevation Shrub encroached upon by juniper, and/or any other undesirable species present.	Juniper encroachment Cheatgrass/weeds	7% 2%
Increase acres burned to more closely approximate the historical fire regime. Improve composition and structure of Mid-elevation Shrub types to better represent historical sagebrush steppe cover types.		
Mountain Shrub		
Increase the acres of early-seral and mid-seral stages. Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Perennial grass/shrub: <10 years old Shrub/Perennial Grass: 10-20 years old Shrub dominated: >20 years old	33% 33% 33%
Increase acres burned to more closely approximate the historical fire regime. Improve composition and structure of Mountain Shrub types to better represent historical Mountain Shrub cover types.		
Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer		
Increase acres of early-seral and mid-seral Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer cover types (pure aspen and Aspen/Conifer mix). Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Aspen: <30 years old Aspen/Conifer mix: 30-50 years Dry Conifer: >50 years old	40% 40% 20%
Increase acres burned to more closely approximate the historical fire regime. Improve composition and structure of Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer types to better represent historical Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer cover types.		
Salt Desert Shrub		
Maintain or increase acres with a native/placeholder shrub-grass mix. Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Perennial Grass: <30 years old Shrub/Grass/Bare Ground Mix: >30 years old	20% 76%
Decrease acres with cheatgrass, weeds, and/or other undesirable species present.	Cheatgrass/weeds	4%

Management Goals	Desired Future Condition (DFC)	
	Vegetation/Fuels Age Classes	Percent in DFC
Maintain fire frequency and size to approximate the historical fire regime. Maintain or improve Salt Desert Shrub types to better represent those historical cover types.		
Vegetated Rock/Lava		
Maintain or increase acres with a native/placeholder shrub-grass mix. Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape.	Perennial Grass Rock/Shrub/Grass/Tree mix	6% 80%
Decrease acres with cheatgrass, weeds, and/or other undesirable species present.	Cheatgrass/weeds	<14%
Maintain fire frequency and size to approximate the historical fire regime. Maintain Vegetated Rock/Lava types to better represent those historical cover types.		
Wet/Cold Conifer		
Maintain the mix of early, mid, and late seral stands of lodgepole pine forest.	Shrub/grass: <30 years old Shrub/tree: 30-75 years old Tree-dominated: >75 years old	30% 44% 26%
Maintain fire frequency and size to approximate the historical fire regime. Maintain or improve Wet/Cold Conifer types to better represent those historical cover types.		
Wildland Urban Interface		
Decrease fire frequency and size in the vicinity of the WUI to protect public and fire-fighter safety, public resources, and private lands.	Decrease fire hazard from high to moderate or low by implementing vegetation treatments and actions outlined in County Wildfire Protection Plans.	

Prioritization Criteria

Prioritization criteria were identified for wildland fire suppression and fire and non-fire vegetation treatments.

Wildland Fire Suppression Priorities

Based on direction regarding National Fire Policy implementation, all wildland fires will receive an AMR. Following are the top three wildland fire suppression priorities when multiple wildland fire ignitions occur:

- Fire-fighter and public safety - at no time would the activities described in this Plan Amendment compromise fire-fighter and public safety.
- The protection of property and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) .
- Minimize risks to sage grouse source, key and restoration habitats.

WUI areas and sage grouse habitat are both considered "critical suppression" areas of highest priority. AMR will consist of perimeter control and minimizing the number of acres burned,

unless the safety of the public or firefighters is at risk. Other BLM administered public lands are considered "conditional suppression" areas where AMR will consist of the full range of management responses (perimeter control to monitoring) depending on values at risk, suppression resources available, season severity and burn condition and suppression costs. "Conditional suppression" areas include those areas identified as suitable for wildland fire use (WFU). The FMPs will be utilized to further define priorities between "critical" and "conditional" suppression areas.

The WUI areas are identified in the National Fire Plan as requiring protection. Communities-at-risk in the WUI were identified in the Federal Register (66FR751 8/17/2001) and are assessed via County Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and initiated by interagency planning efforts. The National Fire Plan mandates that priority be given to protecting these communities from wildland fire and to preventing fires that start on private lands from spreading to BLM-administered lands. Vegetation treatments in and around WUI areas would be conducted with the goal of reducing fire hazard. This goal would not necessarily contribute to progress towards Fire Regime Condition Class 1 (FRCC 1).

When multiple wildland fire ignitions occur, the criteria for establishing suppression priorities follow the two prioritization criteria described above, followed by the following prioritization:

- Minimize risks to sage-grouse source, key, and restoration habitats.
- Minimize risks to habitats occupied by Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.
- Minimize risks to resources where changes in fuel accumulation and fire occurrence have occurred (i.e., FRCC 2 and FRCC 3 areas).

Fire and Non-fire Vegetation Treatment Priorities

Criteria for establishing vegetation treatments are:

- Design landscape-scale projects to reduce the combined risk to human life/property and resources (e.g., where WUI and ecosystems at risk coincide).
- In designing vegetation treatments in Low- and Mid-elevation Shrub and Mountain Shrub that could potentially affect Greater Sage-grouse, conservation measures would be implemented as appropriate.
- The planning, designing, and monitoring of WUI and landscape level projects will be accomplished through interagency planning (BLM and USFS) with active local community participation, and through the development of partnerships.

Vegetation treatments in and around WUI areas would be conducted with the goal of reducing fire hazard. This goal would not necessarily contribute to progress towards FRCC 1.

Vegetation treatment priorities in non-WUI areas would vary by field office as vegetation types vary across the planning area. In general, vegetation treatment priorities include the following:

- Diversify Perennial Grass to speed reestablishment of sagebrush cover.
- Enhance structural and species diversity in degraded Low-elevation sagebrush steppe.

- Reduce shrub and juniper density in Mid-elevation Shrub.
- Reduce invasive species or noxious weeds in all vegetation types.
- Rejuvenate aspen stands, reduce insect infestation and disease, and create a diversity of forest successional stages across the landscape.
- In Mountain Shrub, rejuvenate old, decadent shrubs and increase cover and density of desirable herbaceous species

Objectives and Management Actions[1]

Objective 1 - Make progress toward DFC in the Low-elevation Shrub, Perennial Grass, Invasive Annual Grass, Mid-elevation Shrub, Mountain Shrub, and Juniper vegetation types.

Management Actions

- Use chemical, mechanical, seeding, and prescribed fire treatments as appropriate to achieve DFC.
- In Perennial Grass, Invasive Annual Grass, and juniper-invaded cover types, restore sagebrush steppe with an aggressive sagebrush seeding effort, using the appropriate sagebrush subspecies for the treatment area.
- Strategically place treatments on a landscape scale to prevent fire from spreading into important sagebrush steppe habitat or WUI.

Objective 2 - Maintain, protect, and expand sage grouse source habitats.

Management Actions

- Suppress wildland fires in source habitats, except where WFU would benefit habitat.
- Allow WFU in sage grouse source habitats for the benefit of the habitat only after site-specific project level coordination with IDFG.
- Conduct vegetation treatments in areas that pose a wildland fire risk to source habitats.
- Treat areas within source habitats that have low resiliency (i.e., areas characterized by low species diversity, undesirable composition, and dead or decadent sagebrush).
- Following wildland fire, WFU and prescribed fire treatments, use chemical, mechanical, and seeding treatments with appropriate plant materials to attempt to stabilize sites and prevent dominance of invasive, annual vegetation, and noxious weeds.

