

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

**Determination of NEPA Adequacy
for the Pot Creek Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement
Project**

Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, Colorado

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2012-0087-DNA

September 2012



CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME: Pot Creek Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Project

CASEFILE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: N/A

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.8 N., R.103 W., sec. 8, 17, 18, 21

1.3 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: October 2011

Decision Language: The Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP goals, objectives, and management decisions:

2.6 Special Status Species

Goal C: Identify and initiate restoration and rehabilitation of sagebrush habitat while maintaining a mosaic of canopy cover and seral stages.

Objective: Reduce the encroachment of juniper and other large woody species onto sagebrush habitat.

Section/Page: 2.6 Special Status Species, RMP-23.

1.4 IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING NEPA DOCUMENTS

Applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Section 402 as amended (43 USC 1752).

Colorado Public Land Health Standards, Decision Record & Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment, March 1997.

Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040

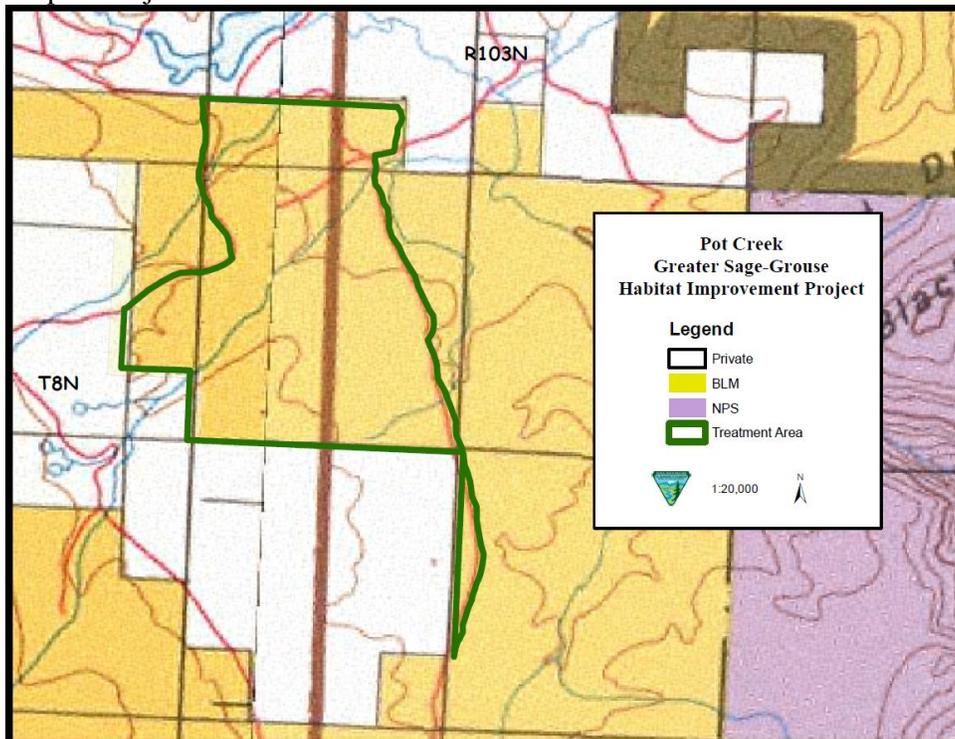
CHAPTER 2 – PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is a joint project between Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the BLM, Little Snake Field Office. The Proposed Action is to selectively remove pinyon pine and juniper

trees that are encroaching into sagebrush habitat on BLM-managed lands west of the Green River, near Pot Creek (see map below). The purpose of this project is to enhance habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (GRSG). GRSG are believed to avoid areas where conifer trees are encroaching into otherwise suitable sagebrush habitats due to unsuitable structural habitat characteristics and increased vulnerability to predation by raptors utilizing young conifers as hunting perches. The Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan identifies pinyon-juniper encroachment as one potential issue affecting sage-grouse populations in Colorado, and suggests that the western portion of Moffat County contains the largest extent of conifer encroachment affecting GRSG in the state.

