BLM

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Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Location:
Uintah County, Vernal, Utah
Township 13 South, Range 25 East, Sections 8, 17, 18, 20, 24, and 25; SLB&M.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction project (see attached Map in Appendix B). The EA is an analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or no action alternative. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions. "Significance" is defined by NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI). A Decision Record (DR), which includes a FONSI statement, is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative will not result in "significant" environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the Vernal Resource Management Plan (2008). This document provides the environmental assessment for the Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction project.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction project is to reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels that have accumulated over the last several decades in order to prevent the potential for large catastrophic fire events. In addition, the proposed action is needed to maintain important sage-steppe habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.

1.3 CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The alternatives considered in this EA are in conformance with the Vernal Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (2008). The specific citations are listed below. Page 78 in section Fire-4 reads:

> *Hazardous fuel reduction activities will be implemented primarily through the use of prescribed fire and managed wildland fire. In some cases, chemical and/or mechanical treatments will be used in conjunction with fire. Where social and/or resource constraints preclude the use of fire, mechanical and/or chemical treatments will be used.*

1.4 RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

<u>Uintah County's General Land Use Plan, as amended in 2007 relative to public land concerns</u>:

All alternatives considered in detail in the EA would be consistent with the County's general planning objectives which state:

- To insure that public lands are managed for multiple use and sustained yield and to prevent waste of natural resources.

- To support the wise use, conservation and protection of public lands and its resources including well-planned management prescriptions.

- Management of forage resources directly affect water quality and water supplies.

- The proper management and allocation of forage on public lands is critical to the viability of the Basin's agricultural, recreation and tourism industry.

Federal Statutes and Regulations.

- Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; U.S.C. 594).

- Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; U.S.C. 315).

- Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955 (69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856, 1856a).

- Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).

- The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701).

- Disaster Relief Act, Section 417 (Public Law 93-288).

- 2001 Annual Appropriations Acts for the Department of the Interior.

- United States Department of the Interior Manual (910 DM 1.3).

- 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

- 2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Update).

- 1998 Departmental Manual 620 Chapter 1, Wildland Fire Management General Policy and Procedures.

- 1998 BLM Handbook 9214, "Prescribed Fire Management" describes authority and policy for prescribed fire use on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

- September 2000, "Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment."

- October 2000, National Cohesive Strategy goal is to coordinate an aggressive, collaborative approach to reduce the threat of wildland fire to communities and to restore and maintain land health.

- August 2001, "Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment -10 Year Comprehensive Strategy" provides a foundation for wildland agencies to work closely with all levels of government, tribes, conservation, and commodity groups and community-based restoration groups to reduce wildland fire risk to communities and the environment,

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Introduction

This EA focuses on the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives. The No Action Alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

2.2 Proposed Action

The proposed action involves the reduction of approximately 392 acres of hazardous fuels through use of the bullhog mastication device. The bullhog methodology involves the chipping of the trees with a reciprocating drum mounted on a rubber tired front end loader machine. The mastication treatment results in bark, sawdust, and wooden chips being left on the ground after treatment is completed.

In the project area, the P –J trees have increased in overall density and encroached into the sagebrush habitat type, increasing the overall fuel loads. The vegetation in the project area is comprised of both mountain big sagebrush and Wyoming sagebrush that has been encroached by Pinyon-Juniper trees. The sagebrush vegetative type has been designated as a Fire Regime Group III (Fire return interval 35-100 years). The project area has also been designated as being in a Class II Condition Class. (Vernal Fire Management Plan, 2009) The increased amount of P-J trees has resulted in a change in the Fire Regime Condition Class from a Class I to a Class II Condition Class. The departure from a Class I Condition Class to a Class II Condition Class indicates that at least one cycle of the natural fire regime fire interval has been missed due to historic fire suppression efforts. The change from a Class I to Class II has resulted in an increase of the hazardous fuel loads in the project area.

No new access roads would be needed to access the project area and access would be via existing roads and trails. No treatment work would be allowed during times of saturated soil conditions, which exist when ruts greater than 4" in depth are created by the bullhog machine in a straight line movement.

The mastication area still has an adequate understory vegetation to protect the soil from erosion, following removal of the P-J trees. Therefore, reseeding this area after treatment would not be required. The project has been designed to provide for the optimum amount of edge effect in order to increase the habitat values for wildlife, and to maintain the natural openings where the sagebrush habitat is located. The proposed action is designed to remove encroaching P-J trees

only. Sites that contain mature Pinyon-Juniper trees, (for this document, mature is defined as greater than 26" dbh) as determined by the soils and vegetation mapping completed by the NRCS in the Uintah Area Soil Survey (persistent P-J) are mapped out and would not be treated. In addition, no Ponderosa Pine trees would be treated.

Treatment work is expected to occur after August 1, 2011. However, if treatment activities occur between May 1 and August 1, then a migratory bird survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist to determine if there are migratory bird species of concern, as listed by the Partners in Flight Species of Concern for the Colorado Plateau. Nesting trees occupied by any of these species would be avoided, with a 50-meter buffer of no disturbance around each identified nesting tree/shrub, during the nesting period.