[1] The Plan Amendment is described in broader terms in the Biological Assessment (BA) (Appendix O of the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS) to better differentiate impacts to federally listed species. These broader descriptions are associated with sagebrush steppe habitat that also serves as sage grouse source, key, and restoration habitat. Specifically, Goals 2 and 3 and the Prioritization Criteria in the BA describe these specific sage-grouse habitat types in broader ecological terms such as "sagebrush steppe" and "important or healthy wildlife habitat." This did not change the effects analysis of the federally listed species as presented in the BA.

- Use native plant materials were determined to be appropriate and practical at the project-implementation level.

Objective 3 - Treat sage grouse key and restoration habitats to expand source habitats. Improve and maintain sage grouse Restoration (R1-3) and key habitats.

Management Actions

- Use AMR to wildland fire in all sage grouse restoration and key habitats and healthy wildlife habitats.
- WFU may be allowed in historically frequent fire regimes to restore fire's natural role and in sage grouse restoration and key habitats for the benefit of the habitat only after site-specific project level consultation/collaboration with IDFG.
- Conduct vegetation treatments in restoration and key habitats to reduce risk of wildland fire and reconnect restoration and key habitats.
- Treat areas of restoration and key habitats that have low resiliency characterized by low species diversity.

Objective 4 - Make progress toward DFC in historically frequent fire regimes (Aspen/Conifer, Dry Conifer, Mid-elevation Shrub encroached by juniper, Mountain Shrub) by increasing WFU and prescribed fire to create a fire regime within the historical range of variability.

Management Actions

- Use mechanical and chemical treatments to prepare areas in FRCC 2 and FRCC 3 for prescribed fire and WFU.
- Where prescriptive parameters, resource conditions, and vegetation conditions allow, use WFU or prescribed fire to increase the annual average number of wildland fire acres to an average similar to historical conditions.
- Following wildland fire, WFU and prescribed fire treatments, use chemical, mechanical, and seeding treatments with appropriate plant materials to attempt to stabilize sites and prevent dominance of invasive, annual vegetation, and noxious weeds. Use native plant materials were determined to be appropriate and practical at the project-implementation level.

Objective 5 - In the Wet/Cold Conifer vegetation type and/or areas in FRCC 1, maintain vegetation conditions using mechanical, chemical, prescribed fire, or WFU treatments, such that wildland fire regimes are within the historical range of variability (i.e., maintain the current fire regime in these vegetation types).

Management Action

- Use treatments, as appropriate, to maintain landscapes in FRCC 1.

Wildland Fire Use (WFU) Areas

Approximately 1.7 million acres across the planning area are identified as suitable for WFU for resource benefit, and approximately 3.3 million acres are identified as not appropriate due to ecological, social, economic, political, and resource constraints. Table 3 below presents acres suitable and not suitable for wildland fire use (WFU) for each field office. Areas designated as suitable for WFU in Plan Amendment were limited to the vegetation cover types that have degraded over the last century because of too little fire, shifts in species dominance, and accumulation of fuels. These cover types include Aspen/Conifer, Dry Conifer, Mid-elevation Shrub, Juniper, Mountain Shrub, and Wet/Cold Conifer. WFU may be allowed in sage grouse habitats for the benefit of the habitat only after site-specific project level consultation/collaboration with Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve are not included in the following figures.

Table 3. Acres Suitable and Not Suitable for Wildland Fire Use By Field Office

Field Office	Not Suitable	Suitable
Upper Snake	1,289,300	501,700
Pocatello	147,000	470,300
Burley	465,000	394,700
Shoshone	1,073,000	382,600
Total Acres	2,974,300	1,749,300

Treatment Levels

In implementing the Plan Amendment, approximately 1,538,000 footprint-acres will be treated over a 10-year period. Figure 2 identifies the vegetation type and graphically illustrates the 10-year treatment-acres for the various treatment methods (i.e., WFU, mechanical and chemical treatment, prescribed fire, and seeding). Table 4 summarizes treatment acres by treatment type for the next 10 years.

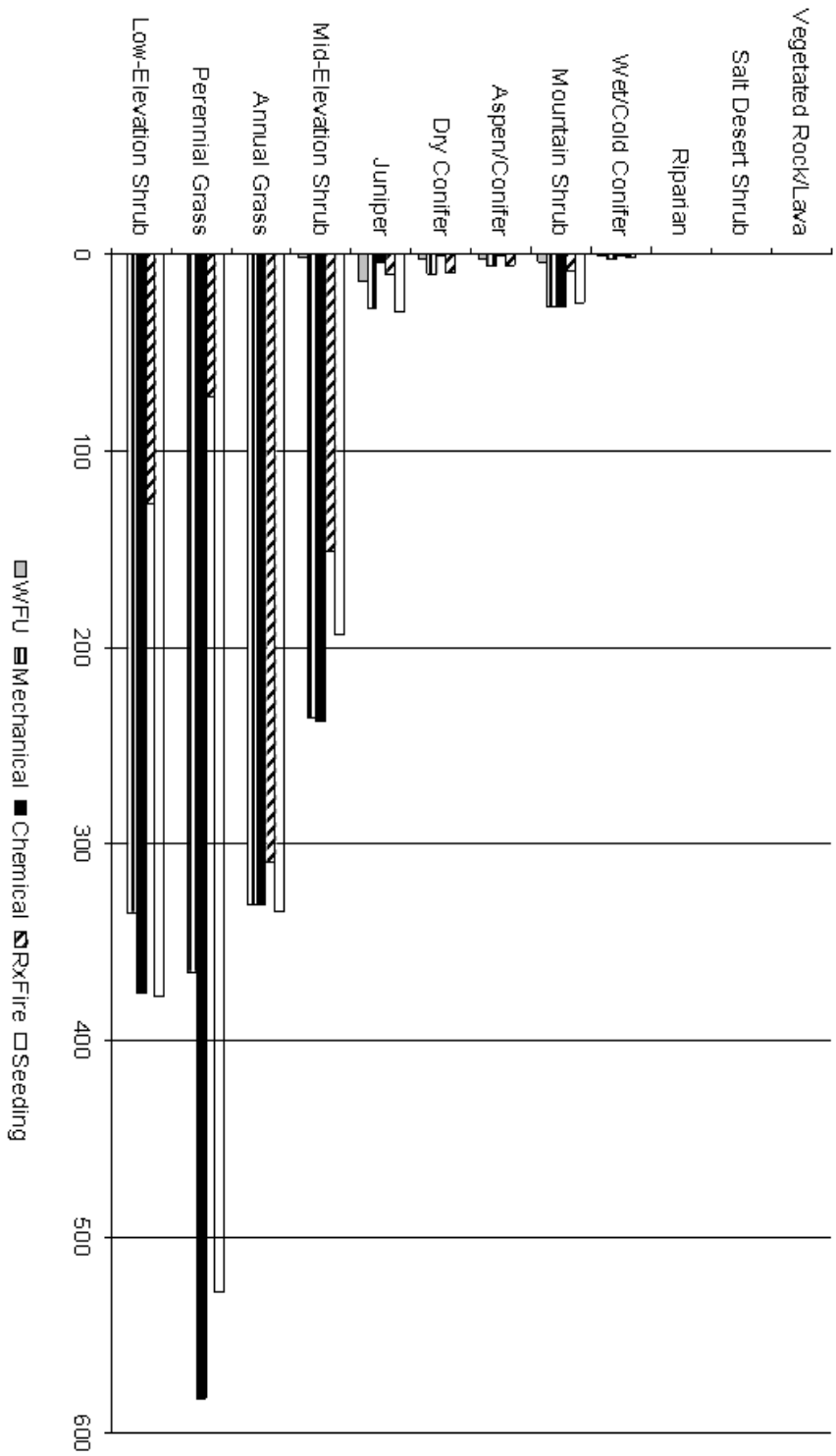
Table 4. Planning Area Total Footprint and Treatment Acres by Treatment Type.

