

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA

August 2011

Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Location:

Daggett County, Utah
T2N, R24E, Sections 15, 21, and 22; SLB&M.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction project. The EA is an analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or no action alternative. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any “significant” impacts could result from the analyzed actions. “Significance” is defined by NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI). A Decision Record (DR), which includes a FONSI statement, is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative will not result in “significant” environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the Vernal Resource Management Plan (2008). This document provides the environmental assessment for the Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose for the Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction project include:

- Reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels.
- Reduce pinyon-juniper encroachment into areas that have been predominantly sagebrush communities.
- Maintain natural fire return intervals.
- Maintain areas that provide for important ecological functions and habitat for keystone species.
- Maintain important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.
- Reduce the risk of soil erosion.
- Reduce the risk of large fire events.

The proposed action is needed to reduce the risk of wildfires leaving or entering the John Jarvie historic ranch and private property in close proximity to the project.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The alternatives considered in this EA are in conformance with the Vernal Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (2008). The specific citations are listed below:

Page 77 in section Goals and Objectives reads:

“The primary goal and objective of fire management is to help restore natural systems to their proper functioning condition by restoring fire to its legitimate role in the ecosystem, including managing wildland fire for other resource benefits.” and

“For Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas, the objective will be to reduce hazardous fuels adjacent to these at-risk areas through mechanical, prescribed fire, or chemical treatments, or a

combination thereof. The BLM will develop WUI Projects in partnership with the State of Utah, the Ute Indian Tribe, and Daggett, Duchesne, Uintah, and Grand Counties."

Page 78 in section Fire-4 reads: *Hazardous fuel reduction activities will be implemented primarily through the use of prescribed fire and managed wildland fire. In some cases, chemical and/or mechanical treatments will be used in conjunction with fire. Where social and/or resource constraints preclude the use of fire, mechanical and/or chemical treatments will be used.*

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS-

This project is in Daggett County.

Daggett County's General Plan of 1996, as amended in 2007, relative to public land concerns: All alternatives considered in detail in the EA would be consistent with the County's general planning objectives which state:

- *"Daggett County supports continuing "multiple use" management practices on public lands." Page 8 in section Multiple Use*
- *"The County will formally support additional wildlife management and habitat improvement programs to the extent that these programs complement other County interests." Page 11 in section Wildlife/Fisheries*
- *"Where once-available grazing forage in the Non-WSA East Daggett County Region has succeeded to pinion, juniper and other woody vegetation and associated biomass, or to cheat grass other invasive grasses and vegetation, or where rangeland health in the Non-WSA East Daggett County Region has suffered for any other reason, a vigorous program of chemical or mechanical treatments such as chaining, logging, seeding, lopping, thinning, burning, range improvements and/or other mechanical treatments should be applied to remove this woody vegetation and biomass, and/or invasive weeds, and stimulate the return of the native grazing forage to its historic levels for the mutual benefit of livestock, wildlife and other agricultural industries in the Non-WSA East Daggett County Region." Page 3 in 2007 amendment to Daggett County General Plan.*
- *"Where water resources in the Non-WSA East Daggett County Region have diminished because once-existing grasses have succeeded to pinion, juniper and other woody vegetation and associated biomass, a vigorous program of chemical or mechanical treatments should be applied to promptly remove this woody vegetation and biomass, stimulate the return of the grasses to historic levels, and thereby provide a watershed that maximizes water yield and water quality for livestock, wildlife, and human uses." Page 5 in 2007 amendment to Daggett County General Plan.*

Federal Statutes and Regulations

- Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; U.S.C. 594).
- Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; U.S.C. 315).
- Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955(69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856, 1856a).

- Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).
- The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701).
- Disaster Relief Act, Section 417 (Public Law 93-288).
- 2001 Annual Appropriations Acts for the Department of the Interior.
- United States Department of the Interior Manual (910 DM 1.3).
- 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.
- 2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Update).
- 1998 Departmental Manual 620 Chapter 1, Wildland Fire Management General Policy and Procedures.
- 1998 BLM Handbook 9214, “Prescribed Fire Management” describes authority and policy for prescribed fire use on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.
- September 2000, “Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment.”
- October 2000, National Cohesive Strategy goal is to coordinate an aggressive, collaborative approach to reduce the threat of wildland fire to communities and to restore and maintain land health.
- August 2001, “Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment -10 Year Comprehensive Strategy” provides a foundation for wildland agencies to work closely with all levels of government, tribes, conservation, and commodity groups and community-based restoration groups to reduce wildland fire risk to communities and the environment.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Invasive Plants / Noxious weeds

- Tall whitetop (*Lepidium latifolium*) State of Utah Noxious Weed

Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species

- Stemless beardtongue (*Penstemon acaulis* var. *acaulis*) BLM Sensitive
- Utes Ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) Federally Listed-Threatened

Wildlife and Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species

- Sage-grouse occupied: brood-rearing, and winter habitat.
- Mule Deer crucial winter habitat.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION:

2.1 Introduction

This EA focuses on the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

2.2 Proposed Action

In the project area the Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Utah Juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) trees have increased in overall density and encroached into the sagebrush habitat type in the project area, increasing the overall fuel loads. The vegetation in the project area is comprised of primarily juniper trees and Wyoming sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*). The sagebrush habitat is designated as a Fire Regime Group III (Fire return interval 35-100 years). The increased amounts of pinyon and juniper trees have resulted in a change in the Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) from a class I to a class II (Vernal Fire Management Plan, 2009). The departure from a class I condition class to a class II indicates that at least one cycle of the natural fire regime fire interval has been missed due to historic fire suppression efforts, manmade structures or changing vegetation conditions. The change from a class I to class II has resulted in an increase of the hazardous fuel loads in the project area. The pinyon-juniper trees have encroached into the sagebrush community in the project area, changing the composition of the vegetation from a sagebrush community to a woodland community.

The proposed action involves the reduction of approximately 395 acres of hazardous fuels by the thinning pinyon-juniper trees through a lop and scatter type of treatment. The lop and scatter treatment involves individuals cutting the pinyon-juniper trees with chainsaws and cutting them into pieces less than two feet in height. Stump heights will be below 12 inches and the debris would be scattered and left on site. No new access roads would be needed to access the project area and access would be via existing roads and trails. No surface disturbance is planned to occur.

The northeast area is a 155 acre pinyon-juniper site that has trees that are approximately 70 years old, averaging 8-10 feet in height, there are approximately 70-90 trees per acre. These areas are in a condition class II. The trees are co-dominant with shrubs and herbs, all three vegetation layers influence ecological processes. The treatment would transition the site from a condition class II back to a condition class I. This area is a semi-desert gravelly sandy loam soil type.

The southwest area is a 240 acre Wyoming sagebrush site that has pinyon-juniper trees encroaching into the site. The pinyon-juniper trees are less than 12 years old, less than 5 feet in height, and there are approximately 40-60 trees per acre. This area is described as a condition class I in the woodland succession stage. This treatment would maintain the site in a condition class I. This area contains a fairly deep semi-desert sandy loam soil type.

Treatment work is expected to occur after August 1. However, if treatment activities occur between May 1 and July 1, then a migratory bird survey would be conducted by a qualified

wildlife biologist to determine if there are migratory bird species of concern, as listed by the Partners in Flight Species of Concern for the Colorado Plateau. Nesting trees occupied by any of these species would be avoided, with a 50 meter buffer of no disturbance around each identified nesting tree/shrub, during the nesting period.

Weekend chainsaw work will be avoided to eliminate noise pollution for weekend recreationalist on the Green River and at the historic John Jarvie ranch.

There is an ephemeral stream near the project area (see attached map). This stream contains moisture during snowmelt and heavy rainfall events: all identified riparian areas will be avoided, and no surface disturbance will occur in these areas.

Known stemless beardtongue habitat will be avoided unless a pre-treatment survey confirms the absence of the BLM sensitive variety of this species, *Penstemon acaulis*, var. *acauli* (See map in Appendix C).

Known tall whitetop (Noxious weed) will be pre-treated, flagged and avoided during the project. The project area will be surveyed for new infestations of all State of Utah noxious weeds prior to treatment. If found these infestations will also be pre-treated, flagged and avoided prior to the proposed action.

2.3 No Action

Under this alternative, no hazardous fuel reduction actions would be taken. Current resource conditions and trends would continue. Pinyon-juniper trees would continue to encroach into the area; thus, outcompeting Wyoming sagebrush and changing the condition class and site condition. Woodland sites containing dominant pinyon-juniper trees lead to condition class II and III.