Due to the potential for weed invasion within the project area, standard weed prevention measures would be followed. These include: conducting a pre-project weed inventory; washing equipment prior to entering the project area, and annual monitoring of the project area to detect and/or treat weed infestations. No staging of vehicles or equipment near Flat Rock Spring would occur to avoid spreading Canada Thistle seed and propagules into the project area.

No chemicals subject to SARA Title III in amounts greater than 10,000 pounds would be used. No extremely hazardous substances as defined in 40 CFR 355 in threshold planning quantities would be used.

2.3 No Action

Under this alternative, no hazardous fuel reduction actions would be taken. Current resource conditions and trends would continue.

2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis

2.4.1 Prescribed Fire

The project contains a moderate amount of cheatgrass within the understory. The use of prescribed fire would result in an expansion of the cheatgrass species which typically responds favorably to fire. The expansion of cheatgrass from fire would result in an increased amount of the highly flammable fuel bed, which would increase the overall hazardous fuel loading. Thus this alternative was not considered since it would not meet the purpose and need of reducing hazardous fuel loads.

In the project area, the Wyoming sagebrush habitat provides crucial elk winter and summer range, and crucial mule deer summer range, in addition to providing habitat for a host of sagebrush obligate non game species. The loss of this habitat type combined with the ongoing loss of habitat loss from the active energy development in the area would result in even more loss of this important habitat type. This alternative was not considered, because it would not maintain sagebrush steppe habitat for wildlife species.

2.4.2 Hand Treatments

The use of hand treatments (chainsaws) to achieve the hazardous fuel reduction objective was considered but eliminated. This treatment would encompass the use of chainsaws to cut down the trees and leave them where they lie. The density of P-J trees is approximately 420 stems/acre. With that density of trees, manually cutting the trees down and leaving them on the ground would result in a large amount of woody slash lying on the ground. This would have the effect of substantially increasing the overall amount of hazardous fuel loads on the surface as the slash dries out. This alternative was not considered because it would not reduce the accumulation of hazardous fuels.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment (i.e., the physical, biological, social, and economic values) of the project area as identified by the interdisciplinary team analysis and as presented in Chapter 1 of this assessment. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

3.2 General Setting

The project area is located in the Bookcliffs area, approximately 65 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The project area occurs on a fairly large topographical plateau. The vegetation in the area consists of Pinyon-Juniper, mountain sagebrush, Wyoming sagebrush, cheatgrass, larkspur, needle & thread grass, Indian rice grass, western wheatgrass, and a small amount of various forb species.

3.3 Resources Brought Forward for Analysis

During the analysis conducted by the interdisciplinary team, it was found that the following aspects of the environment could potentially be affected by the proposed action.

3.3.1 Soils

Soils within the project area have been studied, mapped and described as part of the official published Uintah soil survey, completed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The Uintah soil survey meets the standards of the National Cooperative Soil Survey and describes the soil map units, their individual components, and provides interpretive information on soil use and management.

Soils within the project area are comprised of one soil map unit. Map unit 151 is comprised of a complex of soils. The soils within map unit 151 are the Whetrock soil and the Moonset soil. The Whetrock soil is a channery loam that is derived from eolian deposits over slope alluvium derived from sandstone, limestone, silt, and shale. The Whetrock loam is located on slopes between 1 and 50 percent, is well drained, and has a runoff hazard of medium. The Ecological Site designated for the Whetrock soil (by the NRCS) is a MLRA 34A- 034XY334UT-Upland Stony Loam.

The Ecological Site designated for the Moonset soil type is an Upland Shallow Loam (P-J). For this project however, the project area was mapped through the use of a GPS device to avoid the Moonset soil type since it supports mature or persistent P-J, and the proposed action involves the Whetrock soil type only.

3.3.2 Vegetation

Studies across the Intermountain West have shown substantial increases in Pinyon-Juniper since the late 1800s. (Burkhardt and Tisdale,1976; Gedney et al 1999; Knapp and Soule 1998; Miller and Rose 1995; Soule and Knapp 2000; Tausch et al 1981). These increases were the result of both infill in mixed aged tree communities and expansion into shrub- steppe communities that appeared to have not supported trees over the last few centuries. (Miller, et al). This documented expansion of P-J into the shrub-steppe community has also occurred in the project area, and has resulted in a decline in the overall cover of the shrubs, forbs, and grasses, along with a decline in the vigor, and productivity of the understory species that occur due to the inherent ability of P-J to outcompete the understory species for light, water, and nutrients.

Miller et al (2000, 2005) have identified and described phases of woodlands development in the Intermountain West. Phases are described as:

- Phase I- P-J trees are present but shrubs and herbs are the dominant vegetation that influences ecological processes on the site.

- Phase II- P-J trees are co-dominant with shrubs and herbs and all three vegetation layers influence ecological processes on the site.

- Phase III- P-J trees are the dominant vegetation and the primary plant layer influencing ecological processes on the site.