Footprint Acres	Wildland Fire Use	Mechanical	Chemical	Prescribed fire	Seeding
1,538,000	19,300[1]	1,338,000	1,504,000	692,000	1,486,000

[1] Approximately 19,300 acres in Aspen/Conifer, Dry Conifer, Mountain Shrub and Juniper to improve sage grouse habitat.

Plan Amendment treatment levels were established by wildlife biologists and fire ecologists who determined treatment levels needed to: (1) maintain existing, high-quality sagebrush steppe habitat and to increase the quantity of sagebrush steppe in shrub steppe ecosystems and (2) replicate historical disturbance rates and succession patterns for the vegetation types of the

Figure 2. Vegetation Type and 10-Year Total Treatment Acres by Treatment Type



planning area where more fire is desired, while protecting the WUI to meet the goals and priorities set in the Cohesive Strategy.

Implementation

Field office and fire management staff will implement the Plan Amendment direction. Field office interdisciplinary teams, including both fire and resource specialists, will plan and analyze specific projects. The development of each project incorporating WFU, prescribed fire and non-fire vegetation treatments will include public involvement and the preparation of a NEPA document for each project to be implemented.

Within the scope of this analysis, the Plan Amendment is designed to allow for adaptive management. Adaptive management would allow project planners the flexibility to respond to changes in resource conditions or as new information becomes available from continued monitoring and evaluation. The assumptions set forth above provide the guidance to focus on needs identified on the ground as they are considered on a project-by-project basis.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Accomplishing management objectives outlined in this plan will be determined through the collection of data at a programmatic level. Data used in this analysis to determine current conditions and analyze effects (average annual acres of wildland fire, number of fire starts, and WFU/ESR/vegetation/fuels treatment acres, collected over a 10-year period) will be used to confirm that management actions are leading toward DFC and other plan amendment objectives.

Monitoring data will be compiled and analyzed by field office personnel and summarized by field office. Monitoring data will be evaluated as needed to detect changes in current conditions and answer specific management questions aimed at determining whether the proposed management actions are meeting the Plan Amendment objectives. The monitoring and evaluation plan for the Plan Amendment is described in Table 5.

The plan monitoring and evaluation strategy includes the following:

- Reassess percent of landscape existing by vegetation type, by age class using large fire, and vegetation treatment data.
- Recalculate current conditions and compare the DFC at the field office level when RMP revision is completed.
- Calculate how many fires have occurred and how many acres have burned and been treated in WUI.
- Summarize results in a 10-year report.

Table 4. Plan Amendment Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

Goal/ Objective	Question?	Parameters Monitored	Monitoring Activity		Indicator	Reporting Frequency
Vegetation types are moving toward their historic range of age class variability and distribution across the landscape.	Are management activities moving vegetation toward DFC?	Vegetation/Fuel Age Class for: • Low-elevation shrub • Mid-elevation shrub • Mountain shrub • Aspen/Conifer/Dry Conifer • Salt desert shrub • Vegetated rock • Wet/Cold Conifer	Collect wildland fire, WFU, ESR and pro-active vegetation treatment perimeter data and year of occurrence in geographical information systems (GIS).	Vegetation/ Fuel age class acreage and percent by vegetation type.	Every 10 years or more frequently if vegetation conditions warrant.	
		Uncharacteristic vegetation acres	Use satellite imagery and/or field surveys to re-map cheatgrass and noxious weed acres.	Total cheatgrass and noxious weed dominated acreage and percent by vegetation type.	Every 10 years or more frequently if vegetation conditions warrant.	
Sage grouse source habitat is being protected or enhanced.	Are management activities resulting in improvement in sagebrush steppe?	Vegetation/Fuel Age Class for: • Low-elevation shrub • Mid-elevation shrub • Mountain shrub	Collect wildland fire, WFU, ESR and pro-active vegetation treatment perimeter data and year of occurrence in GIS.	Vegetation/ Fuel age class acreage and percent by vegetation type.	Every 10 years or more frequently if vegetation conditions warrant.	
		Uncharacteristic vegetation acres	Use satellite imagery and/or field surveys to re-map cheatgrass and noxious weed acres.	Total cheatgrass and noxious weed dominated acreage and percent by vegetation type.		
Decrease fire frequency and size in the vicinity of the WUI.	Are management activities reducing fire risk to WUI?	Wildland Fire occurrence in WUI.	Map fire starts and calculate number of fire starts within each WUI polygon.	Total number of fire starts per year by WUI polygon.	Every 10 years or more frequently if vegetation conditions warrant.	
		Average fire size in WUI.	Map large fires[1] and calculate average fire size within each WUI polygon.		Total acres burned and average fire size by WUI polygon.	

[1] Large fire is defined as any wildfire on BLM-administered public lands that is greater than 10 acres in size. Current BLM policy requires that large fires be recorded annually in GIS.

Field office managers will ensure data is collected and would evaluate periodically to determine, among other things, the need for revising this proposed amendment. As policy dictates, wildfire, WFU, and vegetation treatment locations and acres will be recorded. Formal evaluation and reporting will occur every 10 years, unless field office managers deem a shorter timeframe warranted by changes in vegetation condition (i.e., above average annual acreage burned by wildfire). The 10-year report will include a summarization of the above mentioned data and analysis of this data to determine whether resource conditions have moved toward DFC and/or have met other management objectives outlined in this amendment.

In addition to the programmatic monitoring plan described above, monitoring will also be completed at the site-specific level, which will be used to determine if treatments have been successful and if conditions are moving toward site-specific objectives. Site specific monitoring will be performed in compliance with the field office Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plans (NFRPs) for ESR. Pro-active vegetation management treatments will be monitored at the site-specific level following BLM state and national protocols outlined in handbooks and policy. As future resource management planning efforts are undertaken at the field office level, analysis methods may change. As a result, monitoring methods may change. Even though analysis and monitoring methods may change in future planning efforts, broad-scale programmatic monitoring as described above will continue over the life of this amendment.

