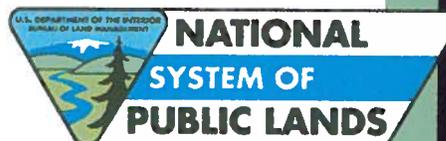


Buckskin Valley Vegetation Treatment Project

Decision Record

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0009-EA

September 2011



INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Sierra Front Field Office is proposing vegetation management treatments designed to restore a balance of sagebrush and woodland ecosystems important for wildlife habitat. The treatments would be implemented over a 10-year period on 7,000 acres of public land on the east side of the Pine Nut Mountains in Lyon and Douglas Counties of western Nevada.

The treatments are needed to restore balance between sagebrush, riparian, and woodland plant communities, all of which provide certain resource values to the landscape including habitats essential for a wide variety of wildlife. As a result of unchecked expansion of pinyon pine and junipers growing into historic sagebrush and riparian sites, the shrub and riparian hardwood communities are at risk of being lost from the landscape, and all three types of plant communities are at risk of catastrophic effects of wildfire.

Sagebrush habitats required for the sage-grouse and other important wildlife species are being lost due to a shift from sagebrush to woodlands and are at risk to exposure to large, intense fires. The sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species, is also a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for the Bi-State Plan Area of Nevada and Eastern California* (hereafter referred to as the Bi-State Plan) states that pinyon-juniper encroachment is an existing and foreseeable risk affecting sage-grouse habitat quality and quantity in the Pine Nut Population Management Unit (PMU), and impacts are likely to become permanent and irreversible without appropriate management. The Bi-State Plan recommended conservation action to reduce pinyon and juniper acreage in the Pine Nut PMU and to reclaim approximately 30,000 acres of sagebrush habitat with treatments producing a mixed-age mosaic of sagebrush habitat.

Riparian vegetation is also at risk of being crowded out by conifers or catastrophic fire, and water availability to support riparian plants has been greatly reduced by conifer expansion. Woodlands are threatened by wildfire, and many acres of woodland adjacent to the project area have been severely burned in recent wildfires. Recovery of all plant communities from the impacts of catastrophic fire takes many years, especially for woodland and riparian tree stands such as aspens and cottonwoods.

1. DECISION

Based on the analysis contained in the *Buckskin Valley Vegetation Treatment Project Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0009-EA), it is my Decision to implement the Proposed Action on BLM-managed lands, to conduct vegetation management treatments designed to restore a balance of sagebrush and woodland ecosystems important for wildlife habitat.

2. RATIONALE

Upon analyzing the impacts of the Proposed Action on BLM-managed lands, I have determined that the project will not have a significant impact to the human environment and that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required. Refer to the attached Finding of No Significant Impact.

The BLM made the EA available for public review and comment for 30-days from June 15 through July 14, 2011. Three comments were received: Richard Huntsberger regarding trees to be retained in the vicinity of his private land and other points needing clarification; the Nevada Department of Wildlife regarding the mixture of seeding; and the Yerington Paiute Tribe regarding special values and concerns in the area. The BLM and the State Historic Preservation Officer have signed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) regarding the inventory of cultural resources and Native American consultation before implementation of vegetation treatments. All cultural or historical resources identified during on-going Class III cultural resources inventories would be avoided. Furthermore, consultation with the Yerington Paiute Tribe would continue throughout implementation of the project.

I have determined that implementing vegetation treatments as proposed would further the public interest by restoring balance between sagebrush, riparian, and woodland plant communities and reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

3. APPEAL PROVISIONS

Decisions may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (b) for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.4 13) at the same time the original documents are filed in this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

4. STANDARDS FOR OBTAINING A STAY

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.



Linda J. Kelly
Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office

September 8, 2011
Date