Using the above descriptions, and the use of the BLM Technical Note 430 "Guide for Quantifying Fuels in the Sagebrush Steppe and Juniper Woodlands of the Great Basin" (Stebleton and Bunting, 2009) along with USGS Circular 1335 - Pinyon-Juniper Field Guide: Asking the Right Questions to Select Appropriate Management Actions (Tausch et al 2009) it was determined that the project area can best be depicted as being in a Phase II condition.

As noted in Section 3.3.1, the project area is comprised of the Winteridge soil type. This soil type supports the sagebrush vegetative type. The understory vegetative community is comprised of similar species composed mostly of western wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, bluegrass, cheatgrass and various forb species. Pinyon-Juniper has encroached into both of the vegetative communities, with an estimated average density of 420 stems/acre.

The NRCS has developed Ecological Site Descriptions for most of the State of Utah. Ecological sites are defined by the NRCS as "A distinctive kind of land, with specific physical characteristics which differs from other types of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind

and amount of vegetation, and in it response to management". The Ecological Sites located within the project area are:

- MLRA 34A-034XY334UT Upland Stony Loam

Since the potential native vegetation in the project area is described by the NRCS as a sagebrush vegetative community, the presence of P -J at the level of approximately 420 stems/acre indicates that the P-J trees present on these sites should be considered to be part of the historic P-J expansion described by Miller et al (2008) and are not part of the potential native vegetative community for the project area.

3.3.3 Fuels and Fire Management

The project area is located within the Upper Bookcliffs (C6) Fire Management Unit (FMU) identified in the Vernal Fire Management Plan. The Upper Bookcliffs FMU calls for:

- Approximately 113,000 acres per decade would be treated with prescribed fire.

  Objectives are: achieve the desired mix of seral stages for all major vegetative types, remove Pinyon-Juniper and Douglas Fir encroachment from the Wyoming sagebrush, mountain big sagebrush, aspen, and mountain browse types, and reduce fuel loads.

- Non fire Fuels Treatments - Treat 7,000 acres per decade.

  Objectives are: achieve the desired mix of seral stages for the major vegetative types; remove the encroaching Pinyon-Juniper from the sagebrush and aspen types; provide fuel breaks in the sagebrush types to limit the size of unplanned fires; and reduce fuel loads. Chemical treatments would be utilized in conjunction with prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to achieve desired objectives, and to also control invasive species.

Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) as outlined in the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station technical report entitled "Development of Coarse Scale Spatial Data for Wildland Fire and Fuel Management (RMRS-87, 2004). The Healthy Forest Restoration Act adopts this classification system, known as the Fire Regime Condition Class which describes the amount of departure of an area or landscape from historic to present conditions. This departure from the natural state may be a result of changes in one or more ecosystem components such as fuel composition, fire frequency, or other ecological disturbances. As mandated by national direction, the Vernal FMP utilizes the FRCC classification system to rank existing ecosystem conditions and prioritize areas for treatment. The project area is has been designated as FRCC 2 (lands that are moderately altered from their historical range). Due to this alteration in the fire regime and corresponding change in the Fire Condition Class there has been a corresponding increase in the overall fuel loadings.

The alteration in the FRCC from Class 1 to Class 2 can be associated with the reduced role of fire in the ecosystem. The shift from a relatively stable or limited rate of P-J expansion to a substantial increase in conifer establishment in both space and time is generally attributed to the

reduced role of fire; introduction of livestock grazing, and shifts in climate. (Miller, Tausch, McArthur, Johnson, and Sanderson; 2008).

Fuel loadings for the project area were assessed through utilizing BLM Technical Note 430- "Guide for Quantifying Fuels in the Sagebrush Steppe and Juniper Woodlands of the Great Basin" (Stebleton and Bunting, 2009). Based on this guide along with the research completed by Miller et al (2000, 2005) and on site tree density measurements to determine Pinyon-Juniper stems per acre, it was determined that the project area is in a Phase 2 condition as described in the literature described above. For a Phase 2 condition, fuel loads are estimated to be:

- Forb and grass component
  - Live herbaceous loading- 0.06 tons/acre
  - Dead herbaceous loading- 0.02 tons/acre
  - Total herbaceous loading- 0.08 tons/acre

- Non tree woody component (Shrubs)
  - Total shrub fuel loading- 1.86 tons/acre

- Pinyon-Juniper Trees
  - Live fuel loading- 17.21 tons/acre
  - Dead fuel loading- 1.35 tons/acre
  - Total Fuel loading is estimated to be 18.56 tons/acre

Combined fuel loadings for the project area are approximately 20.5 tons/acre.

3.3.4 Wildlife and Special Status Species

3.3.4.1 Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), was implemented for the protection of migratory birds. Unless permitted by regulations, the MBTA makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including the feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products. In addition to the MBTA, Executive Order 13186 sets forth the responsibilities of Federal agencies to further implement the provisions of the MBTA by integrating bird conservation principles and practices into agency activities and by ensuring that Federal actions evaluate the effects of actions and agency plans on migratory birds.