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a rational approach to decision-making in natural resource management. Adaptive management of natural resources is fueled by a monitoring program that acts as an early-warning system for resource problems, and which facilitates the evaluation and planning phases in deciding which actions to implement. Under adaptive management, planning decisions and implementation actions are based upon real-world information and data. Adaptive management is a cyclic, active feedback process (Figure 3) with four important components: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) monitoring, and (4) evaluation. No one component is more important than the others, though information gained through periodic monitoring and evaluation keeps this process cycling. Adaptive management only occurs when all four activities are regularly performed. The constant feedback nature of adaptive management facilitates management flexibility and reduces the chances of missed opportunities.

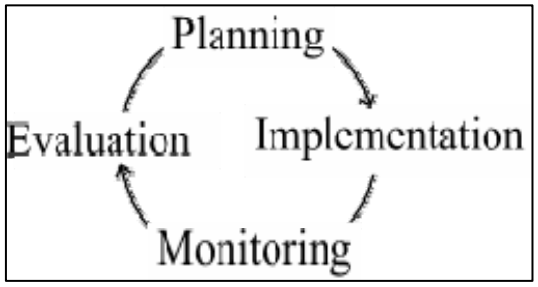


Figure 3. The Adaptive Management Cycle.

Monitoring (data collection) and evaluation (data analysis) are critical to gaining reliable information and data about natural resources, which are essential for rational planning decisions to implement new management actions or maintain present activities.

As a decision-making process, adaptive management evaluates the outcomes of management actions, and then uses this information to direct or change management. Approached in this

manner, management actions/activities are treated as working hypotheses, not final solutions to complex ecological problems. Monitoring and evaluation provide continued feedback (information and data), upon which a resource manager can make informed decisions. An effective monitoring program keeps resource managers abreast of current conditions and gives them the information and data to adapt management actions/activities to changing resource conditions.

In other words, adaptive management facilitates corrective management actions intended to repair ecosystem functions and processes. Evaluation tests whether management actions are achieving expected results or not. When results are being achieved, management actions continue unchanged. If management actions are determined to be ineffective or even counter-productive, adaptive management can redirect management actions to better achieve goals/objectives. Assuming that an ecosystem is healthy, adaptive management can facilitate maintaining ecosystem processes within normal fluctuations of climate and environment. Adaptive management requires monitoring and evaluation to feed the decision process.

Adaptive management in this case means analyzing, monitoring, and evaluating the broad-scale indicators outlined previously in Table 5. Answers to the management questions will be evaluated as monitoring studies are completed. A detailed report will be compiled at least once every ten years. If management objectives are not being met, the objectives set forth in this analysis will be re-evaluated to determine if a plan amendment is necessary.

Management Restrictions, Conservation Measures and Guidelines

Management restrictions will be applied with the intent to protect sensitive resources. These include restrictions for: wildland fire suppression, fire and non-fire vegetation treatments, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation. Conservation measures for sage grouse and Commnity Assistance and Protection Guidelines have also been incorporated and will be applied as appropriate. All restrictions, conservaton measures and guidelines are intended to prevent significant impacts to natural and human resources and to meet current BLM state or federal policy. Since wildland fire suppression is generally considered an emergency action, the agency administrator could choose to override the restrictions to protect life, property, or valuable resources.

This section lists the resource disciplines for which restrictions were developed. This includes restrictions from the USFWS concurrence letter of June 20, 2006 (Appendix O) to protect threatened, endangered, and candidate species. Restrictions are organized according to the resource discipline they affect. They were considered in the analysis of all alternatives and will be applied as appropriate during the implementation of the Plan Amendment.

Wildland Fire Suppression Restrictions

Suppression restrictions were developed for the following resource disciplines:

- Fire Management
- Cultural Resources and Historic Trails
- Noxious Weeds
- Human life, communities, infrastructure, and property
- Recreation
- Riparian Areas
- Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Vegetation
- Wildlife
- Threatened, Endangered, Candidate and Proposed Species

The following suppression restrictions will be applied to all suppression actions occurring throughout the Planning Area, consistent with National Fire Policy (NFP) and land use plan LUP direction:

Fire Management

- A Wildland Fire Situation Analysis will be initiated when fires escape initial attack, as per the Redbook (Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations).
- Interagency cooperation will be maintained to facilitate coordinated fire management activities across administrative boundaries.
- Wildland fire suppression activities will continue to exercise Tribal trust responsibilities.
- If fire escapes initial attack, a BLM resource advisor will be assigned to ensure that resource management concerns are adequately addressed and that necessary mitigation occurs.
- If public health and safety; wildland urban interface; sage grouse habitat; any ACEC; Resource Natural Area; congressionally designated watershed; or any other area of concern is being threatened or has the potential to be threatened, the appropriate manager will be notified of the threat and a resource advisor will be dispatched.
- Prior to wildland fire season potential areas of conflict between archeological resources and wildland fire suppression activities should be identified.

Cultural Resources and Historic Trails

- Dozer blading should not occur within 300 feet of playas or dry lakebeds to protect cultural resources. Buffer zones greater than 300 feet from playas and dry lake beds are preferable.
- Dozer blading should not occur within 300 feet of known historic trails, cultural sites, National Register of Historic Places Districts, Landmarks, and ACECs designated for cultural resources.
- Through the Field Office Manager (FOM) or Resource Advisor, an archaeologist will be notified to: 1) provide technical expertise, 2) identify cultural resources that may be encountered, and 3) identify best cultural protection practices to be used during suppression activities. Examples of cultural protection practices may include but are not limited to:
    - manual reduction of fuels from vulnerable sites/features; disposal of debris away from cultural features.

- Creation of fire breaks near or around sites.
- Wrapping of structures in fire proof materials or use of retardant/foam to protect structures.
- Flush-cutting and covering of stumps with dirt, foam, or retardant where subsurface cultural resources could be affected.
- Identification of and reduction of hazard trees next to structures.
- Use of low intensity, backing fire in areas near historic features.
- Saturation of ground/grass adjacent to vulnerable structures with water, foam, or gel before burning.
- Covering of rock art or wrapping of carved trees, dendroglyphs, and other such features in fire retardant fabric.
- Limbing of carved trees to reduce ladder fuels.
- Reduction of fuels and smoke near rock art.
- Covering of fuels near rock art with foam, water, or retardant, avoiding the rock art.

Noxious Weeds

- To minimize spread of noxious weeds, equipment used for extended attack or Type I/II incidents should be cleaned before arriving on-site and prior to leaving the incident. Staging areas and fire camps should avoid sites with noxious weed infestations.

Recreation

- Developed recreation sites and structures on public lands will be protected.
- Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) guidelines will be followed where appropriate as identified in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (USDA and USDI 2006).

Riparian Areas

- Dozer blading should not occur within 300 feet of perennial streams unless approved by the authorized officer. Buffer zones greater than 300 feet from riparian areas are preferable.
- Application of retardant or foam, adjuvant/surfactant should be avoided within riparian areas and 300 feet adjacent to riparian areas and waterways.

Special Designations (WSAs, ACECs)[2]

- Within Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), wildland fire management activities would follow BLM Manual H-8550-1, Interim Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. The use of earth-moving equipment within these areas requires approval of the authorized officer.
- Fire camps and staging areas should be placed outside of special management areas.
- Use of natural firebreaks and existing roads and trails to contain a wildland fire would be encouraged.

