



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale>

6700 (ORV040)

APR 27 2015

Dear Interested Public,

The Vale District Bureau of Land Management is proposing a multi-year, multi-phase project that would use a combination of prescribed fire, silvicultural thinning, and herbicide and mechanical invasive species treatments that include western juniper removal, to maintain and restore habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse and other sagebrush species in the Malheur Resource Area in eastern Oregon.

The Northwest Malheur County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project is also expected to decrease the risk of high-severity fires, restore fire-resilient habitats and help wildfire suppression efforts that could prevent damage to sage-grouse habitat. Treatment activities would occur in phases over 15 years. Alternative treatment activities will be analyzed by a planned release of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project.

Enclosed for your review is a vicinity map of the proposed treatment area and a summary of the project.

Once details are finalized, the BLM will conduct a field tour of the project area sometime in May or June. If you are interested in attending this tour, please respond back immediately so that we can get you the information as soon as possible. You can submit issues or concerns in writing to one of the following communication tools: E-mail: BLM_OR_VL_Mail@blm.gov, Fax: 541-473-6213, Mail: Vale District BLM Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918; ATTN: Jason Simmons.

In order to continue receiving notifications and remain on the list throughout the rest of the planning process for this project, you must: submit issues or concerns or state that you wish to remain on the list using one of the communication tools listed above.

Please submit your issues/concerns or mailing list requests before **May 26th, 2015**.

I look forward to working with you to restore sage-grouse habitat and reduce the threat of severe wildfire on public and private lands. For additional information about the Northwest Malheur County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, contact the project leader, Don Rotell, Jason Simmons or the lead wildlife biologist, Monica Ketcham at the Vale District Office (541) 473-3144.

Sincerely,

Thomas "Pat" Ryan
Malheur Resource Area Manager
Vale District Bureau of Land Management

The Northwest Malheur County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project

The Vale District Bureau of Land Management in eastern Oregon plans to implement a multi-year, multi-phased fuels management and habitat restoration project in the Malheur Resource Area.

The primary goal of the project is to maintain and restore habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse and other sagebrush species.

The plan would decrease the risk of high-severity fires by reducing hazardous fuels and improving vegetation health of forested areas within the project's sagebrush-steppe landscape. This could restore fire-resilient habitats, improving the vigor of fire-dependent areas and helping suppression efforts of wildfires damaging to sage-grouse habitat.

The Northwest Malheur County Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project Area is in the northwestern portion of Malheur County. Treatment areas would be north of Highway 20, west of Pole Creek Road, and south of Highway 26. The Project Area encompasses 258,556 acres, of which 144,671 acres are BLM-administered lands; 3,563 acres are Bureau of Reclamation-administered lands; 110,091 acres are private lands and a small amount are state- and U.S. Forest Service-owned. It is within the North Fork Malheur and Bully Creek Geographic Management Areas (GMAs). **A vicinity map is enclosed.**

More than 90 percent of the Project Area is considered either preliminary priority habitat or preliminary general habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse, as identified in the Oregon Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement.