The Utah Partners In Flight (UPIF) has prioritized migratory birds that are considered "most in need of conservation action, or at least need to be carefully monitored throughout their range within Utah." These are also the species "that will be most positively influenced by management as well as those species with the greatest immediate threats" according to UPIF (Parrish et al. 2002). In addition, The Utah Steering Committee has identified approximately 542,967 acres of Bird Habitat Conservation Area's (BHCA) within the VPA (USC 2005). BHCA's are intended to display areas where bird habitat conservation projects may take place, predicated on concurrence, collaboration, and cooperation with all landowners involved; however, the BHCA's have no official status.

Numerous species may migrate through, or nest within the project area. This section identifies migratory birds that may inhabit the project area such as BHCA's or those that are classified, as High-Priority birds by Partners in Flight*, according to the habitat types found within the project area:

- *Sagebrush-Steppe;* horned lark, sage sparrow, sage thrasher*, Brewer's sparrow*, western kingbird, Say's phoebe, prairie falcon, green-tailed towhee*, and Swainson's hawk.

- *Pinyon-JuniperWoodlands;* black-chinned hummingbird*, gray flycatcher*, gray vireo*, Lewis' woodpecker, Clark's nutcracker, pinyon jay, western scrub jay, black-throated gray warbler, bushtit, juniper titmouse*, northern shrike, Virginia's warbler*, broad-tailed hummingbird*, mountain bluebird*, and Say's phoebe.

3.3.4.2 Raptors

Some of the more visible birds in and near the project area include golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawk, Swainson's hawk, great horned owl, and ravens. The BLM raptor database was reviewed and no known raptor nests were identified within the project area. Habitats in and around the project area provide diverse breeding and foraging habitat for raptors. These habitats include rocky outcrops, pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrub lands.

3.3.4.3 Big Game

Mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk are the primary big game species found within the project area. Use typically occurs from spring to winter, when elk and deer utilize the project area for foraging, thermal cover and escape cover. Both species have an extremely variable diet and therefore live in a variety of habitats. They consume a combination of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Food consumption is also related to the season of use. During winter, elk move to lower elevations where they are found most often on south facing slopes, primarily in P-J woodlands. Deer typically move down to lower elevation foothill areas.

Crucial elk winter has been designated within the project area. This designation was made in the Vernal Field Office RMP.

Other wildlife species that are likely to occur in the project area include black bear, mountain lion, coyote, and bobcat, as well as a large variety of small mammals. Many of these species are habitat generalists, meaning they are not tightly restricted to specific habitat types. These species have not shown negative impacts by bull hog operations; therefore, they will not be discussed further in this document.

3.3.5 Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds

Canada Thistle is present within the project boundary, primarily at Flat Rock Spring.

3.3.6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Ongoing scientific research has identified the potential impacts of anthropogenic (man-made) greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and changes in biological carbon sequestration due to land management activities on global climate. Through complex interactions on a regional and global scale, these GHG emissions and net losses of biological carbon sinks cause a net warming effect of the atmosphere, primarily by decreasing the amount of heat energy radiated by the earth back into space. Although GHG levels have varied for millennia, recent industrialization and burning of fossil carbon sources have caused CO_2 concentrations to increase dramatically, and are likely to contribute to overall global climatic changes. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently concluded that —warming of the climate system is unequivocal and—most of the observed increase in globally average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations (IPCC 2000a).

Global mean surface temperatures have increased nearly 1.8°F from 1890 to 2006 (Gooddard, 2007). Models indicate that average temperature changes are likely to be greater in the Northern Hemisphere. Northern latitudes (above 24° N) have exhibited temperature increases of nearly 2.1°F since 1900, with nearly a 1.8°F increase since 1970 alone. Without additional meteorological monitoring systems, it is difficult to determine the spatial and temporal variability and change of climatic conditions, but increasing concentrations of GHGs are likely to accelerate the rate of climate change.

In 2001, the IPCC indicated that by the year 2100, global average surface temperatures would increase 2.5 to 10.4°F above 1990 levels. The National Academy of Sciences has confirmed these findings, but also has indicated there are uncertainties regarding how climate change may affect different regions (National Academy of Sciences, 2006), Computer model predictions indicate that increases in temperature will not be equally distributed, but are likely to be accentuated at higher latitudes. Warming during the winter months is expected to be greater than during the summer, and increases in daily minimum temperatures is more likely than increases in daily maximum temperatures. Increases in temperatures would increase water vapor in the atmosphere, and reduce soil moisture, increasing generalized drought conditions, while at the same time enhancing heavy storm events. Although large-scale spatial shifts in precipitation distribution may occur, these changes are more uncertain and difficult to predict.

Several activities contribute to the phenomena of climate change, including emissions of GHGs (especially carbon dioxide and methane) from fossil fuel development, large wildfires and activities using combustion engines; changes to the natural carbon cycle; and changes to radiative forces and reflectivity (albedo). It is important to note that GHGs will have a sustained climatic impact over different temporal scales. For example, recent emissions of carbon dioxide can influence climate for 100 years.