[2] These restrictions do not apply to the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. Refer to the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve General Management Plan and Record of Decision (September 2006) for specific management restrictions.

- The resource values, hazards present, and management prescriptions within specific areas would be evaluated when applying guidelines to ACECs.

Vegetation

- Blading should occur on existing roads where possible. Blading through undisturbed areas, especially those supporting native cover types, should be avoided unless necessary to protect life, property, or resource values.

Wildlife

- When conducting fire suppression actions, species with recovery plans, conservation agreements, Partners in Flight species, and Birds of Conservation Concern will be protected as specified in their respective plans or agreements.
- Establishment of control lines, base camps, and support facilities in known special status species habitat will be avoided unless life and property are threatened.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

The following restrictions apply to Threatened, Endangered, Candidate or Proposed species and to designated critical habitat.

- Fire fighter safety and public safety are top priorities in response to fire suppression. At no time will the activities described in this EIS compromise fire fighter safety and public safety.
- The BLM will coordinate annually with the USFWS to update species status in the planning area.
- Field Managers will ensure resource staff initiates emergency consultation with the USFWS whenever suppression activities may impact listed species habitat and, more specifically, during emergency suppression actions to protect life and property.
- Control lines, base camps, support facilities, and other suppression-related facilities should not be established within:
  - 1/2 mile of known bald eagle or yellow-billed cuckoo nests (February 1-August 15)
  - 1 mile of occupied gray wolf den sites (April 15 - June 30)
  - 300 feet of occupied Ute ladies'-tresses habitat
  - 300 feet of all water bodies and springs occupied by T & E and Candidate species
  - Secure habitat within designated grizzly bear management unit (BMU).
- Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) guidelines will be followed in occupied T&E and Candidate species habitat where appropriate (Appendix T in Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations, 2005). MIST guidelines direct suppression techniques, procedures, tools, and equipment that least impact the environment. Wet-lining (using water to soak/saturate fuels) is the preferred fireline construction tactic.
- Field Managers will assign a Resource Advisor or other designated representative as per the current Red Book guidance.
  - BLM will notify USFWS when appropriate to discuss T&E species mitigation within the suppression area to assure conservation practices are being followed to avoid adverse effects.

  - When Incident Management Teams (IMTs) are required, the Resource Advisor will brief the IC about conservation measures needed to avoid adverse effects.
- Where grizzly bears may reasonably occur:
  - The BLM Resource Advisor will brief all fire crews on general operating procedures including proper bear safety, sanitation, and food storage.
  - Incident Commanders, Fire Management Officers, and Scouts should be equipped with and trained to use bear deterrent spray.
  - Garbage should be disposed of in bear-proof containers when possible and removed from camps daily, preferably in the evening.
- No water-dipping by helicopters will occur within 1/2 mile of any occupied bald eagle nest.
- Fuel storage, fuel trucks, and refueling activities will not occur within 300 feet of live waters containing T&E and Candidate species. The current Planning Area Hazardous Material plan will be followed to ensure T&E and Candidate species and habitat will not be adversely affected in the event of a spill.
- Dozer blading should not occur within 300 feet of perennial streams or their tributaries occupied by T&E and Candidate species.
- Drafting equipment for pumps will be properly screened to prevent entrapment of T&E fish species. Maximum screen mesh size shall be 3/32-inch diameter.
- Any sump created by blocking flow in any occupied T&E habitat will be performed in coordination with a natural resource specialist to prevent dewatering.
- If chemical products will be injected into the system, water will not be pumped directly from the streams. If chemicals are needed, water will be pumped from a portable tank, or a backflow check valve will be used.
- Application of retardant or foam (aerial or ground) will be avoided within 300 feet of perennial streams or their tributaries occupied by T&E and Candidate species pursuant to the current Red Book guidance.
- To minimize spread of noxious weeds, equipment used for extended attack or Type I/II incidents should be cleaned before arriving on-site and prior to leaving the incident. Staging areas and fire camps will avoid sites with noxious weed infestations.

TES Reporting Requirements

Because of the programmatic nature of this EIS process, the exact timing, site-specific suppression methods, location, and size of fires are currently unknown. In order to monitor the impacts of wildland fire-suppression activities, the Level I team will meet immediately after the fire season to review a summary of activities (fire suppression) that may have occurred in or adjacent to T&E and Candidate habitat. If the Level I team identifies fire-suppression activities for which more information is needed to ascertain potential effects to the environmental baseline for a particular listed or candidate species, BLM will provide a report providing the necessary information identified by the Level I team to the USFWS Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office or the Eastern Idaho Field Office no later than December 31 for the preceding 12-month period. The types of information that may be needed include:

- The location, timing, size, intensity, and suppression activities used for each fire.

- Any mitigations used during fire-suppression activities to avoid effects to T&E and Candidate species and habitat, any T&E and Candidate species or habitat affected, and the estimated extent of effects.
- Results of post-fire reviews and monitoring.

Fire and Non-Fire Vegetation Treatment Restrictions

Fire and non-fire vegetation treatment restrictions will be applied to site-specific restoration and hazardous fuels reduction treatment actions for the following disciplines:

- Vegetation
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources and Historic Trails
- Hazardous Materials and Abandoned Mine Sites
- Livestock Grazing
- Special Management Areas
- Placeholder Species
- Riparian Areas
- Special Designations (WSAs, ACECs)
- Visual Resources
- Wildlife
- Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species

The following fire and non-fire vegetation treatment restrictions will be applied to site-specific restoration and hazardous fuels reduction treatment actions occurring throughout the Planning Area, as appropriate and consistent with NFP policy and LUP direction.

Vegetation Management

- No chemical treatment would conflict with national vegetative treatment guidance in existence at the time of application. To reduce potential resource impacts from chemical treatments, herbicide use would conform to application criteria described in the 2007 Record of Decision for Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States or in subsequent revisions and/or replacements of this document. Use would conform to instructions from BLM Manual 9011 Chemical Pest Control, as well as label restrictions and current policies and state statutes. In addition, the prescription for herbicide application (desired, optimum environmental conditions) would evaluate off-site migration and non-target species by assessing wind speed and direction, temperature, precipitation forecast, soil infiltration potential, constraints on overland water transport due to precipitation or flooding, establishment of riparian buffer strips, and risk to special status species. Fishery and/or wildlife biologists would assist project planners in selecting appropriate herbicides for use among or near terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna sensitive to herbicides.
- The economic effects of alternative fuels management practices would be considered. Local involvement and economic benefits from fuels reduction projects would be promoted.
- Collaboration with local partners to assess WUI areas would be continued, and existing CWPPs would be updated to implement fuels treatments.
- There would be no Healthy Forest Restoration Act treatments in old-growth forests.
- Vegetation treatment activities would continue to exercise Native American Tribal trust responsibilities.

- Fuels treatments would be utilized to reduce the overall threat of the establishment and spread of noxious/invasive plant species.
- The economic effects of alternative fuels management practices would be considered. Local involvement and economic benefits from fuels reduction projects would be promoted.
- Collaboration with local partners to assess WUI areas and to update existing County Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) would continue.

