

APPENDIX 24—MITIGATION GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL STATUS PLANTS

Mitigation options to avoid or reduce impacts to Special Status Plants may be limited because of specific habitat requirements or lack of necessary biological information to make such an assessment. Most of the common techniques, such as compensation mitigation or habitat restoration, have proven largely unsuccessful, although seed banking is commonly performed to attempt off-site propagation. Mitigation plans for areas where impacts to these species cannot be avoided are designed to provide special management actions that minimize the overall impact to the species. However, because of the difficulties of providing successful mitigation options, impacts to Special Status Plants are considered less than significant only if no net loss of population size or habitat quality results. “No net loss” is intended to mean that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) must “ensure that [actions authorized, funded, or carried out by BLM]...affecting the habitat of Special Status Species are carried out in a manner that is consistent with the objectives for managing those species. BLM shall not carry out any actions that would cause any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources or reduce future management options for the species involved” (BLM Manual 6840).

An assessment is completed using a sensitive plant model to evaluate the potential habitat for sensitive plant species for a proposed project.

A field visit would be conducted to identify if habitat and/or plants are in the project area. The project is moved or modified to avoid the habitat or the plants; however, if avoidance is not possible, the project is designed to minimize disturbance to the identified habitat or plants. In the rare instance that a project would not be able to be modified to the extent needed to protect the plants, the project would not be authorized.

Once a sensitive species population is identified, the objective of vegetation management for the area is to protect and maintain that plant population by designing treatments to maintain or enhance the habitat to meet the needs of the plant (desired plant community [DPC]).

Inventory for plants and habitat would be a priority to develop management objectives that are designed to maintain or enhance habitat for the plant. As unique plant communities, such as the sand hills bitterbrush/silver sagebrush, cushion plant, and chain lakes alkaline wetland communities, are identified, protection measures are developed.