Map of Project Area



The proposed project area encompasses 685 acres and falls entirely within Preliminary Priority Habitat for GRSG. The boundary of the proposed project area is defined by a combination of existing roads and BLM-private land interface. Within the proposed project area, pinyon pine and juniper trees will be selectively removed only in areas that meet BOTH of the following criteria:

- <20% slope
- within soil types where sagebrush-dominated shrublands are the “potential native vegetation” as defined by the *Soil Survey of Moffat County Area, Colorado*

It is estimated that 80 to 90% of the overall proposed project area will meet these criteria. Within targeted treatment areas, trees will be hand felled by contractors on foot using chainsaws. Vehicle travel will be restricted to existing roads and trails. Because of the low level of overall tree density within the proposed project area, using hand crews to individually fell trees is the preferred method of treatment. While stand density has not been quantified, most of the proposed project area is estimated to have <5 standing trees per acres, with the majority of trees targeted for treatment being

younger age-class trees <12 feet in height. Trees will be felled, limbed, and bucked such that residual slash height sits at or below the prevailing sagebrush shrub height in the immediate vicinity of the treated tree or 24 inches, whichever is higher. Both live trees AND standing dead trees will be treated.

CHAPTER 3 – REVIEW OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

3.1 NEPA Adequacy Criteria

3.1.1 Is the current proposed action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed? Is the current proposed action located at a site specifically analyzed in an existing document? Yes. The current proposed action is part of the proposed actions in the previously approved Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040.

3.1.2 Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values? Yes. The Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040 analyzed the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. The proposed action in this DNA is a part of the listed activities covered in this EA. The current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values are essentially the same as those in 2005.

3.1.3 Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances? Yes. The proposed action would have no disproportionate impacts on minority populations or low income communities per Executive Order (EO) 12898 and would not adversely impact migratory birds per EO 13186.

3.1.4 Do the methodology and analytical approach used in the existing NEPA document(s) continue to be appropriate for the current proposed action? Yes. The Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040 methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to this proposed action.

3.1.5 Are the direct and indirect impacts of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA document(s)? Does the existing NEPA document analyze site-specific impacts related to the current proposed action? Yes. Direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action are unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA documents. The Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040 analyzed the direct, indirect, and site-specific impacts of the area covered under this present proposed action.

3.1.6 Can you conclude without additional analysis or information that the cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Yes. The cumulative impacts that would result from the implementation of the Proposed Action would remain unchanged from those identified in the existing Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project, CO-100-LS-05-040. No additional activities have been implemented on either that would change the impacts resulting from the Proposed Action.

3.1.7 Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action? Yes. Extensive public outreach through scoping and involvement of the public and other agencies occurred during the development of the EA.

3.2 Interdisciplinary Review

Title	Resource	Date
Ecologist	Air Quality, Floodplains, Soils, Special Status Farmlands, Water Quality – Surface, Wetlands/Riparian Zones	ES 9/17/12
Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Concerns	EM 9/26/2012
Realty Specialist	Environmental Justice	LM 9/21/12
Environmental Coord. NEPA	Hazardous Materials	DA 11/7/12
Rangeland Management Spec.	Invasive Non-native Species	CR 9/24/12
Rangeland Management Spec.	Sensitive Plants, T&E Plant	JHS 9/18/12
Wildlife Biologist	T&E Animal	DA 9/21/12
Geologist	Water Quality - Ground	EMO 9/21/12
Recreation Specialist	WSA, W&S Rivers	GMR 9/18/12
Wildlife Biologist	Animal Communities	DA 9/21/12
Wildlife Biologist	Special Status, T&E Animal	DA 9/21/12
Rangeland Management Spec	Plant Communities	JHS 10/5/12

Rangeland Management Spec	Special Status, T&E Plant	JHS 9/18/12
Ecologist	Riparian Systems	ES 9/17/12
Ecologist	Water Quality	ES 9/17/12
Ecologist	Upland Soils	ES 9/17/12

3.3 Land Health Assessment

This action has been reviewed for conformance with the BLM’s Public Land Health Standards adopted February 12, 1997. This action will not adversely affect achievement of the Public Land Health Standards.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM’s compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Signature of Lead Specialist _____ Date _____

Signature of NEPA Coordinator _____ Date _____

Signature of the Authorizing Official /s/ Matt Anderson _____ Date 11/9/12
Wendy Reynolds, Field Manager

Note: The signed Conclusion on this document is part of an interim step in the BLM’s internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision.