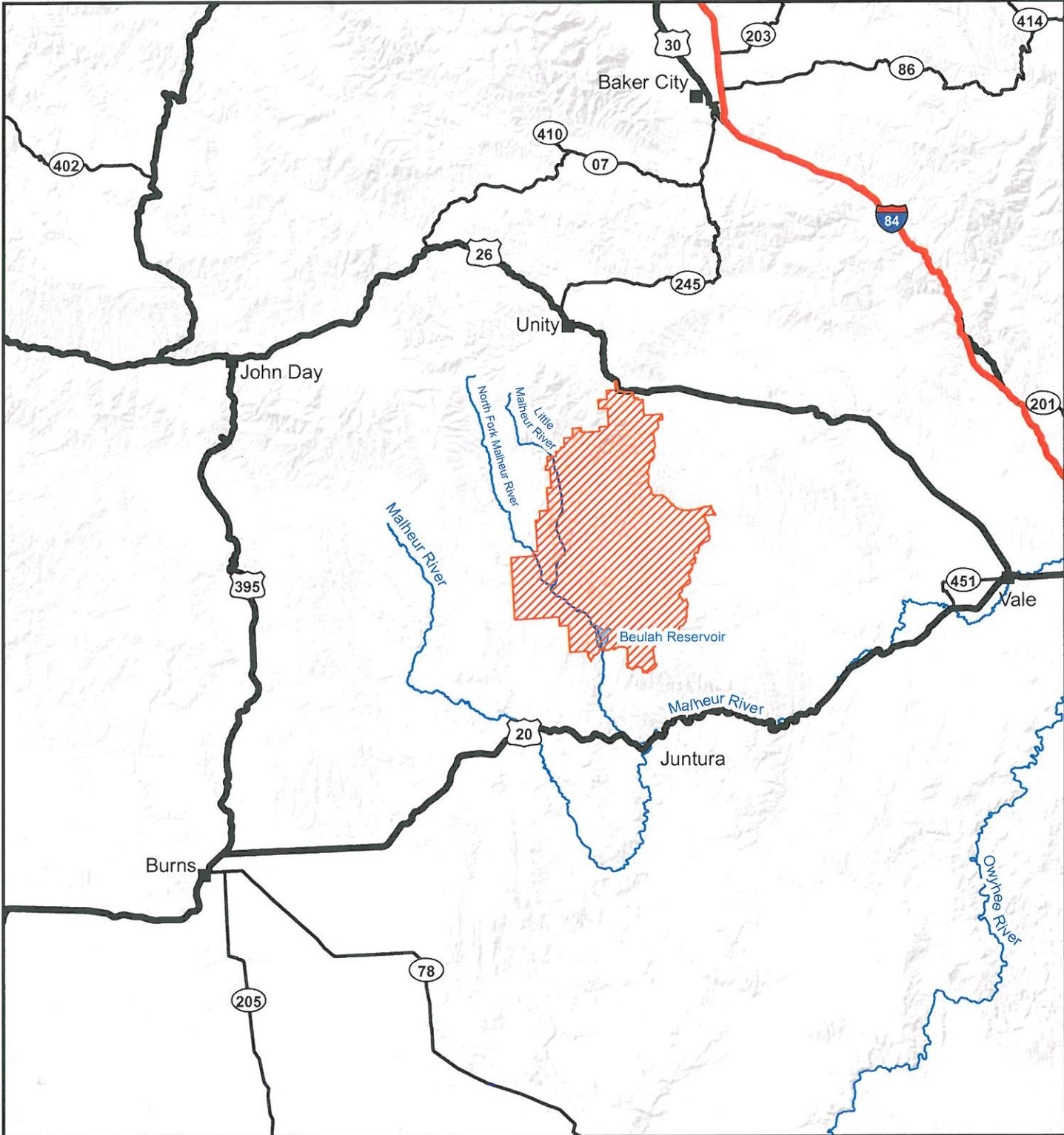
The project would use a combination of cutting encroaching undesirable conifer- predominately western juniper - and prescribed fire to meet the following goals:

- (1) Maintain and/or improve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
- (2) Reduce conifer encroachment to shift plant communities toward historic conditions.
- (3) Increase ecosystem resiliency to fire by reducing hazardous fuels and reintroducing fire as a disturbance.
- (4) Reduce invasive annual grass cover to interrupt the fire cycle and to shift plant communities toward historic conditions including sagebrush habitat.

Treatment methods would include broadcast burning, underburning, jackpot burning, pile burning, conifer cutting, silvicultural thinning, broadcast herbicide spraying, and competitive or restoration seeding and planting.

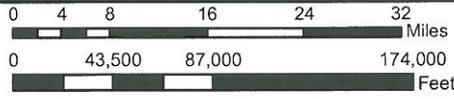
Treatment would result in about a 70 percent reduction in undesirable encroaching conifer density, over the next 15 years.

An Environmental Assessment will be released in summer or fall of 2015 with full project details and BLM's analysis of alternative management actions and their impacts. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment when that document is published.



Legend

-  Project Area
-  Towns
- Highways**
-  Interstate Highway
-  State Highway
-  United States Highway
-  Rivers



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management



VALE DISTRICT
Malheur Resource Area

The Northwest Malheur County
Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat
Restoration Project
Environmental Assessment

2015



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Map 1: Project Area Vicinity