Air Quality

- All fire activities on BLM-administered lands would be coordinated with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group Smoke Management Program. Under this program, prescribed fire and WFU could be restricted when regional or local air quality is compromised, or if the project would negatively affect visual quality in Class 1 Airsheds (Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, Bridger Wilderness, Sawtooth Wilderness, and Craters of the Moon Wilderness), Non-attainment Areas, and sensitive receptors.

Cultural Resources and Historic Trails

- The FO will ensure that existing cultural and paleontological data and information is reviewed and that required and appropriate cultural resource inventories/surveys are completed prior to implementing site-specific fuels projects to meet BLM policy.
- A Class II or Class III inventory will be conducted for all proposed prescribed fire areas unless previous inventory has been deemed adequate in consultation with the SHPO and Native American Tribes.
- All prescribed fires and fuels projects will be subject to further site-specific analyses and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act compliance and consultation.
- All proposed fire and non-fire (mechanical, chemical, and seeding) vegetation treatment actions will be assessed in consultation with the SHPO and Native American Tribes for their potential to affect cultural resources. Where previous inventory has been sufficient to identify vulnerable cultural resources, no inventory should be needed. However, where adequate inventory is lacking, appropriate and required inventory of the area as determined in consultation with the SHPO will be conducted.
- Fire project planners should coordinate with the archeologist to incorporate, as necessary, best cultural protection practices in burn plans. Examples of cultural protection practices to be considered may include but are not limited to:
    - Manual reduction of fuels on vulnerable sites/features; disposal of debris away from cultural features.
    - Use of low-intensity backing fire in areas near historic features.
    - Saturation of ground/grass adjacent to vulnerable structures with water, foam, or gel before burning.
    - Pre-burning of site(s) at lower intensity than planned for surrounding areas.
    - Limiting fire intensity and duration over vulnerable sites.
    - Use of a fast-moving, higher intensity fire over lithic scatters, where rock materials are vulnerable to longer-duration heating.
    - Creation of fire breaks near or around sites.

  - Wrapping of structures in fire-proof materials or use of retardant/foam to protect structures.
  - Flush-cutting and covering of stumps with dirt, foam, or retardant where subsurface cultural resources could be affected.
  - Identification of and reduction of hazard trees next to structures.
  - Covering of rock art or wrapping of carved trees, dendroglyphs, and other such features in fire retardant fabric.
  - Limbing of carved trees to reduce ladder fuels.
  - Reduction of fuels and smoke near rock art.
  - Covering of fuels near rock art with foam, water, or retardant, avoiding the rock art.
- Cultural resources will be given full consideration during subsequent site-specific NEPA processes. This consideration provides for review of existing literature on previous inventories, field inventory of unsurveyed areas, documentation and evaluation of identified sites, analysis of site-specific effects, application of appropriate management actions to reduce anticipated adverse effects, and consultation with the SHPO and affected Tribes.
- Dozer blading should not occur within 300 feet of known historic trails, cultural sites, Register of Historic Places Districts, Landmarks and ACECs designated for cultural resources.

Hazardous Materials and Abandoned Mine Sites

- Hazardous materials and abandoned mine sites identified within any specific fuels management or vegetation treatment area would be avoided.
- The use of hazardous substances (e.g., retardant, foam, gasoline in riparian zones, and explosives) for fire control would be avoided whenever practical.

Livestock Grazing

- All treatment areas would be rested from livestock grazing until project-specific monitoring identified in site-specific project plans and/or NEPA documents show that resource objectives have been met. Resumption of grazing would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Placeholder Species

- Plant materials used in re-vegetation actions would be native when appropriate and practical. However, desirable non-native species may be used in re-vegetation actions on harsh or degraded sites, when native seed is not available, or where they would structurally mimic the natural plant community and prevent soil loss and invasion by exotic annual grasses and noxious weeds. The species used would be those that have the highest probability of establishment on these sites. These "placeholders" would maintain the area for potential future native restoration. Native seed would be used more frequently and at larger scales as species adapted to local areas become more available.

Recreation

- Treatments in developed or high-use recreation areas would be designed to minimize impacts to the recreational resource or users.
- Treatments would be designed to minimize impacts to character of the managed recreation setting and to the recreation experiences and benefits desired by the recreation participant. In areas where the character of the setting and/or the desired benefit outcomes are not defined, treatments would be designed to minimize impacts to the recreational resource or users.

Riparian Areas

- No dozer blading should occur within 300 feet of perennial streams. Buffer zones greater than 300 feet are preferable.

Special Designations (WSAs, ACECs)[3]

- Within WSAs, fuels and vegetation treatments and WFU should follow BLM Manual H-8550-1, *Interim Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review.* The use of earth-moving equipment within these areas requires approval of the authorized officer; however, minimizing use of tools is the preferred practice.

Visual Resources

- Treatments occurring in areas classified or inventoried as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I and II would consider visual qualities to preserve the landscape character. Wherever possible, landscape modifications would replicate the natural line, form, color, and texture found in the surrounding area. Treatments that result in long-term disruption of natural visual qualities (e.g., drill seeding that establishes vegetation rows) should be avoided or hidden by design.

Wildlife

- Seasonal guidelines may be applied if needed to mitigate the impacts to big game species from planned fuels management and vegetation treatments as specified in the LUPs identified in Table 1.
- Restrictions may be imposed on fuels management and vegetation treatment projects in areas supporting nesting raptors as per amended LUPs (Table 1). Treatment proposals would be coordinated with IDFG.
- Species with recovery plans, conservation agreements, Partners in Flight species, and Birds of Conservation Concern will be protected as specified in their respective plans/agreements.
- Habitat Conservation Assessment and Conservation Strategies have been prepared and are currently being implemented for the following BLM sensitive species: Townsend's big-eared bat, wolverine, spotted bat, white headed woodpecker, trumpeter swan, northern goshawk, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage grouse (Idaho plan

[3] These restrictions do not apply to the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. Refer to the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve General Management Plan and Record of Decision (September 2006) for specific management restrictions.

pending), mountain quail, Idaho dunes tiger beetle, Bonneville cutthroat trout, bull trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, red band trout and leather sided chub.

- Vegetation treatments proposed in areas supporting sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse would be coordinated with IDFG and would be implemented under LUP guidance or restrictions.
- Seasonal guidelines may be applied to mitigate the impacts to big game species from planned vegetation treatments as specified in LUPs.
- During implementation, the Proposed Plan Amendment directs collaboration with the appropriate local, state, and federal agencies to promote public education on species at risk, including their importance to the human and biological community and the rationale behind the protective measures that would be applied to their habitats.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

The following restrictions apply to proposed habitats occupied by T&E and Candidate species and designated critical habitat.