3.3.7 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

The BLM evaluated 34 units for Wilderness Characteristics in 2007. Of these units a total of 17 had either recent or historic vegetation treatments which were identified by an interdisciplinary

team. Of the 17 units with vegetation treatments, 12 of the treatments evaluated were found to retain their wilderness character with vegetation treatments not being identified as noticeable to the casual observer. Five of the units identified vegetation treatments as having noticeable intrusions to wilderness character (See 2007 inventory for Cliff Dweller, Lower Flaming Gorge, Mountain Home, Seep Canyon, and Wolf Point units.) Of the five the dominant noticeable vegetation treatment was the chaining method which involved heavy equipment dragging a chain between equipment (generally two bull dozers) and uprooting trees along the way. In heavy or dense pinyon-juniper trees, the chainings were identified as noticeable intrusions based on large piles of dead uprooted trees being left behind. Lop and scatter was noticeable as an intrusion in dense areas, however it was determined that the casual observer would not notice the lop and scatter as an intrusion within 1-3 years of the project completion.

Approximately 392 acres of the project area are located within an area (Bitter Creek, 33,487 acres) that was found to have wilderness characteristics in 2007 by a BLM interdisciplinary team. Although the area was found to have wilderness characteristics, it was not designated as a natural area in the Vernal RMP ROD (2008). The ROD stated that the area would not be designated as a natural area because:

> "The area is considered high potential for oil and gas (O&G) development. 23,569 acres (70%) of the total area is currently leased for O&G development. Wilderness characteristics could not be protected, preserved or maintained" (p.33 of the ROD)

As of this writing, approximately three treatment projects totaling 606 acres of Bullhog mastication treatment have been completed in the Bitter Creek unit. None of the Bullhog mastication treatment projects cumulatively or individual detracted from the 2007 inventory evaluation for wilderness character for the Bitter Creek unit.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter analyzes the direct and indirect impacts that the proposed action and the no action alternative have on the resources identified in Chapter 1 and explained in Chapter 3. It also analyzes the cumulative impacts expected from other land use activities and recognizes actions that could take place in the reasonably foreseeable future.

4.2 Alternative A – Proposed Action

4.2.1 Soils

Soil erosion is not expected to increase as a result of the proposed action, as the project area is relatively flat, and no mastication treatment would be conducted during periods of saturated soil conditions. The proposed action would result in an increase in overall ground cover as removal of the encroaching P-J trees is expected to benefit the understory grasses, forbs, and shrubs in their overall productivity and vigor since the competition with the P-J for water, nutrients and

light would be dramatically reduced. An increase in overall ground cover is expected to improve overall watershed conditions through increased infiltration and lessened amounts of bare ground, which reduces the potential for soil erosion.

4.2.2 Vegetation

Under this alternative, there would be 392 acres of fuel reduction activities. Encroaching Pinyon-Juniper trees would be removed across the 392 acre project and there would be a minor amount of shrub loss from being crushed by the bull hog machine. The shrubs, grasses, and forbs are expected to increase in overall vigor and productivity as the competition with the Pinyon-Juniper trees for light, nutrients and water is drastically reduced. 392 acres of shrub-steppe habitat would be maintained as shrub-steppe habitat.

The proposed action would result in a change from the current Phase II condition to a Phase I Condition as described in BLM Technical Note 430 (Stebleton and Bunting, 2009), and (Miller et al 2000, 2005).

4.2.3 Fuels and Fire Management

With the removal of the encroaching P-J, the overall fuel loadings for the project area would decline from an existing 20.56 tons/acre to 2.05 tons/acre, a reduction of an estimated 18.51 tons/acre. The FRCC for the project area would change from the current Class II Condition Class to a Class I Condition Class. The reduction in fuel loading would be expected to result in a decline in the degree of fire severity that occurs from any unplanned fire events, as the residual shrubs, forbs, and grasses typically produce shorter flame lengths and reduced rates of spread of the flaming fire front. With an expected decline in fire severity, then the understory species are more likely to survive an unplanned fire event, which would also hasten vegetative recovery following a fire event. A hastened recovery of vegetation would also likely reduce the potential for any post fire erosion events.

4.2.4 Wildlife and Special Status Species

4.2.4.1 Migratory Birds

Migratory bird species may be present during the breeding/nesting season from May 1 – August 1. If bull hog operations were to take place during the breeding/nesting season, individual bird species could be impacted. Impacts may include; destruction of nests, eggs, and nesting habitat, fragmentation of habitat, reduction of habitat patch size, human presence during the breeding/nesting season can cause nest abandonment. The mastication would result in a long term loss of 392 acres of P-J trees. There would also be a minor amount of shrub loss from being crushed by the bull hog machine. Nesting species associated with those habitat types would most likely move to adjacent areas to nest.

As per the proposed action, project activities are planned to occur after August 1. However, if treatment activities occur between May 1 and August 1, then a migratory bird survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist to determine if there are migratory bird species of

concern. Also, the proposed project targets younger P-J trees and not the older, mature or persistent stands of P-J which are favored by most P-J bird species. Although there may be some short-term direct impacts to P-J bird species, the long term benefit of the proposed project would maintain the sagebrush/grassland habitat which would in return benefit sagebrush/grassland bird species, several of which are currently identified as BLM State Sensitive Species.

