



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>

4190 (ORV040)
Leslie Gulch Fire (JU3L)

JUL 30 2015

Dear Interested Public,

On the evening of June 28, 2015 the Leslie Gulch fire was ignited by lightning. Moderate winds and very dry fuels allowed the fire to escape the initial attack and after burning a total of 7851 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vale District, the fire was contained on July 3, 2015.

The Vale District intends to complete a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis document. This document will evaluate a variety of resource issues and develop a range of management actions to address those issues. Once completed, a Decision Record will be issued to implement proposed actions as quickly as possible to protect and rehabilitate this area. Due to the emergency nature of the proposed actions, once the documentation is complete, the Decision Record will be issued final and effective immediately.

The MRA is seeking comments concerning the area and issues within the Leslie Gulch Fire perimeter including:

- The burned area contains currently occupied sage-grouse habitat and 882 acres are designated as Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and 7,569 acres of General Habitat Management Area (GHMA) for sage-grouse, as identified in the *Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement* released in June, 2015. There are no known sage-grouse leks present within the burn perimeter.
- Habitats for sagebrush obligate species were adversely modified by the fire.
- The Leslie Gulch Fire burned 3,659 acres of designated deer winter range.
- The Leslie Gulch Fire burned 331 acres (4%) of the Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and 7,520 acres (87%) of the Slocum Creek WSA. The Leslie Gulch Fire burned 64 current Special Status Plant sites. These include locations for the following Bureau Sensitive plant species, their Oregon State category is shown in parenthesis: *Senecio errttrae* (Candidate), *Trifolium owyheense* (Listed Endangered), *Astragalus cusickii* var., *sterillis* (Listed Threatened), and *Mentzelia packardiae* (Listed Threatened).
- The Leslie Gulch Fire burned significant cultural sites.
- Steep riparian areas were burned by the fire leaving these areas vulnerable to increased runoff and sediment delivery due to the fire having removed the vegetation from these drainages.
- The following noxious weeds have previously been documented in the fire area: diffuse, spotted and Russian knapweed, Scotch, bull and Canada thistles, perennial pepperweed, saltcedar, rush skeletonweed, St. Johnswort, whitetop ssp., purple loosestrife, and medusahead

rye. The removal of desirable competing vegetation by the fire will allow these noxious weeds to proliferate and spread.

- The Leslie Gulch Fire burned portions of one livestock grazing allotment: 2,162 acres (2%) of the Three Fingers Allotment. In addition, there are 5,689 acres that are not allocated for grazing within the fire area. The fire impacted approximately eight miles of livestock management fences and two guzzlers, two spring developments, as well as other livestock management infrastructure.

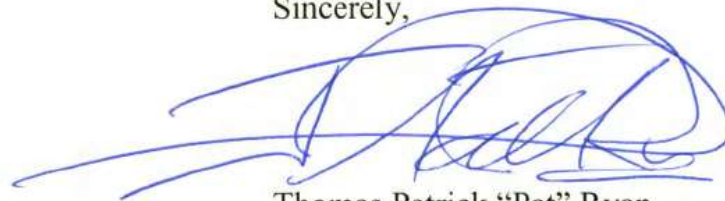
The purpose of implementing emergency stabilization actions are to: stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation of natural and cultural resources; minimize threats to life or property resulting from the effects of a fire; and repair/replace/construct physical improvements necessary to prevent degradation of land or resources. Rehabilitation actions are done to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management-approved condition and repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire. Management actions the MRA are considering include:

- Noxious weed control (including the use of the chemical Imazapic)
- Ground seeding with ATV/UTV
- Fencing (new temporary construction and damaged fence maintenance)
- Grazing closure
- Guzzler repair
- Placement of new Wilderness Study Area signs
- Monitoring

If you wish to comment, please be as specific as possible for consideration in the environmental analysis. Provide your comments to the Vale District Office at 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon, 97918 or by email to Susan Fritts, at sfritts@blm.gov by August 7, 2015. To be considered, comments must contain the name and address of the submitter. Please be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have questions regarding this project, please contact the Project Lead, Susan Fritts at the Vale District Office at 541-473-3144.

Sincerely,



Thomas Patrick "Pat" Ryan
Field Manager
Malheur/Jordan Resource Areas