2.4 Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed

Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire was considered but not analyzed due to the following: threat of non-native invasive expansion, difficulties for fire control measures, and limiting visitor use for the Green River Corridor and Jarvie Historic Ranch.

The project contains a minimal amount of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) within the understory. The use of prescribed fire would likely result in an expansion of the cheatgrass species which typically responds favorably to fire. The expansion of cheatgrass from fire would likely increase the amount of the highly flammable fuel bed, and the overall hazardous fuel loading. The purpose and need is to decrease the hazardous fuel loading; therefore, the increase of the concentration of cheatgrass is directly opposite the desired condition.

The Red Creek area has many fire control concerns in the area: lack of natural barriers, presence of historical sites adjacent to the project area and the lack of man-made barriers.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

3.1 Introduction: This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment (i.e., the physical, biological, social, and economic values) of the project area as identified by the interdisciplinary team analysis and as presented in Chapter 1 of this assessment. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

3.2 General Setting: The project area is located approximately 1,000 feet north and west of the John Jarvie historic ranch in Daggett County. The project area is on the south facing gentle slope of Red Creek near the Green River, approximately nine miles east of Dutch John, Utah. The vegetation in the area consists primarily of pinyon pine, Utah juniper and Wyoming big sagebrush.

3.3 Resources Brought Forward for Analysis: During the analysis conducted by the interdisciplinary team, it was found that the following aspects of the environment could potentially be affected by the proposed action.

3.3.1 Vegetation/Fuels and Fire Management: The project area vegetation is comprised of primarily: Wyoming big sagebrush (*artemesia tridentata* var. *wyomingensis*), pinyon pine (*pinus edulis*), Utah juniper (*juniperus osteosperma*), bitterbrush (*purshia tridentata*), larkspur, poa, and western wheat grass. The Wyoming big sagebrush type has been designated as fire regime Group III where the historic natural fire interval is between 35-100 years. The condition class II designation indicates that the area has gone at least one fire interval period (35-100 years for this site) between fire events, due to historic fire suppression efforts. Due to this alteration in the fire regime and corresponding change in the fire condition class there has been a corresponding increase in the overall fuel loadings.

Sagebrush sites have experienced significant pinyon pine-juniper infilling and expansion during the last century in the Uintah Basin area. Pinyon-juniper has expanded into landscapes once dominated by an assemblage of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The expansion of PJ woodlands affects soil resources, water and nutrient cycles, forage production, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, plant communities, plant structure and fire patterns across the landscape. Another impact is the shift from historic fire regimes to larger and more intense wildfires that are increasingly determining the future of the landscape. A healthy sagebrush system is more adapted to withstand cheatgrass and other exotic weed species after fire and other disturbances.

3.3.3 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was implemented for the protection of migratory birds. Unless permitted by regulations, the MBTA makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including the feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products. In addition to the MBTA, Executive Order 13186 sets forth the responsibilities of Federal agencies to further implement the provisions of the MBTA

by integrating bird conservation principles and practices into agency activities and by ensuring that Federal actions evaluate the effects of actions and agency plans on migratory birds. The Utah Partners in Flight (UPIF) has prioritized migratory birds that are considered “most in need of conservation action, or at least need to be carefully monitored throughout their range within Utah.” These are also the species “that will be most positively influenced by management as well as those species with the greatest immediate threats” according to UPIF (Parrish et al. 2002). In addition, The Utah Steering Committee has identified approximately 542,967 acres of Bird Habitat Conservation Area’s (BHCA) within the VPA (USC 2005). BHCA’s are intended to display areas where bird habitat conservation projects may take place, predicated on concurrence, collaboration, and cooperation with all landowners involved; however, the BHCA’s have no official status.

Numerous species may migrate through, or nest within the project area. This section identifies migratory birds that may inhabit the project area such as BHCA’s or those that are classified, as High-Priority birds by Partners in Flight*, according to the habitat types found within the project area: *Sagebrush-Steppe*; horned lark, sage sparrow, sage thrasher*, Brewer’s sparrow*, western kingbird, Say’s phoebe, prairie falcon, green-tailed towhee*, and Swainson’s hawk. *Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands*; black-chinned hummingbird*, gray flycatcher*, gray vireo*, Lewis’ woodpecker, Clark’s nutcracker, pinyon jay, western scrub jay, black-throated gray warbler, bushtit, juniper titmouse*, northern shrike, Virginia’s warbler*, broad-tailed hummingbird*, mountain bluebird*, and Say’s phoebe.

Greater Sage-grouse (BLM Sensitive, Federal Candidate)

The greater sage-grouse is a BLM sensitive species, and a federal candidate for listing under the ESA. These birds inhabit sagebrush plains, foothills, and mountain valleys. Sagebrush is the predominant plant of quality habitat. Factors involved in the decline in both the distribution and abundance of greater sage-grouse include permanent loss, degradation, and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat throughout the western states including Utah (Heath et al.1996, Braun 1998). Documented severe populations declines (approximately 80%) occurred from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s. Research and conservation efforts in the last 20 years have help stabilize and recover many populations. Populations appear to have taken a slight positive turn in recent years. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) identifies occupied, brood, and winter habitat within the project area.

Raptors

Some of the more visible birds in and near the project area include golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, osprey, turkey vultures, and ravens. The BLM raptor database was reviewed and no known raptor nests were identified within the project area. Habitats in and around the project area provide diverse breeding and foraging habitat for raptors. These habitats include rocky outcrops, pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrub lands.

Big Game Species

Mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk are the primary big game species found within the project area. Use typically occurs from spring to winter, when elk and deer utilize the project area for calving, foraging, thermal cover and escape cover. Both species have an extremely variable diet and therefore live in a variety of habitats. They consume a combination of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Food consumption is also related to the season of use. Elk and deer eat mostly grasses and forbs during summer. During winter, elk move to lower elevations where they are found most often on south facing slopes, primarily in pinyon-juniper woodlands. Deer typically move down to lower elevation foothill areas.

Deer crucial winter habitat has been designated within the project area. This designation was made in the Vernal Field Office RMP.

Other wildlife species that are likely to occur in the project area include black bear, mountain lion, coyote, and bobcat, as well as a large variety of small mammals. Many of these species are habitat generalists, meaning they are not tightly restricted to specific habitat types. These species have not shown negative impacts by slashing operations; therefore, they will not be discussed further in this document.

Invasive, Non-native Species, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate plant species/Special Status plant Species

Ute Ladies'-tresses, *Spiranthes diluvialis*, (Federally Threatened) occurs within ¼ mile of the project area on both sides of the Green River riparian corridor. The nearest plants are approximately 1200 feet from the edge of the proposed disturbance. This distance exceeds the current USFWS informal consultation threshold of 300'. The proposed action is unlikely to generate sufficient fugitive dust, pollutants, or soil erosion to affect these populations. In addition, the riparian populations are separated geographically from the project by a steep slope that separates the bench vegetation where the fuel treatment is expected and the riparian corridor containing orchid habitats.

3.3.4 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Ongoing science has identified the potential impacts of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and changes in biological carbon sequestration due to land management activities on global climate. Through complex interactions on a regional and global scale, these GHG emissions and net losses of biological carbon sinks cause a net warming effect of the atmosphere, primarily by decreasing the amount of heat energy radiated by the earth back into space. Although GHG levels have varied for millennia, recent industrialization and burning of fossil carbon sources have caused CO₂ (e) concentrations to increase dramatically, and are likely to contribute to overall global climatic changes. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently concluded that “warming of the climate system is unequivocal” and “most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid- 20th century is very likely due to observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations” (IPCC 2007)

Global mean surface temperatures have increased nearly 1.8 degrees F. from 1890 to 2006 (Goddard, 2007). Models indicate that the average temperature changes are likely to be greater in the Northern Hemisphere. Northern latitudes have exhibited temperature increases of nearly 21 degrees since 1900, with a nearly 1.8 degree increase since 1970 alone. Without additional meteorological monitoring systems, it is difficult to determine the spatial and temporal variability and change of climatic conditions, but increasing concentrations of GHGs are likely to accelerate the rate of climatic change.

In 2001, the IPCC indicated that by the year 2100, global average surface temperatures would increase 2.5 to 10.4 degrees above 1900 levels. The National Academy of Sciences has confirmed these findings, but has also indicated there are uncertainties regarding how climate change may affect different regions. (National Academy of Sciences, 2006). Computer model predictions indicated that increases in temperature will not be equally distributed, but are likely to be accentuated at higher latitudes. Warming during the winter months is expected to be greater than during the summer, and increases in daily minimum temperatures is more likely than increases in daily maximum temperatures. Increases in temperatures would increase water vapor in the atmosphere, and reduce soil moisture, increasing generalized drought conditions, while at the same time enhancing heavy storm events. Although large-scale spatial shifts in precipitation may occur, these changes are more uncertain and difficult to predict.