4.2.4.2 Raptors

Impacts would be the same as the migratory bird section. If treatment activities occur between May 1 - August 1, then a raptor survey would be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist.

4.2.4.3 Big Game

One of the major problems facing big game populations in Utah is that many of the crucial ranges are in late successional plant community stages that are dominated by increasing densities of P-J or other conifer trees. The tree-dominated habitats occupied by persistent P-J adjacent to the project area offer a place to retreat from severe weather, but offer little in the way of forage. That is why it is important to maintain mosaic patterns of habitat that can provide forage, cover, and water. Treatment of the encroachment P-J sites can successfully return this area into a grassland/shrubland community, thus enhancing and promoting the return of sagebrush and other perennial understory species which will benefit big game habitat for the long term.

Both deer and elk can be found within the project area throughout the year. An increase in human presence during the spring, summer, and winter months could cause short term impacts (increased stress, increased energy expenditure, displacement during calving and fawning) to big game species. No treatment activities will be allowed from December 1 - April 30, during the elk wintering time period.

4.2.5 Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds

Due to the use of heavy equipment in the project area, soils could be disturbed as a result of the proposed action. Weed species are often opportunistic and can more easily establish after soil surface disturbances, and there would be a potential for weed encroachment following surface disturbance.

Mitigation: *The following management plan will be followed in order to prevent the establishment of weeds within the project area as a result of the proposed action.*

Weed Management Plan

1. A pre-project weed inventory would be conducted to determine the presence of noxious weeds. If weeds were found, they would be: a) mapped and reported; 2) removed or treated prior to surface disturbance; 3) and removed or treated prior to seed set when possible.
2. All equipment would be power-washed prior to entering the project area.

3. All vehicles and equipment would be power-washed after driving through a noxious weed infestation.
4. Staging areas would be located in weed free sites.
5. Annual monitoring of the project area for weed establishment would occur.
6. Annual treatments of weeds would be conducted under the authority of existing Vernal Field Office Pesticide Use Proposals, and following existing policy (Vernal Field Office Surface Disturbing Weed Policy 2009).
7. Avoid staging equipment near Flat Rock Spring.

4.2.6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate change analyses are comprised of several factors, including greenhouse gases (GHGs), land use management practices, the albedo effect, etc. The tools necessary to quantify climatic impacts are presently unavailable. As a consequence, impact assessment of specific effects of anthropogenic activities cannot be determined. Additionally, specific levels of significance have not yet been established. Existing climate prediction models are global in nature; so are not at the appropriate scale to estimate potential impacts of climate change on the project area. Therefore, climate change analysis for the purpose of this document is limited to accounting and disclosing of factors that contribute to climate change. Qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation of potential contributing factors within the project area are included where appropriate and practicable. The lack of scientific tools designed to predict climate change on regional or local scales limits the ability to quantify potential future impacts. However, potential impacts to air quality due to climate change are likely to be varied. For example, if global climate change results in a warmer and drier climate, increased particulate matter impacts could occur due to increased wind-blown dust from drier and less stable soils. Cool season plant species' spatial ranges are predicted to move north and to higher elevations, and extinction of endemic threatened/endangered plants may be accelerated. Due to loss of habitat, or due to competition from other species whose ranges may shift northward, the population of some animal species may be reduced. (Final GHG Inventory, July 2007).

4.2.7 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Under this alternative there would be approximately 392 acres of mastication treatment within the Bitter Creek unit. The mastication treatment is expected to result in leaving piles of woody matter composed of 1-2 inch chips. The piles would be less than one foot high, and resemble compost type piles. The piles would be scattered, diffuse, and isolated enough that the average observer would not perceive the woody matter as a substantial impact to naturalness. The mastication treatment would not leave behind any man-made structures, and since there would be no mastication work during times of saturated soil conditions, there would be a minimal amount of tire tracks across the project area. Those tracks that are made would likely blend into the landscape of the project area within one to two years following treatment as they have been found to be in other similarly treated areas. The project boundaries follow the natural sage brush openings and there would be no residual long term sharp contrasts or straight edge effects left upon the landscape in the project area.

As noted in Chapter 3, several previous mastication projects totaling 606 acres have been conducted in this area of wilderness characteristics. These projects have not been found to have degraded the quality of the relevant values that comprise the wilderness characteristics, and based on this evidence the proposed action is not expected to degrade these characteristics either.

In compliance with Secretarial Order 3310 and under BLM's Instruction Memorandum 2011-034, the 6300-2 manual "Consideration of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the Land Use Planning Process" BLM may approve projects in lands with wilderness characteristics under some circumstances (6300-2 manual .24) In light of the above analysis, the proposed action is anticipated to create no impacts to wilderness characteristics due to limited ground disturbance and modest changes in the vegetation community.

