

## OPTIONAL PLAN CONFORMANCE/NEPA COMPLIANCE RECORD

CX-NM-510-2006-0095

Prepared by: Michael McFerraz

BLM Office: Roswell Field Office

Proposed Action Title/Type: El Paso II Rx

Location of the Proposed Action: Township 7 South, Range 25 East, all or portions of sections 19, 20, 30,31.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is to use prescribed fire to treat approximately 2646 acres of mesquite on the Red Bluff allotment (64049). The proposed action would be burned in two separate blocks. The first block will contain 1782 acres of public land and nine acres of private land. The second block will contain 673 acres of public land and 182 acres of private land. These two blocks may be burned within the same year, or, in a different year. It is the goal of this proposed action to remove mesquite and to increase watershed and biodiversity within the project area.

The goal of consuming 30-70 percent of the vegetation by fire would stimulate herbaceous vegetation growth and achieve the objective of reducing re-sprouting mesquite. Furthermore, this proposed action would be used to control the invasion of mesquite within the floodplain, and to re-invigorate the desired palatable vegetation. This proposed action will include a restoration program that consists of re-seeding the project area after the initial treatment. The proposed action would be repeated periodically to maintain this ecosystem. The land is suitable for the proposed action and would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation.

Improvements such as fences oil and gas location and pipelines in the project area will be properly protected from the fire by clearing vegetation mechanically, by hand, or by burning vegetation immediately around it (black lining). Grazing within the prescribed fire area will be deferred until green-up occurs with a minimum average new growth height of three inches. The proposed action will be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan.

Coordination with the allotment operator prior to burning will include provisions to ensure that no livestock are in the area. Rest from grazing for three months prior to the burn will ensure that fine fuel will remain on site to carry the fire. The allotment operator will also be responsible for clearing fire line with heavy equipment on private land where required. The perimeter of the prescribed fire is fences and existing roads.

### Part I: Plan Conformance Review.

The proposed action conforms to the Roswell Resource Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (1997); the New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management and Record of Decision (2001), which amended the Roswell RMP; and the Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States, Final EIS (USDI BLM, May 1991). Furthermore, the proposed actions and alternatives are consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1700 et seq); the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315 et seq.); the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); the Carlson-Foley Act (1968); and the Federal Noxious Weed Act

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(1974), as amended by Section 15 - Management of Undesirable Plants on Federal Lands. The proposed action conforms to The Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2004).

## Part II: NEPA Review

This proposed action meets all of the requirements contained within the Federal Register/Vol. 68, No. 108. The proposed action also qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, Section 1.12. This proposed action has been reviewed and determined that none of the exceptions described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

/s/ Michael L. McFerraz 3/20/06  
Michael L. McFerraz      Date

/s/Howard Parman 3/20/06  
Howard Parman      Date

## Participating Staff of the Bureau of Land Management:

Michael McFerraz – Prescribed Fire/Fuels Technician, BLM  
Allan Wyngaert – Prescribed Fire/Fuels Specialist, BLM  
Chuck Schmidt – Fire Management Officer, BLM  
Joseph Navarro – Rangeland Management Specialist, BLM  
Helen Miller – Rangeland Management Specialist/Weed Specialist, BLM  
Dan Baggao – Wildlife Biologist, BLM  
Michael McGee – Hydrologist, BLM  
Paul Happel – Recreation Specialist, BLM  
Pat Flanary – Archeologist, BLM  
Irene M. Gonzales – Realty Specialist, BLM  
Jerry Dutchover – Geologist, BLM  
John Simitz – Geologist, BLM

Decision and Rationale on Action

I have decided to implement the prescribed fire of mesquite, and restoration of allotment 64049. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after the date of the signature of this Categorical Exclusion.

/s/ T. R. Kreager  
T. R. Kreager  
Assistant Field Manager-Resources

3/21/06  
Date