Several activities contribute to the phenomena of climate change, including emissions of GHGs (especially carbon dioxide and methane) from fossil fuel development, large wildfires and activities using combustion engines, changes to the natural carbon cycle; and changes to radiative forces and reflectivity (albedo). It is important to note that GHGs will have a sustained climatic impact over different temporal scales. For example, recent emissions of carbon dioxide can influence climate for 100 years.

3.3.4 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

This project is within the Browns Park Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The relevant values for this ACEC are high value scenery, wildlife habitat, cultural and historic resources.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

4.1 Introduction: This Chapter analyzes the direct and indirect impacts that the proposed action and the no action alternative have on the resources identified in Chapter 1 and explained in Chapter 3. It also analyzes the cumulative impacts expected from other land use activities and recognizes actions that could take place in the reasonably foreseeable future.

4.2 Alternative A – Proposed Action

4.2.1 Vegetation/Fuels and Fire Management: Under this alternative, there would be 380 acres of fuel reduction activities. The pinyon-juniper trees would be removed and the desirable grasses, shrubs, and forbs are expected to increase in overall vigor and productivity as the competition with the pinyon-juniper trees for light, nutrients and water is drastically reduced. The treatment is expected to reduce the fuel loadings to the extent that the Condition Class would be maintained in a Class I condition.

4.2.3 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

Migratory Birds

Migratory bird species may be present during the breeding/nesting season from May 1 - August 1. If slashing operations were to take place during the breeding/nesting season, individual bird species could be impacted. Impacts may include; destruction of nests, eggs, and nesting habitat, fragmentation of habitat, reduction of habitat patch size, human presence during the breeding/nesting season can cause nest abandonment. Project activities are planned to occur after August 1. However, if treatment activities occur between May 1 and August 1, then a migratory bird survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist to determine if there are migratory bird species of concern present. Also, the proposed hazardous fuel reduction project targets younger pinyon-juniper trees and not the older, mature stands of pinyon-junipers which are favored by most pinyon-juniper bird species. Although there may be some short-term direct impacts to pinyon-juniper bird species, the long term benefit of the hazardous fuel reduction project would benefit sagebrush/grassland bird species, several of which are currently identified as BLM State Sensitive Species.

Greater Sage-grouse (BLM Sensitive, Federal Candidate)

The nearest known lek is located approximately 1.5 miles to the east of the project area. The UDWR has designated the project area as occupied, brood rearing, and winter habitat. Sage-grouse habitat use and requirements change through the annual flow of the seasons and life functions. Early brood-rearing (May-July) habitat generally occurs relatively close to nest sites. As herbaceous plants mature and dry, hens move their broods to late brood-rearing (July-September) habitats which consist of more succulent vegetation. Winter habitat almost exclusively consists of sagebrush, which is the main diet of sage-grouse in the winter. There are no known active lekking grounds within 2 miles of the proposed project.

Treatment activities could indirectly affect individual sage grouse through temporary displacement (flushing) from foraging/cover areas.

Treatment of encroachment or invasion sites can successfully return this area into a grassland/shrubland community, thus enhancing and promoting the return of sagebrush and other perennial understory species which will benefit sage grouse in the long term.

Raptors

Impacts would be the same as the migratory bird section. If treatment activities occur during the nesting period, May 1 - August 1, then a raptor survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist. Nesting trees occupied by any of these species would be avoided, with a 0.5 mile buffer of no disturbance around each identified nesting tree, during the nesting period.

Big Game Species

Crucial deer winter habitat has been designated by the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan. One of the major problems facing big game populations in Utah is that many of the crucial ranges are in late successional plant community stages that are dominated by mature stands of pinyon-juniper or other conifer trees. Tree-dominated habitats offer a place to retreat from severe weather, but offer little in the way of food. That is why it is important to maintain mosaic patterns of habitat that can provide food, cover, and water. Both deer and elk can be found within the project area during the summer and winter months. An increase in human presence during this time frame could cause short term impacts (increased stress, increased energy expenditure) to big game species. Treatment of encroachment or invasion sites can successfully return this area into a grassland/shrubland community, thus enhancing and promoting the return of sagebrush and other perennial understory species which will benefit big game habitat in the long term.

Mitigation: Do not conduct treatment activities from December 1 - April 30 in order to protect deer on the winter range.

Invasive, Non-native Species, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate plant species/Special Status plant Species

A “no affect” determination for Ute Ladies’-tresses, *Spiranthes diluvialis*, (Federally Threatened) would apply under the proposed action because the edge of the proposed action is approximately 1200 feet from the nearest orchid habitat. The habitat is separated from the project area by a small topologically steep barrier. Any fugitive dust, pollutants, or soil erosion is expected to be minimal due to the proximity of the habitat in relation to the project.

4.2.4 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate change analyses are comprised of several factors, including greenhouse gases (GHG’s), land use management practices, the albedo effect, etc. The tools necessary to quantify climatic impacts are presently unavailable. As a consequence, impact assessment of specific effects of

anthropogenic activities cannot be determined. Additionally, specific levels of significance have not yet been established. Existing climatic prediction models are global in nature; so are not at the appropriate scale to estimate potential climatic change on the project area. Therefore, climate change analysis for the purpose of this document is limited to accounting and disclosing of factors that contribute to climate change. Qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation of potential contributing factors within the project area included where appropriate and practicable.

The lack of scientific tools designed to predict climate change on regional or local scales limits the ability to quantify potential future impacts. However, potential impacts to air quality due to climate change are likely to be varied. For example, if global climate change results in a warmer and drier climate, increased particulate matter impacts could occur due to increased windblown dust from drier and less stable soils. Cool season plant species spatial ranges are predicted to move north and to higher elevations, and extinction of endemic threatened/endangered plants may be accelerated. Due to loss of habitat, or due to competition from other species whose ranges may shift northward, the population of some animal species may be reduced. Less snow at lower elevations would be likely to impact the timing and quantity of snowmelt, which in turn, could impact aquatic species (Final Utah GHG Inventory, July 2007).

4.3 Alternative B – No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, current resource trends would continue.

4.3.1 Vegetation/Fuels and Fire Management

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of the Pinyon-juniper trees across the project area. Sagebrush obligate species, including sage-grouse are sensitive to western juniper encroachment into sagebrush communities (Miller et al). Over time the Pinyon-Juniper trees would eventually out-compete the shrubs, grasses, and forbs for water, nutrients, and light, resulting in the loss of the sagebrush habitat type in the project area. Over time, the fuel loading would continue to increase, eventually shifting the project area from the existing Condition Class II to a Condition Class III situation. Eventually, an unplanned fire is expected to occur, and since the fuel loadings would have increased, the severity of the fire event is also expected to be greater. Since the increased amount of Pinyon-Juniper densities would have correspondingly decreased the amount of understory plants, the loss of trees from an unplanned fire event would most likely result in increased soil erosion due to the lack of ground cover remaining following the fire event.

4.3.3 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of Pinyon-Juniper trees within the sagebrush. Encroachment by Pinyon-Juniper into sagebrush habitats is detrimental to sagebrush-dependent species because it results in the loss or fragmentation of sagebrush habitat. Over time the Pinyon-Juniper trees will out compete the shrubs, grasses, and forbs, resulting in the loss of the sagebrush habitat type.

Invasive, Non-native Species, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate plant species/Special Status plant Species

A “no affect” determination for Ute Ladies’-tresses, *Spiranthes diluvialis*, (Federally Threatened) would apply under this alternative because no project work would be permitted.

4.3.4 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impacts would be the same as those described in the Proposed Action.

4.4 Cumulative Impacts Analysis: “Cumulative impacts” are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.

Fire and Fuels: The Cumulative Impact area for Fire and Fuels is the Vernal Field Office. The Bureau of Land Management has been directed by Congress (2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy) to implement actions designed to reduce decades of accumulation of hazardous fuels on public lands. In the future in the Vernal Field Office, hazardous fuel reductions activities will most likely increase through the use of mechanical, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use to manage the vegetative resource. With the increased hazardous fuel reductions, the Field Office landscape will eventually be composed of different age classes of vegetation.

Vegetation: The Cumulative Impact area for vegetation is the Vernal Field Office. Since 2004, The Vernal Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has been involved with the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development to take actions to restore declining habitat conditions in the sage steppe habitat type. Approximately 75,000 acres have been treated to date, and continued actions are expected to continue to occur in the future through the use of mechanical, prescribed fire, chemical applications, and wildland fire use to manage the vegetative resource.