4.3 Alternative B – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, current resource trends would continue.

4.3.1 Soils

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of the encroaching P-J trees across the project area. Over time the P-J trees would eventually out compete the shrubs, grasses, and forbs for water, nutrients, and light, resulting in the loss of the sagebrush habitat type in the project area. As P-J becomes the dominant species affecting ecological processes on the site, overall ground cover is expected to decline. With declining ground cover, overland erosion is expected to increase, leading to increased erosion and sedimentation rates.

4.3.2 Vegetation

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of the encroaching P-J trees across the project area. Under current climatic conditions, conifers are likely to continue expanding into shrub – steppe plant communities. (Miller, et al 2008). With the expected continuation of the P-J expansion, the project area is expected to move from the existing Phase II condition to a Phase III condition. In a Phase III condition, the P-J trees would have replaced the sagebrush and herbaceous understory, and the P-J would be the dominant species affecting the ecological processes on the site. As the perennial species decline over time, the existing cheatgrass plants are expected to also increase over the same time period, resulting in a site with a P-J tree overstory and a cheatgrass dominated understory. There would be a long term loss of 392 acres of shrub-steppe habitat over time.

4.3.3 Fuels and Fire Management

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of the encroaching P-J trees across the project area. Hazardous fuel loads would be expected to increase as the P-J densities increase and replace the shrub/herbaceous understory. The FRCC for the project area would be expected to change from a Class II Condition to a Class III condition as the fuel loading increases. As the fuel loading increases, increased fire severity is also expected to increase from unplanned fire events.

4.3.4 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of Pinyon Juniper trees across the project area.

4.3.4.1 Migratory Birds

The continued encroachment by Pinyon-Juniper into sagebrush habitats would be detrimental to sagebrush-dependent species because it results in the loss of sagebrush foraging/nesting habitat. Over time, there is expected to be a loss of 392 acres of foraging and nesting habitat under this alternative.

4.3.4.2 Raptors

Impacts under this alternative would be the same as the no action for Migratory Birds.

4.3.4.3 Big Game

The continued encroachment by P-J into sagebrush habitats would be detrimental to sagebrush-dependent species because it results in the loss or fragmentation of sagebrush habitat. Over time the Pinyon-Juniper trees will out compete the shrubs, grasses, and forbs, resulting in the loss of the sagebrush habitat type. The decline of the sagebrush type habitat including the understory would result in a loss of forage over 392 acres for a variety wildlife species, especially for sagebrush dependent species.

4.3.5 Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds

Under this alternative, no treatments would occur and existing resource conditions and trends would occur. Ongoing weed control efforts would continue to be directed towards black henbane and Canada thistle, especially near Flat Rock Spring. Over time, as the encroaching P-J is expected to dominate the site as it replaces the sagebrush type, cheatgrass is expected to increase, and become the dominant understory species.

4.3.6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impacts for this alternative would be the same as described in Section 4.2.6

4.3.7 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Under this alternative, existing resource conditions would continue. The wilderness characteristics within the project area would remain unchanged as the Pinyon-Juniper trees increase, and the sagebrush habitat declines in scope and quality. Any unplanned fire that would occur would also not diminish the wilderness characteristics.

4.4 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

"Cumulative impacts" are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.

4.4.1 Fire and Fuels

The Cumulative Impact area for Fire and Fuels is the Vernal Field Office. The Bureau of Land Management has been directed by Congress (2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy) to implement actions designed to reduce decades of accumulation of hazardous fuels on public lands. In the future in the Vernal Field Office, hazardous fuel reductions activities will most likely increase through the use of mechanical, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use to manage the vegetative resource. With the increased hazardous fuel reductions, the Field Office landscape will eventually be composed of different age classes of vegetation.

4.4.2 Vegetation

The Cumulative Impact area for vegetation is the Vernal Field Office. Since 2004, The Vernal Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has been involved with the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development to take actions to restore declining habitat conditions in the sage steppe habitat type. Approximately 75,000 acres have been treated to date, and continued actions by this group are expected to continue to occur in the future through the use of mechanical, prescribed fire, chemical applications, and wildland fire use to manage the vegetative resource. Field Office Weed Monitoring and Control program would continue to treat weed infestation areas.

4.4.3 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

The Cumulative Impact area for wildlife and Special Status Animal Species is the Vernal Field Office Area.

4.4.3.1 Migratory Birds (Raptor Species)

The Vernal Field Office has been involved in restoring declining habitat conditions in the sage steppe habitat type. It is expected that habitat treatments within sage steppe habitat types will continue to occur in the future.

4.4.3.2 Big Game

Due to a precipitous decline in deer numbers in the early 1990s deer hunting has been limited and/or closed. Conversely, elk numbers have risen substantially in the same time span. Presently, the Bookcliffs is open to limited entry permits for both deer and elk. Since present deer and elk numbers are below the established herd management objective numbers, deer and elk numbers will continue to increase in the future, until herd objective numbers are realized. As herd numbers increase, then the continued need for vigorous and productive vegetative types will increase.