- Treatment activities may occur near or adjacent to T&E and Candidate species habitat and will be designed to minimize or mitigate impacts to habitat occupied by T&E and Candidate species and designated critical habitat so that the species or their habitats will not be adversely affected. All fire and non-fire vegetation treatment activities in areas that may affect T&E and Candidate species would be conducted in consultation with USFWS. Further, all such activities would be designed and implemented in such a manner that potential impacts to T&E and Candidate species from disturbance or habitat modification would be extremely unlikely to occur or would be so small as to not be meaningfully measured, detected, or analyzed.
- T&E and Candidate species with recovery plans, conservation agreements, and conservation strategies will be protected as specified in their respective plans/agreements/strategies. These protections include such measures as adequate habitat and range for a given species, including mitigation measures for multiple land use activities authorized by the BLM.
- Herbicide applicators will obtain a weather forecast for the area prior to initiating a spraying project to ensure no extreme precipitation or wind events could occur during or immediately after spraying. Aerial application of herbicides will not occur during periods of inversion. Spraying will follow label instructions.
- Fuels management and vegetation treatment activities would be conducted according to standards and guidelines in The Pacific Bald Eagle Recovery Plan, 1986. The planning area within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem would conduct fuels management and vegetative treatments according to standards and guidelines in the Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Management Plan (Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Working Group 1996). No vegetation treatment activities would occur within a one-half-mile radius of bald eagle nesting zones from February 1 to July 31. No activities associated with this Plan Amendment would occur within one half mile (direct line of site) or one quarter mile of winter bald eagle concentration sites from November 1 to March 1.

- Riparian cottonwood forests with willow understories that may be impacted by fuels management and vegetation treatments would be surveyed for yellow-billed cuckoos prior to initiating project activities. When developing vegetation treatment projects, no ground-based application of herbicides would occur from May 1 to August 31 within 200 feet of occupied yellow-billed cuckoo habitat.
- Aerial application of chemicals would not occur from May 1 to August 31 within one-half mile of occupied yellow-billed cuckoo habitat.
- Fuels management and vegetation treatment areas within the BMUs would be coordinated with U.S. Forest Service activities to comply with road density restrictions and number and juxtaposition of management activities with BMUs, as provided for in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS 1993) or the Final Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Yellowstone Area (USFWS 2003).
- When developing vegetation treatment projects, open and total motorized access routes or trail density within BMUs would not increase. When developing vegetation treatment projects within BMUs, the Bureau will coordinate with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee to develop/implement sanitation guidelines.
- Gray wolf *(Canis lupus)* populations in the area, which includes portions of the Planning Area, have been designated as experimental/nonessential. Presence or absence of gray wolf dens or rendezvous sites in fuels management or vegetation treatment areas would be determined prior to initiating projects. In the event active den or rendezvous sites are established within the planning area, vegetation treatments would be designed and implemented to minimize noise disturbance or habitat modifications within one mile of the den or rendezvous sites from April 15 to June 30.
- Fuels management and vegetation treatments that may occur within the Little Lost River drainage would be conducted according to standards and guidelines developed for bull trout *(Salvelinus confluentus)* Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas on BLM lands within the geographic range of bull trout (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999a, 2002).
- No aerial application of herbicides would occur within one half mile of all water bodies and springs containing listed snails, Columbia spotted frog, and bull trout.
- No ground-based applications of herbicides, surfactants, or adjuvants would occur within 100 feet of perennial streams or their live water tributaries occupied by listed snails, Columbia spotted frog, and bull trout.
- Dozer blading would not occur within 300 feet of streams that have habitat occupied by T&E or Candidate Species.
- Ground-disturbing activities other than tree and shrub planting will not occur within 300 feet of all water bodies and springs containing listed snails, Columbia spotted frog and bull trout.
- No aerial application of herbicides would occur within one-half mile of all water bodies and springs containing listed snail, Columbia spotted frog and bull trout species.
- Treatments will follow PACFISH/INFISH guidelines in bull trout habitat.
- For those portions of the Snake River drainages where fuels management and vegetation treatments have the potential to affect populations of T&E Snake River mollusks, the Bureau will consult with the Service to ensure mitigation measures are adequate to avoid adverse effects to Snake River mollusks.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Restrictions

- The respective Field Office's Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan contains ESR restrictions that would be applied to all site-specific ESR actions as appropriate.

Selected Conservation Measures[4] to be Considered in Developing Vegetation Treatments Potentially Affecting Greater Sage-Grouse

Prescribed Fire

- Prior to planning prescribed burns or other vegetation management treatments in sagebrush communities, ensure that sage-grouse seasonal habitats have been mapped (see 5.3.2 for additional discussion of mapping).
- Once seasonal habitats have been mapped, ensure that proposed project areas have been evaluated on the ground in the context of the appropriate seasonal habitat characteristics (see 5.3.2).
- Avoid the use of prescribed fire and other sagebrush-reduction projects in areas where sagebrush is a limiting factor the landscape or in habitats that currently meet, or are trending toward meeting, breeding or winter habitat characteristics.
- If the analysis shows that a vegetation treatment may still be advisable, design habitat-manipulation projects to achieve the desired objectives, considering the following:
    - Where prescribed burning, or other treatments, in sage-grouse habitats may be warranted (e.g., sagebrush cover exceeds desired breeding or winter habitat characteristics; understory does not meet seasonal habitat characteristics and restoration is desired; there is a need to restore ecological processes; or a proposed treatment site is in an exotic seeding being managed for overall sage-grouse benefits on the surrounding landscape).
    - Project design should be done with interdisciplinary input and in cooperation with IDFG.
    - Ensure that any proposed sagebrush treatment acreage is conservative in the context of surrounding seasonal habitats and landscape.
    - Where appropriate, ensure that treatments are configured in a manner that promotes use by sage-grouse (see Connelly 2000 for additional discussion).
    - Leave adequate untreated sagebrush areas for loafing/hiding cover near leks for sage-grouse.
- Evaluate and monitor prescribed burns, and other treatments, as soon as possible after treatment and periodically thereafter to determine whether the project was successful and is meeting or trending toward desired objectives.
- Avoid the use of prescribed fire or other sagebrush treatments in habitats prone to the expansion or invasion of cheatgrass or other invasive species unless adequate measures are taken to control the invasive species and ensure subsequent dominance by desirable perennial species. In many—if not most—cases, this will likely require chemical treatments and reseeding.

[4] Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee. 2006. Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho

- Plan, execute, and monitor prescribed fires in a manner that provides for adequate control and provision for contingency resources.
- Ensure that burn plans address the importance of preventing escaped fires when prescription fires are planned in the vicinity of source and key habitat.