Wildlife: The cumulative impact area for wildlife is the Vernal Field Office. Due to the decline in deer numbers hunting has been limited. Conversely, elk numbers have risen substantially in the same time span. Presently, Three Corners is open to limited entry permits for elk and open to deer. Since present deer and elk numbers are meeting or are below the established herd management objective numbers, deer and elk will continue to increase in the future, until herd objective numbers are realized. As their numbers increase, the continued need for vigorous and productive vegetation types will increase.

Greenhouse Gases: Rangelands, and to a broader extent sagebrush steppe ecosystems are important for carbon sequestration, primarily because of the significant carbon stored as soil organic matter and the magnitude of the rangelands that occur within the United States (roughly one third of total lands, excluding Alaska) (Svejcar et al, 2008). Conversion of sagebrush steppe to annual vegetation dominance (such as cheatgrass) is associated with 1) volatilization of carbon in woody shrubs during wildfires (carbon source); 2) loss of surface soil organic matter due to erosion after a wildfire; 3) reduction in net carbon stored in deeper soils; and 4) reduction in net carbon exchange in annual grasslands compared to sagebrush steppe lands (Bradley, et al, 2006).

Conversion of sagebrush steppe to annual vegetation dominance would be cumulative with such events occurring throughout the western United States.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

During preparation of the EA, public involvement consisted of posting the proposal on the Utah BLM Environmental Notification Bulletin Board (ENBB) on March 11, 2011. Issues or impacts identified through the interdisciplinary team analysis process are described in the Appendix.

A public comment period is being conducted from 06/27/11 to 07/28/11. Prior to completing the EA, the BLM will evaluate and address substantive public comments.

5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

Utah State Historical Preservation Office
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

5.3 List of Preparers

Blaine Tarbell	Team Lead, Natural Resource Specialist, Fire/Fuels Management	Impact analysis for Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Environmental Justice, Fire/Fuels Management, Flood Plain, Lands/Access, Riparian, Socio-economic and Hazardous Wastes.
Kathie Davies	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious concerns	Impact analysis for Cultural Resources, and Native American Religious concerns
Jannice Cutler	Livestock Grazing, Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	Impact analysis for Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines.
Betty Gamber	Geology / Mineral Resources, Paleontology	Impact analysis for Geology / Mineral Resources Energy Production, Paleontology
Maggie Marston	Invasive, Non-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate, plant species, Vegetation including Special Status plant Species	Impact analysis for Invasive, Non-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate plant species. Vegetation including Special Status plant Species.
Stan Olmstead	Floodplains, Hydraulic Conditions, Water Quality, Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Impact analysis for Floodplains, Hydraulic Conditions, Soils, Water Quality, Wetlands/Riparian Zones
Dixie Sadlier	Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Animal, Fish and Wildlife including Special Status Species	Impact analysis for Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Animal, Fish and Wildlife including Special Status Species
Jason West	Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas	Impact analysis for Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Mark Wimmer	Environmental Planning Coordinator	Impact analysis for Farmlands (Prime and Unique)

6.0 REFERENCES

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USDO I - Bureau of Land Management, 2009, Fire Management Plan

Utah Steering Committee (USC). 2005. Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation In Utah. Intermountain West Joint Venture.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST

Project Title: Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA

File/Serial Number:

Project Lead: Blaine Tarbell

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: (Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for significant impact analyzed in detail in the EA; or identified in a DNA as requiring further analysis

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section C of the DNA form.


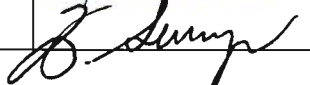
Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Air Quality	Air quality impacts from the projected levels of emission are expected to be negligible. Minimum quantities of dust emissions are anticipated because the volume of traffic from this proposal would be less than one or two vehicles per day during the project, and the project is estimated to take 20 days to complete.	Blaine Tarbell	2/8/11
NI	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Browns Park ACEC relevant and important criteria were based on High Value Scenic Views, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historic resources. The high value scenic views are predominately river based. The project area will not be within view of the river. Wildlife habitat is reviewed by the wildlife specialist, and cultural and historic resources are reviewed elsewhere within the checklist and neither have shown potential impacts.	Jason West	3/20/2011
NP	BLM natural areas	None Present as per Vernal RMP and GIS layer review	Jason West	4/29/2011
NI	Cultural Resources	The area of potential effect is considered to be the area within the polygons on the map provided. No new access roads will be created with the undertaking. Access will be on existing roads and by walking into the project area. Lop and scatters are considered to be of low to minimal impact to cultural material within the area. Crews are advised to watch for and avoid any direct impact to cultural material. They are asked to work around features and to call the archaeologist to investigate before proceeding. A letter recommending "no adverse effect" to historic properties was sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer on March 28, 2011. A concurrence letter was received from the SHPO on April 13, 2011.	Kathie Davies	4/15/2011
NP	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	The tools necessary to quantify climatic impacts are presently unavailable. As a consequence, impact assessment of specific effects of anthropogenic activities cannot be determined. Additionally, specific levels of significance have not yet been established. Existing climate prediction models are global in nature; so are not at the appropriate scale to estimate potential	Blaine Tarbell	4/13/20