Annual Grasslands

- Local working groups (LWG), land management agencies, IDFG, and other partners should work closely together to identify and prioritize annual grassland areas for restoration. Work cooperatively to identify options, schedules, and funding opportunities for specific projects.
- In general, the priority for implementation of specific sage-grouse habitat restoration projects in annual grasslands should be given first to:
    - Sites adjacent to or surrounded by sage-grouse source habitats, then
    - Sites outside source habitats but adjacent to or within approximately two miles of key habitat, and
    - Sites beyond two miles of key habitat. The intent here is to focus restoration outward from existing, intact habitat.
- All seeding project designs should include measures for noxious weed control and monitoring for at least 3 years following implementation.
- Seed used in sage-grouse habitat restoration seedings, burned area rehabilitation projects, and hazardous fuels/wildland urban interface projects will be tested and certified as weed-free, based on prevailing agency policy and protocol. Private landowners are encouraged to use only certified seed, as well.
- In designing rehabilitation and restoration projects, use the best available science relative to seeding technology and plant materials. Use of NRCS's "VegSpec" website may be helpful. VegSpec is a web-based decision support system that assists land managers in the planning and design of vegetation establishment practices. VegSpec uses soil, plant, and climate data to select plant species that are site-specifically adapted, suitable for the selected practice, and appropriate for the purposes and objectives for which the planting is intended. (See http://plants.usda.gov).
- Design vegetation treatments in areas of high fire frequency to facilitate firefighter safety; reduce the risk of extreme fire behavior; reduce the risk and rate of fire spread to source, key, and restoration habitats; reduce fire frequencies; and shorten the fire season.
- Where rangelands are dominated by annuals (such as cheatgrass) or where they border farmlands or railroad right-of-ways, convert cheatgrass areas to perennials, or establish buffers of perennial species to reduce the risk of fire spread from railroad or agriculture-related activities (e.g., sparks from trains, field burns, burn barrels), where appropriate and feasible.
- To discourage the spread of invasive annuals and noxious weed seed, require the washing of fire vehicles (including undercarriage) prior to deployments and prior to demobilization from wildfire incidents.
- Human activities such as fence and pipeline maintenance or construction, facility maintenance, utility maintenance, or any project or related work at or within 1 km (0.6 miles) of occupied leks that results in or will likely result in disturbance to lekking birds

should be avoided from approximately 6:00 PM to 9:00 AM. In general, this guideline should be applied from March 15 through May 1 in lower elevation habitats and March 25 through May 15 in higher elevation habitats.

Perennial Grasslands

- LWGs, land management agencies, IDFG, and other partners should work closely together to identify and prioritize perennial grasslands (exotic versus native) where plant species diversity or sagebrush is limiting on the landscape. Further, they should work cooperatively to identify options, schedules, and funding opportunities for reestablishing sagebrush in higher priority areas.
- When seeding sagebrush, source-identified, tested seed adapted to local conditions should be used.
- One or more of the following approaches for restoring sagebrush should be considered to improve likelihood of success (see Dalzell 2004 and Monsen et al. 2004):
- Use of the "Oyer" compact row seeder, which compacts soil and presses seed into the surface.
- Use of the Brillion cultipacker seeder, where seed is broadcast over the surface followed by cultipacking.
- Transplant bare-root or containerized stock in small critical areas to establish a seed source.
- Use the "mother plant" technique, and transplant bare-root or containerized stock in select locations throughout the area to establish a seed source.
- For large areas (e.g., large wildland fires), aerial seed onto a rough seedbed (Monsen et al. 2004) coupled with one or more of the above options.
- In established stands of introduced perennial grasses, transplant sagebrush into strategic patches or strips in critical sites or throughout the area. Scalp spots or strips to reduce grass competition prior to planting. Or, as an alternative to scalps, consider the use of herbicides (see Monsen et al. 2004, Volume 3).
- Where the diversification of crested wheatgrass or similar seedings with native species of grasses, forbs, and/or shrubs is desired, Pellant and Lysne (2005) recommend a three-step process:
- Reduce competition of crested wheatgrass to facilitate the establishment and persistence of the desired species. Possibilities include use of livestock, capitalizing on drought episodes that reduce grass vigor, herbicides such as glyphosate, and mechanical treatments.
    - Introduce desired, site-adapted species through drill seeding; aerial seeding followed by harrow, cultipacker or chaining; livestock trampling; or transplanting container stock, bareroot stock, or individual plants from native sources ("wildings"). Lambert (2005) provides descriptions, recommended seeding rates, and other useful information for nearly 250 species of native and non-native grasses, forbs, and shrubs.
    - As part of post-treatment management, ensure that livestock grazing and rest intervals are matched with the phenology and life history characteristics of the desired/seeded/transplanted species. Implement monitoring to clearly document

how, what, when, and where treatments were implemented. Follow up with suitable effectiveness monitoring to document success of the treatments relative to project objectives.

Conifer Encroachment

- LWGs, land management agencies, IDFG, and other partners should work closely together to identify and prioritize conifer encroachment areas for further management action. Work cooperatively to identify options, schedules, and funding opportunities for specific projects. For western juniper, Miller et al. (2005) provide *Guidelines for Selecting the Most Appropriate Management Actions*, pages 54–57.
- IDFG, land management agencies, LWGs, and other partners should work closely together to identify leks where conifer encroachment may be affecting lek attendance or nearby habitat quality.
- Remove Douglas fir or other conifers where they are encroaching on wet meadows, riparian areas, or sagebrush stands that provide potential sage-grouse habitat.
- Remove juniper, Douglas fir, pinyon pine, or other trees within at least 100 m (330 ft) or an 8-acre area of occupied sage-grouse leks. Techniques could include chainsaw, chipper, or other suitable mechanical means. Ensure cutting and slash disposal is completed between approximately July 15 and January 30 to minimize disturbance to grouse that may be in the vicinity (e.g., males at leks, nesting females, and young broods). This practice serves to reduce raptor predation on sage-grouse by eliminating potential perches within view of leks, thereby improving survival, recruitment, and productivity. It may be particularly valuable where avian predation may be of greater concern such as in areas with fragmented habitat, nearby infrastructure features, and/or in the case of small, isolated sage-grouse populations.
- Where juniper or other conifer species have encroached upon sagebrush communities at larger scales, employ prescribed fire, chemical, mechanical (e.g., chaining, chipper, chainsaw, or commercial sale), or other suitable methods to reduce or eliminate juniper. Priority should be given to areas where there is a strong likelihood for recovery of perennial herbaceous vegetation or where preparatory and follow-up actions (e.g., control of invasive species and seeding) are likely to be successful. Whenever possible, but especially if sagebrush habitat is limited locally, use juniper-control techniques that are least disruptive to the affected stand of sagebrush. For example, if junipers are only scattered, and the associated sagebrush community is otherwise relatively healthy, cutting junipers with chainsaws will remove the encroachment threat while allowing for immediate use of the sagebrush by sage-grouse. In all cases, control efforts should be planned using interdisciplinary expertise.
- Where juniper control around leks is planned, monitor leks for at least three consecutive years post-treatment to document effects on lek attendance. Ideally, two to three years of pre-treatment monitoring is also recommended, but this may not always be feasible.

Community Assistance/Protection Guidelines

The following community assistance actions will be employed consistent with National Fire Plan (NFP) (USDI 2000) policy:

- Continue to collaborate with local partners to assess and define Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas, update existing County Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), and implement a prevention and education program.
- Work with other federal agencies, state, county, and private entities to update CWPPs.
- Provide Rural Fire Assistance (RFA), as identified in CWPPs, to rural fire districts. Assess and increase suppression capabilities and effectiveness by providing RFA to local fire suppression organizations.
- Provide planning and implementation assistance to private landowners so hazardous fuels can be reduced as identified in CWPPs.
- Provide funding to implement fire education projects identified in CWPPs.
- To reduce fuel hazards and the threat of wildland fire, including consideration of any local communities-at-risk.
- Continue to collaborate with local partners to assess WUI areas and update existing CWPPs to implement fuels treatments.