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		impacts of climate change on the project area. Therefore, climate change analysis for the purpose of this document is limited to accounting and disclosing of factors that contribute to climate change. Qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation of potential contributing factors within the project area are included where appropriate and practicable. There are currently no "credible scientific" methods to predict the potential climate change impacts from project specific GHG emissions (40 CFR 1502.22 Incomplete or Unavailable Information).		
NP	Environmental Justice	No minority or economically disadvantaged communities or populations are present which could be affected by the proposed action or alternatives.	Blaine Tarbell	2/8/11
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	No prime or unique farm lands have been identified in Daggett County by the Natural Resources Conservation Service; therefore this resource will not be carried forward for analysis.	Mark Wimmer	2/10/11
NP	Floodplains	A review of the Field Office GIS layer files indicates that there are no HUD inventoried flood plains located in the project area. There are incidental non-HUD inventoried flood plains however the proposed project would not cause action of concern since the residual slash would not negatively impact flood plains.	Stan Olmstead	4/29/11
PI	Fuels / Fire Management	Project is designed to reduce encroaching pinyon pine and juniper trees, which would reduce potential hazardous fuel conditions.	Blaine Tarbell	2/8/11
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources / Energy Production	No surface disturbance because of the nature of the proposed action.	Betty Gamber	5/3/2011
NI	Hydrologic Conditions	The proposed action is designed to increase ground cover, which would improve Hydrologic conditions. The lop-and-scatter of course woody vegetation would act to reduce surface water flow energy. Stormwater and concern for Section 402 of the Clean Water Act would not be an issue.	Stan Olmstead	4/29/11
NI	Invasive Plants / Noxious Weeds	Surface disturbance will be minimal. Areas of existing noxious weeds will be identified, pre-treated, and avoided prior to proposed action. Tall whitetop currently occurs on the southern access road of the project. The proposed action contains mitigation measures that should prevent the project from spreading existing weeds.	Maggie Marston	4/20/11
NP	Lands / Access	The proposed project does not involve treating any access routes or existing ROWs, and there is currently existing access to the project area.	Blaine Tarbell	2/8/11
NI	Livestock Grazing	The proposed project is in the Red Creek Flat Allotment. The grazing preference has been retired on the Red Creek Flat Allotment (Vernal Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (Oct., 31, 2008). Livestock use is only approved on a temporary non-renewable basis. The reduction of pinyon pine and juniper trees would increase overall forage production in the long term.	Jannice Cutler	3/23/2011
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	A consultation letter was sent to the Tribes on February 7, 2011. We received two "no-effect" responses from the Pueblo of Laguna Tribe (February 17, 2011) and the Hopi Tribe (February 25, 2011).	Kathie Davies	4/15/2011
NI	Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	The project area was inventoried in 2007 as part of two separate units (Lower Flaming Gorge unit, and the Mountain Home unit) none of the proposed project area was found to have wilderness character. Further, based on project level review, the area project area clearly lacks wilderness character based on several roads.	Jason West	4/29/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		pipeline projects and developments in the immediate area of the project.		
NP	Paleontology	Surface geologic formations in that area are Precambrian, Cambrian Ladore formation, and Mississippian rocks undivided. No paleontology issues are expected.	Betty Gamber	5/3/2011
NI	Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	The grazing preference has been retired on the Red Creek Flat Allotment (Vernal Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (Oct., 31, 2008)). Rangeland Health Assessments have not been conducted on this allotment. Management of the allotment is designed to enhance wildlife values. The proposed action is designed to improve the condition and vigor of understory plants through reducing competition from pinyon pine and juniper trees. There is expected to be a long term increase in vegetative ground cover and a reduction in soil erosion.	Jannice Cutler	3/23/2011
NP	Socio-economics	Due to the small scale project size, socioeconomic are not expected to be measurably impacted by this proposed project.	Blaine Tarbell	2/8/11
NI	Recreation	Hunting takes place within the project area. ATV use is limited to designated trails and travel within the project area. The proposed vegetation manipulation project is not expected to impact these activities.	Jason West	4/29/2011
NI	Soils	Project is designed to improve long term vegetative cover which would reduce soil erosion potential, and there would be no surface disturbing actions.	Stan Olmstead	2/11/11
PI	Special Status Animal Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species e.g. Migratory birds.	Migratory bird species may be present during the breeding/nesting season.	Dixie Sadlier	05/03/2011
NI	Special Status Plant Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species	Stemless beardtongue has been identified in the project area, however, it is unknown whether the population is a BLM Sensitive variety <i>P. acaulis</i> var. <i>acaulis</i> , or the more common <i>P. acaulis</i> . Avoidance of the population would occur unless pre-treatment survey during the blooming season confirms the absence of <i>P. acaulis</i> var. <i>acaulis</i> . The proposed action contains an avoidance area (buffered polygon (150')) which should mitigate soil disturbance of this unconfirmed, mapped beardtongue population.	Maggie Marston	4/20/11
PI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	Review of office files were reviewed, and show no threatened, or endangered animal species. See Wildlife Appendix. Greater sage-grouse occupied, brood-rearing and winter habitat has been identified within the project area. Treatment of encroachment or invasion sites can successfully return this area into a grassland/shrubland community, thus enhancing and promoting the return of sagebrush and other perennial understory species which will benefit sage grouse.	Dixie Sadlier	5/3/2011
PI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	Ute Ladies'-tresses, <i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i> , (Federally Threatened) occurs within ¼ mile of the project area within the Green River riparian corridor. The project is unlikely generate sufficient fugitive dust, pollutants, or soil erosion that could affect these populations.	Maggie Marston	4/20/11
PI	Vegetation	There would be a loss of encroaching P-J trees across 381 acres.	Blaine Tarbell	4/13/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed action falls within VRM Class II. The project is designed to blend in with existing form, color and texture of the surrounding landscape, and is not expected to draw attention from the casual observer, which is within the guidelines and prescriptions for the VRM Class II area. Key observation points include boaters on the Green River, Camping sites from the Indian crossing campground and the horse facility at the Jarvie ranch. The proposed project would not be within the viewshed of these areas. Based on improved techniques and commitment from the project propend to take stump height to 1 foot, and to buck (cut into smaller pieces) the trees, the proposed project will not be substantially noticeable to the casual observer.	Jason West	4/29/2011
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	Hazardous Waste: No chemicals subject to reporting under SARA Title III in an amount equal to or greater than 10,000 pounds will be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of annually in association with the project. Furthermore, no extremely hazardous substances, as defined in 40 CFR 355, in threshold planning quantities, will be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of in association with the project. Solid Wastes: Trash would be confined in a covered container and hauled to an approved landfill. Burning of waste or oil would not be done. Human waste would be contained and be disposed of at an approved sewage treatment facility.	Blaine Tarbell	4/14/2011
NI	Water Quality (surface / ground)	Surface water: The site is generally uplands with very small drainages bisecting the project acreage. No perennial waters are in the direct area of the project however the Green River is located south of the project from a few hundred feet to about 1 mile distance. The only potential for negative impacts to surface waters would be due to potential spills by equipment or erosion from activities during soil water saturated conditions. However since this is a lop-and-scatter this is highly unlikely. Once pinyon/juniper are cut and scattered they would act as a reduction in erosion and new brush and grass species vegetation returning after tree removal would also reduce soil erosion. Ground: There are no subsurface disturbances that would impact ground water.	Stan Olmstead	4/29/11
NI	Wetlands / Riparian Zones	No inventoried riparian habitat is located within the project area. Inventoried riparian is located along the Green River however this designated riparian areas would be avoided by the proposed action and soil erosion run off would be reduced after the implementation of the project.	Stan Olmstead	4/29/11
NI	Wild and Scenic Rivers	The WSR suitable segment is identified as ½ mile or line of sight. The project will be on the ridgelines above the river and not be within the line of sight for the river. Should segments of the project be within line of sight, based on new technique and applicant committed measures (1 foot stump height and bucking the trees (cutting them into smaller pieces) and the duration that the project may be visible from the key observation points, the impacts would not be noticeable.	Jason West	4/29/2011
NP	Wild Horses and Burros	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no Wild horse and Burro areas present within the project area.	Blaine Tarbell	4/14/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Wilderness	None present as per Vernal RMP and GIS layer review	Jason West	4/29/2011
NI	Woodland / Forestry	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no commercial woodlands within the project area.	David Palmer	4/22/2011

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
NEPA / Environmental Coordinator		8/2/11	2011-0240
Authorized Officer		8/2/11	

FINAL REVIEW:

Follow the italicized instructions below and then delete the asterisks "" in the checklist, this sentence, and the instructions.*

**Rationale for Determination is required for all "NIs" and "NPs." Write issue statements for "PIs"*

Appendix B: Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, Utah Special Status Animal Species including Partners-In-Flight Species of Concern.

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
Bonytail <i>Gila elegans</i>	FE	Is endemic to the Colorado River system within main channels of large rivers, and favor swift currents.	None. This species occurs in the Green River. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Colorado pikeminnow <i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>	FE	Known from the Colorado River system. Uses large swift rivers.	None. This species occurs in the Green and White Rivers. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Humpback chub <i>Gila cypha</i>	FE	Is endemic to the Colorado River System within deep, swift-running rivers, with canyon shaded environments.	None. This species occurs in the Green River. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Razorback sucker <i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	FE	Endemic to large rivers of the Colorado River system.	None. This species occurs in the Green and White Rivers. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Black-footed ferret <i>Mustela nigripes</i>	FE	Semi-arid grasslands and mountain basins. It is found primarily in association with active prairie dog colonies that contain suitable burrow densities and colonies that are of sufficient size.	None. The distribution of this species is limited to a nonessential experimental population reintroduced into Coyote Basin, Uintah County starting in 1999. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Canada Lynx <i>Lynx lynx canadensis</i>	FT	Primarily occurs in Douglas-fir, Spruce-fir, and subalpine forests at elevations above 7,800 feet amsl. The lynx uses large woody debris, such as downed logs and windfalls.	None. If extant in Utah, this species most likely occurs in montane forests in the Uinta Mountains. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Mexican spotted owl <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	FT; PIF	In Utah, found primarily in rocky canyons. Nests in caves or crevices. Roosts on ledges or in trees in canyons. The species prefers mesic (moister/cooler) canyons with mixed conifer or riparian components. Breeding and nesting season: March through August.	None. The habitat as been surveyed and determined unsuitable for nesting (<i>Assessment of Potential Mexican Spotted Owl Nesting on BLM-Administered Lands in Northeastern</i>	Yes

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
			<i>Utah, September 2005).</i>	
Western yellow-billed cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	FC; PIF	Riparian obligate and usually occurs in large tracts of cottonwood/willow habitats. However, this species also has been documented in lowland deciduous woodlands, alder thickets, deserted farmlands, and orchards. Breeding season: late June through July.	None. Species is known to occur along the Green River and the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Bluehead sucker <i>Catostomus discobolus</i>	CAS	Occupies a wide range of aquatic habitats ranging from cold, clear mountain streams to warm, turbid rivers.	None. The Bluehead sucker is native in parts of Utah. The species occurs in the upper Colorado River system. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Flannelmouth sucker <i>Catostomus latipinnis</i>	CAS	Adults occur in riffles, runs, and pools in streams and large rivers, with the highest densities usually in pool habitat. Young live in slow to moderately swift waters near the shoreline areas.	None. The Flannelmouth sucker is native in Utah. The species occurs in the Colorado River system. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Roundtail chub <i>Gila robusta</i>	CAS	Adults inhabit low to high flow areas in the Green River; young occur in shallow areas with minimal flow.	None. The Roundtail chub is native in Utah. The species occurs in the Colorado River system. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Colorado River Cutthroat trout <i>Oncorhynchus clarkii pleuriticus</i>	CAS	Requires cool, clear water and well-vegetated streambanks for cover and bank stability; instream cover in the form of deep pools and boulders and logs also is important; adapted to relatively cold water, thrives at high elevations. Most remaining populations are fluvial or resident. Occurs also in lakes.	None. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	CAS	Generally found in a wide variety of forest types including deciduous, coniferous, and mixed forests. Typically mature and old growth forests and generally selects larger tracts of forest over smaller tracts. In the western U.S., characteristically nests in coniferous forests including	None. Prefers old-growth forests near or within large drainage systems. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
		those dominated by ponderosa pine, lodgepole, or in mixed forests dominated by various coniferous species including, Douglas-fir, cedar, hemlock, spruce, and larch. Western birds also nest in deciduous forests dominated by aspen, paper birch, or willow.		
Bald eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	WSC	In Utah, breeding occurrences are limited to 10 locations within four counties (Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Grand, and Salt Lake counties). Winter habitat typically includes areas of open water, adequate food sources, and sufficient diurnal perches and night roosts.	Moderate. Bald eagles utilize ungulate winter ranges that provide carrion, and areas of open water such as the Green River. Roosting or nesting habitat does not occur within the proposed project area. Bald Eagles may forage in the area from November - March. Treatment activities will not impact bald eagles.	Yes
American white pelican <i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	WSC; PIF	Inhabits areas of open water including large rivers, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs with surrounding habitats ranging from barren to heavily vegetated sites. Typically nests on isolated islands in lakes or reservoirs.	None. Known to nest on islands associated with Great Salt and Utah Lakes. In northeastern Utah, the species occurs as a transient on larger water bodies. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Greater Sage-grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	WSC; PIF;FC	Inhabits upland sagebrush habitat in rolling hills and benches. Breeding occurs on open leks (or strutting grounds) and nesting and brooding occurs in upland areas and meadows in proximity to water and generally within a 2-mile radius of the lek. During winter, sagebrush habitats at submontane elevations commonly are used.	Moderate. The species is widespread, but declining, with extant populations in Uintah and Duchesne counties. Office files were reviewed, and no sage grouse have been documented using this area. UDWR has not designated any habitat within the project area.	No
Ferruginous hawk <i>Buteo regalis</i>	WSC; PIF	Resides mainly in lowland open desert terrain characterized by barren cliffs and bluffs, pinon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush-rabbit brush, and cold desert shrub. Nesting habitat includes promontory points and rocky	None. This species is known to occur in the West Desert and the Uintah Basin as a summer resident and a common migrant. Within the Uintah	Yes

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
		outcrops.	Basin, the species is more associated with prairie dog colonies as the main prey base. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	
Burrowing owl <i>Athene cunicularia</i>	WSC	Inhabits desert, semi-desert shrubland, grasslands, and agriculture areas. Nesting habitat primarily consists of flat, dry, and relatively open terrain; short vegetation; and abandoned mammal burrows (within northeastern Utah primarily in association with prairie dog complexes) for nesting and shelter.	None. Known to occur in Uintah and Duchesne counties. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Mountain plover <i>Charadrius montanus</i>	WSC; PIF	In the Uintah Basin, small Mountain plover populations breed in shrub-steppe habitat where vegetation is sparse and sagebrush communities are dominated by Artemisia spp. with components of black sage and grasses. Nest locations also vary with respect to topography (nests were located on flat, open ground; on the top or at the base of slopes; or very close to large rocky outcroppings).	None. The only known breeding population of Mountain plover in Utah is located on Myton Bench. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
White-tailed prairie dog <i>Cynomys leucurus</i>	WSC	Inhabits grasslands, plateaus, plains and desert shrub habitats. White-tailed prairie dogs form colonies or “towns” and spend much of their time in underground burrows and hibernating during the winter months.	None. Prairie dogs are an obligate species to several other state-sensitive species, such as Ferruginous hawk, Mountain plover, and Burrowing owl, in that these species depend on them for food, shelter, and nesting habitat or habitat manipulation. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Short-eared owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>	WSC	Inhabits arid grasslands, agricultural areas, marshes, and occasionally open woodlands. In Utah, cold desert shrub and sagebrush-rabbit brush habitats also are utilized. Typically a ground nester.	None. Known to occur in Uintah County, with occurrence probable in Duchesne County. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Lewis’s Woodpecker	WSC; PIF	Inhabits open habitats including pine forests, riparian	Moderate. In Utah, the species is	No

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>		areas, and pinion-juniper woodlands. Breeding habitat typically includes ponderosa pines and cottonwoods in stream bottoms and farm areas. The species inhabits agricultural lands and urban parks, montane and desert riparian woodlands, and submontane shrub habitats.	widespread, but is an uncommon nester along the Green River. Breeding by this species has been observed in Ouray and Uintah counties, and along Pariette Wash. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	
Three-toed Woodpecker <i>Picooides tridactylus</i>	WSC; PIF	Prefers coniferous forest, primarily spruce and balsam fir. It inhabits areas where dead timber remains after fires or logging. It is found less frequently in mixed forest, and occasionally in Willow thickets along streams. Also found in high elevation aspen groves, bogs, and swamps.	None. In Utah, the species is widespread but no habitat exists within the Project area. The Three-toed woodpecker is associated more with spruce trees and not pinion pine or Doug-fir. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Grasshopper sparrow <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	WSC; PIF	Prefers grasslands of intermediate height and are often associated with clumped vegetation interspersed with patches of bare ground. Other habitat requirements include moderately deep litter and sparse coverage of woody vegetation.	Low. In Utah, the species is widespread and has been known to breed in Uintah, Duchesne, and Daggett counties. Project area is within an old chaining.	Yes
Long-billed Curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i>	WSC; PIF	Inhabits shortgrass prairies, alpine meadows, riparian woodlands, and reservoir habitats. Breeding habitat includes upland areas of shortgrass prairie or grassy meadows with bare ground components, usually near water.	None. Widespread migrant in Utah. Breeding birds are fairly common but localized, primarily in central and northwestern Utah. Potential nesting has been reported in Uintah County, but has not been confirmed. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	WSC; PIF	Inhabits mesic and irrigated meadows, riparian woodlands, and subalpine marshes at lower elevations (2,800 to 5,000 feet amsl). Suitable breeding habitat for this ground nester includes tall grass, flooded meadows, prairies, and agricultural fields; forbs and perch sites also are required.	None. The species breeds in isolated areas of Utah, primarily in the northern half of the state. Breeding and winter habitat have been documented throughout Uintah,	Yes

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
			Duchesne, and Daggett counties. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	
Big free-tailed bat <i>Nyctinomops macrotis</i>	WSC	Rocky areas in rugged country. The species has been observed in lowlands of river floodplain-arroyo association; also in shrub desert and woodland habitats. Roosts in rock crevices (vertical or horizontal) in cliffs; also in buildings caves, and occasionally tree holes. Winter habits unknown.	Moderate. The species has been documented in northeastern part of the state from Daggett County into Wyoming. Treatment activities will not impact Big free-tailed bats.	Yes
Fringed myotis <i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	WSC	The species is widely distributed throughout Utah, but is not very common in the state. The Fringed myotis inhabits caves, mines, and buildings, most often in desert and woodland areas.	Low. High value and substantial value habitat exists for the species in southern Utah in lower elevations; however, the species has had a couple documented sightings along the White River.	Yes
Spotted bat <i>Euderma maculatum</i>	WSC	Inhabits desert shrub, sagebrush-rabbit brush, pinion-juniper woodland, and ponderosa pine and montane forest habitats. The species also uses lowland riparian and montane grassland habitats. Suitable cliff habitat typically appears to be necessary for roosts/hibernacula. Spotted bats typically do not migrate and use hibernacula that maintain a constant temperature above freezing from September through May.	Low. The species potentially occurs throughout Utah; however, no occurrence records exist for the extreme northern or western parts of the state. Known occurrences have been reported in northeastern Uintah County. Treatment activities will not impact spotted bats.	Yes
Townsend's big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	WSC	Inhabits a wide range of habitats from semidesert shrublands and pinion-juniper woodlands to open montane forests. Roosting occurs in mines and caves, in abandoned buildings, on rock cliffs, and occasionally in tree cavities. Foraging occurs well after dark over water, along margins of vegetation, and over sagebrush.	Low. The species occurs throughout much of Utah including Duchesne and Uintah counties. One individual was collected at the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in 1980. Roosting habitat for this species potentially could occur in areas where rock cliffs and caves are present. Treatment activities will not impact Townsends	Yes

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
			big-eared bats.	
Western (Boreal) toad <i>Bufo boreas</i>	WSC	Commonly found throughout most of Utah and can be found in a variety of habitats, including slow moving streams, wetlands, desert springs, ponds, lakes meadows, and woodlands.	Low. The species is commonly spread throughout central and northern Utah. The only known occurrence in the basin exists within the northwest portion of Uintah County which has substantial value habitat for the species.	Yes
Corn snake <i>Elaphe guttata</i>	WSC	Habitat includes pine woodlands, brushy fields, open hardwood forests, mangrove thickets, barnyards, and abandoned buildings, areas near springs, old trash dumps, and caves.	Low. Occurs in Uintah County. The species have been identified at Ouray National Wildlife Refuge. Treatment activities will not impact corn snakes.	Yes
Smooth green snake <i>Opheodrys vernalis</i>	WSC	Habitat includes meadows, grassy marshes, moist grassy fields at forest edges, mountain shrublands, stream borders, bogs, open moist woodland, abandoned farmland, and vacant lots.	Low. Although not commonly seen throughout Utah the species has been documented in the northern section of Uintah County in lower elevations. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Prairie falcon <i>Falco mexicanus</i>	PIF	Habitat includes alpine, cliff, cropland/hedgegrow, desert, and grassland/herbaceous areas.	Low. Will utilize sagebrush-steppe habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Swainson's hawk <i>Buteo swainsonii</i>	PIF	Inhabits grasslands, deserts, agricultural areas, shrublands, marshlands, and riparian forests. Nest in trees in or near open areas. Breeding season: April 1 – July 15.	Low. Will utilize sagebrush-steppe habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Black-chinned hummingbird <i>Archilochus alexandri</i>	PIF	Habitat includes dry lowlands and foothills with pinion-juniper woodlands.	Low. Will utilize sagebrush-steppe habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Broad-tailed hummingbird <i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	PIF	Habitat includes open woodland, especially pinion-juniper, pine-oak, and conifer-aspen association; brushy hillsides; montane scrub and thickets.	Low. Will utilize sagebrush-steppe habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Brewer's sparrow <i>Spizella breweri</i>	PIF	Habitat includes desert and shrubland/chaparral.	Low. Will utilize sagebrush-steppe habitats. Treatments will not take	No

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
			place during the nesting season.	
Cassin's finch <i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>	PIF	Habitat includes open coniferous forest; in migration and winter also in deciduous woodland, secondary growth, scrub, brushy areas, partly open situations with scattered trees.	None. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Cassin's kingbird <i>Tyrannus vociferan</i>	PIF	Habitat includes sparse woods and dry scrub areas.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season	Yes
Clark's nutcracker <i>Nucifraga Columbiana</i>	PIF	Habitat includes open coniferous forest, forest edge and clearings, primarily in mountains, but wandering into various habitats; in winter also in lowlands.	Low. Will utilize pinyon-juniper habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Gray flycatcher <i>Empidonax wrightii</i>	PIF	Habitat includes arid areas of sagebrush or pinion-juniper woodlands.	Low. Will utilize pinyon-juniper habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Gray vireo <i>Vireo vicinior</i>	PIF	Habitat includes dry shrubby areas, chaparral, and sparse woodlands.	Low. Will utilize pinyon-juniper habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Green-tailed towhee <i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>	PIF	Habitat is usually low shrubs, sometimes interspersed with trees; avoids typical forest, other than open pinion-juniper woodlands. In pinion-juniper, associated with sagebrush (<i>Artemisia</i> spp.) dominated openings with high shrub species richness.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season	Yes
Juniper titmouse <i>Parus inornatus</i>	PIF	Habitat includes sparse pinion-juniper and oak woodlands.	Low. Will utilize pinyon-juniper habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
Mountain bluebird <i>Sialia currucoides</i>	PIF	Habitat includes subalpine meadows, grasslands, shrub-steppe, savanna, and pinion-juniper woodlands; in south usually at elevations above 1500 m (4900 ft.). In winter and migration also inhabits desert, brushy areas and agricultural lands.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season	Yes
Pinion jay <i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	PIF	Habitat includes semi-arid foothills with pinion-juniper woodlands.	Low. Will utilize pinyon-juniper habitats. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No

Species	Status	Habitat Association	Potential for Occurrence Within the Proposed Project area and Cumulative Effects Area	Eliminated From Detailed Analysis (Yes/No)
Sage sparrow <i>Amphispiza belli</i>	PIF	Habitat includes dry sagebrush/scrublands with sparse vegetation.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season	No
Sage thrasher <i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	PIF	Habitat includes desert and shrubland/chaparral.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season	No
Virginia's warbler <i>Vermivora virginiae</i>	PIF	Habitat includes dry woodlands, scrub oak brushlands, canyons and ravines.	Low. Treatments will not take place during the nesting season.	No
White-throated swift <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	PIF	Habitat includes cliffs and canyons.	None. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes
Wilson's phalarope <i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	PIF	Habitat includes grassland/herbaceous riparian and wetlands.	None. Habitat is not present within the proposed project area.	Yes

Federally Listed Species:

- FE = Federally listed as endangered;
- FT = Federally listed as threatened;
- FC = Federally listed as candidate

State Sensitive Species:

- CAS = State Conservation Agreement Species;
- WSA = Wildlife Species of Concern

PIF = Partners in Flight species of concern, Colorado Plateau, Utah Mountains, potentially in the Vernal Field Office.

Appendix C-Maps

Red Creek Slashing Project



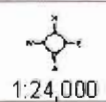
John Jarvie Ranch

Red Creek Lop and Scatter

Juniper

- Regen, less than 6 feet
- Mature trees 6-10 feet

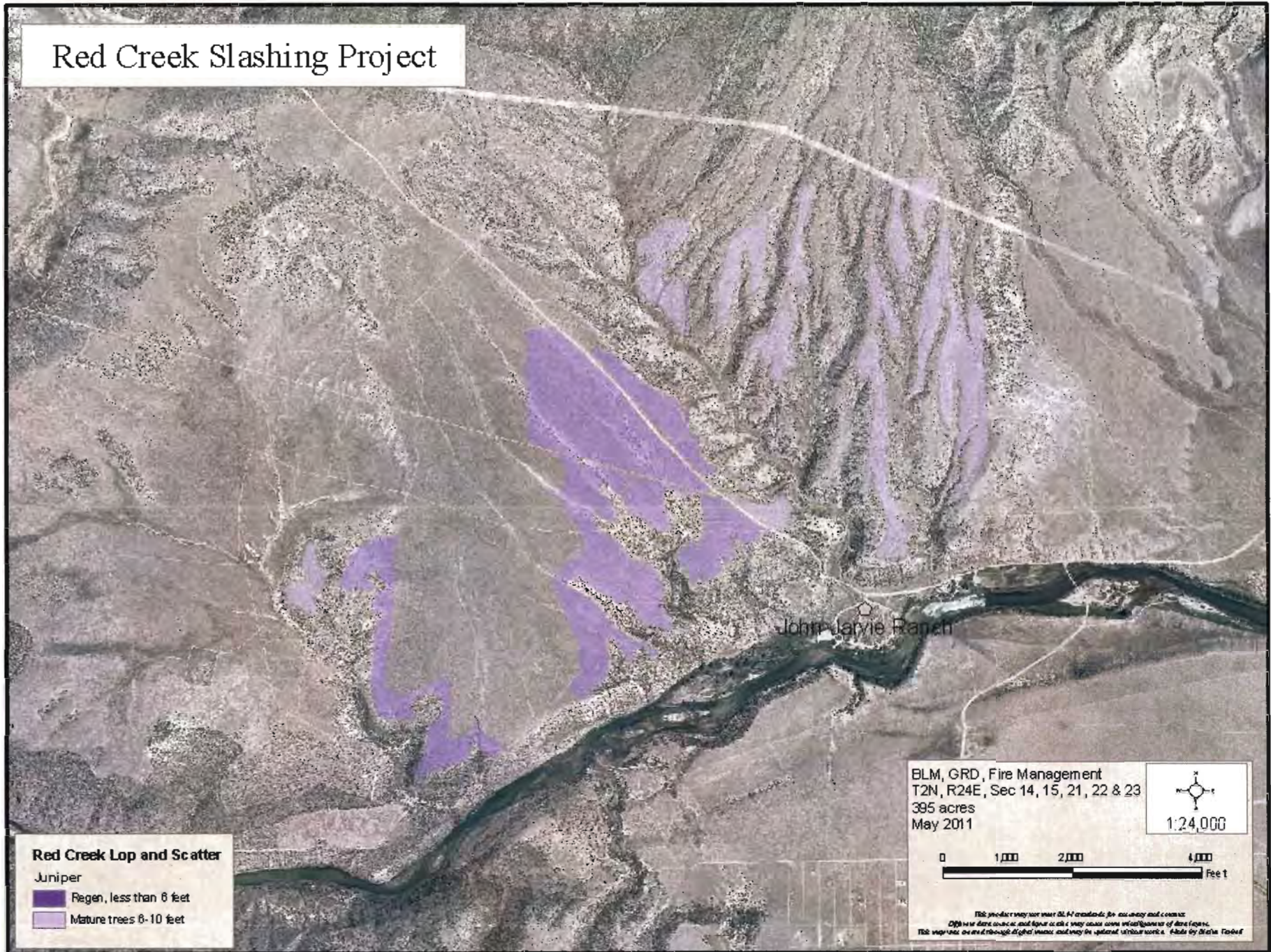
BLM, GRD, Fire Management
T2N, R24E, Sec 14, 15, 21, 22 & 23
395 acres
May 2011



0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet

This product was prepared by BLM or its contractors for use by the public. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose.

Red Creek Slashing Project



Red Creek Lop and Scatter

Juniper

- Regen, less than 6 feet
- Mature trees 6-10 feet

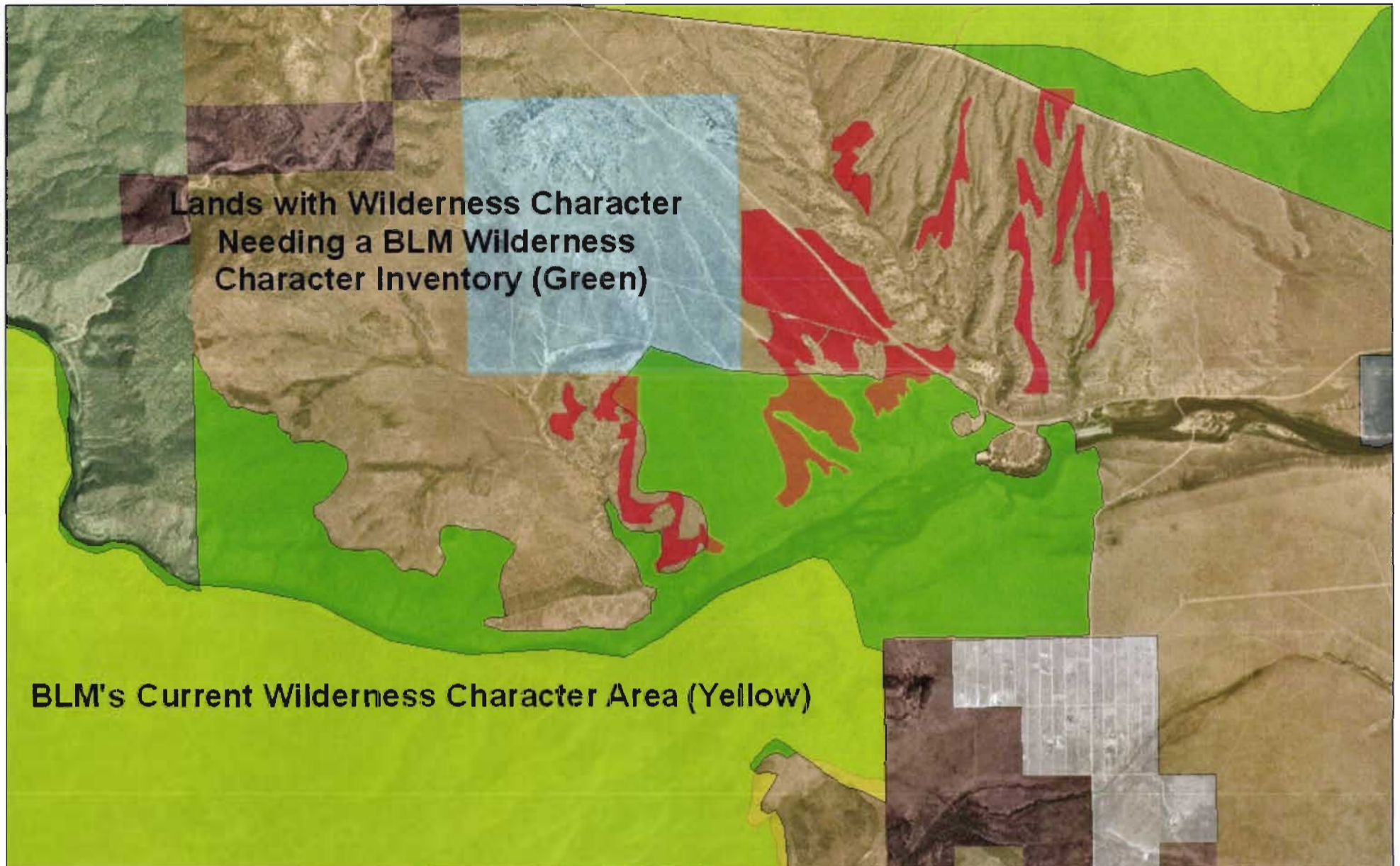
BLM, GRD, Fire Management
T2N, R24E, Sec 14, 15, 21, 22 & 23
395 acres
May 2011



0 1000 2000 4000 Feet

This product may not meet BLM standards for accuracy and content.
Data was derived from aerial photography and may contain errors.
This report was prepared through digital means and may be updated without notice. Made by State Forest

**Lower Flaming Gorge and Home Mountain
Wilderness Character Areas
Red Creek Slashing Project
April 7, 2011**



**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Decision Record
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA**

August 2011

Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Location: Daggett County, Vernal, Utah
T2N, R24E, Sections 15, 21, and 22; SLB&M.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
Phone: 435-781-4400
FAX: 435-781-4410



DECISION RECORD
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA
Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Decision: Based on my understanding of the information contained in the *Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction EA* and my subsequent finding of no significant impact, it is my decision to authorize the actions needed to restore the sagebrush vegetation type as set out in DOI-BLM-GO10-2011-0240-EA

The following actions will be realized:

- Treat the project area with a “lop and scatter” treatment.
- Apply ongoing weed control efforts following treatment.

Rationale for Decision: My decision to authorize implementation of the proposed action alternative will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation to wilderness characteristics, threatened or endangered species, cultural resources, or matters pertaining to Native American religious freedoms or their customs. Realization of the proposed action is in conformance with the existing Vernal RMP (2008) and is consistent with the Daggett County Land Use Plan. The No Action Alternative was not selected because that alternative would not meet the stated purpose and need of reducing the hazardous fuel loads.

Implementation of the proposed action will result in the improvement towards a vigorous and healthy mountain big sagebrush vegetative type. The treatment will result in the following positive result:

- Reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels.
- Reduce the threat of wildfires leaving or entering private property adjacent to the project
- Reduce Pinyon-Juniper encroachment into areas that have been predominantly sagebrush communities.
- Maintain areas that provide for important ecological functions and habitat for keystone species.
- Maintain important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.

Protest and/or Appeal Provision:

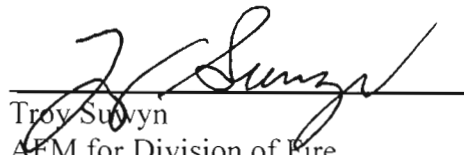
As per 43 CFR 5003.1. (b), this decision is effective immediately.

The decision or approval may be appealed to the Interior Board Of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR 4.21. Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, an appeal must be filed to: Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, Virginia, 22203. A copy of the notice of appeal must also be filed in the Vernal Field Office at 170 South 500 East; Vernal, Utah, 84078, as well as with: Office of the Solicitor, 125 South State Street, Suite 6201, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84138. Public notification of this decision


will be considered to have occurred on June 27, 2011. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR 3150.2(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellants success on merits,
- (3) The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted,
and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors the granting of the stay



Troy Surwyn
AFM for Division of Fire



Date

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

**Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA**

August 2011

Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction

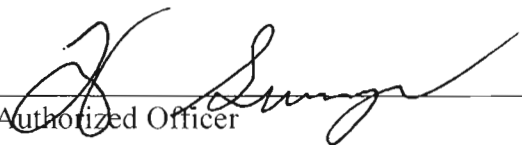
Daggett County, Vernal, Utah
T2N, R24E, Sections 15, 21, and 22; SLB&M.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
Phone: 435-781-4400
FAX: 435-781-4410



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Environmental Assessment
NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0240-EA
Project Name: Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the (referenced or attached) environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that Red Creek Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project will not have a significant effect on the human environment [other than those already analyzed in existing NEPA documents]. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.


Authorized Officer

8/2/11
Date