4.4.4 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Rangelands, and to a broader extent sagebrush steppe ecosystems, are important for carbon sequestration, primarily because of the significant carbon stored as soil organic matter and the magnitude of the rangelands that occur within the United States (roughly one-third of total lands, excluding Alaska). (Svejcar, et. al, 2008). Conversion of sagebrush steppe to annual vegetation dominance (such as cheatgrass) is associated with 1) volatilization of carbon in woody shrubs during wildfires (carbon source); 2) loss of surface soil organic matter layer due to erosion after a wildfire, 3) reduction in net carbon stored in deeper soils; and 4) reduction in net carbon exchange in annual grasslands compared to sagebrush steppe lands (Bradley, et. al. 2006). Conversion of sagebrush steppe to annual vegetation dominance would be cumulative with such events occurring throughout much of the western United States.

4.4.5 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

The Cumulative Impact Area is the area comprised by the Bitter Creek wilderness characteristics unit.

Past actions include the three Bullhog mastication projects totaling 606 acres. These previous vegetative manipulation projects have not diminished the relevant values of the Bitter Creek wilderness characteristic unit, therefore, the proposed action is not expected to directly or indirectly impact the relevant values of this unit. Because no direct or indirect impacts to wilderness characteristics would occur under either the Proposed Action or the No Action alternatives, no cumulative impacts would occur under the either alternative.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

During preparation of the EA, public involvement consisted of posting the proposal on the Utah BLM Environmental Notification Bulletin Board (ENBB) on January 14, 2011. Issues or impacts identified through the interdisciplinary team analysis process are described in Appendix A.

5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
State Historical and Preservation Office
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

5.3 List of Preparers

Steven Strong	Team Lead	Soils, Fire Management, Flood Plain, Riparian, Water Quality.

Kathie Davies	Cultural Resources and Native American	Impact Analysis for Cultural Resources and Native American
Maggie Marston	Invasive, No-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Plant, Vegetation including Special Status plant Species	Impact analysis for Invasive, No-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Plant, Vegetation including Special Status plant Species
Dixie Sadlier	Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Animal, Fish and Wildlife including Special Status Species	Impact analysis for Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Animal, , Fish and Wildlife including Special Status Species
Jason West	Wild & Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas	Impact analysis for Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas
Mark Wimmer	Environmental Planning Coordinator	Impact analysis for Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Environmental Justice, Farmlands (Prime and Unique)
Dusty Carpenter	Range Management Specialist	Impact analysis for Livestock grazing and Rangeland Health Standards

6.0 REFERENCES

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Miller, R.F.; Rose, J.A.; 1995. Historic expansion of Juniperous occidentatlis in Southeastern Oregon. Great Basin Naturalist. 55: 37-45.

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U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 2009, Fire Management Plan.

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Determi-nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Floodplains	A review of the Field Office GIS layer files indicates that there are no flood plains located in the project area.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
PI	Fuels / Fire Management	Project is designed to reduce hazardous fuel loads	Steve Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources / Energy Production	The project area is leased for fluid minerals, but there are no ongoing energy related activities occurring in the project area.	Steve Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Hydrologic Condition	The proposed action is designed to increase ground cover, which would improve Hydrologic conditions.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
PI	Invasive Plants / Noxious Weeds	Canada thistle, a Utah Noxious weed, occurs near Flat Rock Spring. This invasive would be treated and monitored during the project. Vehicles and equipment would not be staged within Canada thistle treatment site.	Maggie Marston	05/18/11
NI	Lands / Access	The proposed project does not involve treating any access routes or existing ROWs, and there is currently existing access to the project area.	Steven Strong	2/2/2011
NI	Livestock Grazing	The proposed project will not directly impact livestock operations; as the pasture will be available for use and no rest will be required. The overall ecology of the project area may benefit from long term indirect impacts.	Dusty Carpenter	2/2/2011
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	Tribal consultation was sent on March 7, 2011. We received two no adverse effect from the Pueblo of the Laguna Tribe (4/25/2011) and the Hopi Tribe (April 25, 2011). We did not receive any other responses.	Kathie A. Davies	05/23/2011
NI	Paleontology	No subsurface disturbance would occur that could impact Paleontology resources	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	To date, there has been no formal rangeland health assessment done on this allotment. The proposed action is designed to improve the vegetative condition by removing competition with P-J trees. There is expected to be a long term increase in vegetative ground cover and a reduction in soil erosion	Dusty Carpenter	2/22/2011
NI	Socio-economics	Due to the small scale project size, socioeconomics are not expected to be measurably impacted by this proposed project.	Steve Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Recreation	Timing will not impact hunting season use. OHV use limited to designated routes only.	Jason West	4/18/2011
PI	Soils	Small potential for increased erosion and sediment yield from the proposed action.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
PI	Special Status Animal Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species e.g. Migratory birds.	Project is designed to remove Pinyon-Juniper. Possible impacts to sagebrush-steppe, and tree nesters.	Dixie Sadlier	04/11/2011
NP	Special Status Plant Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species	No BLM Sensitive plant species are known from the project area.	Maggie Marston	05/18/2011

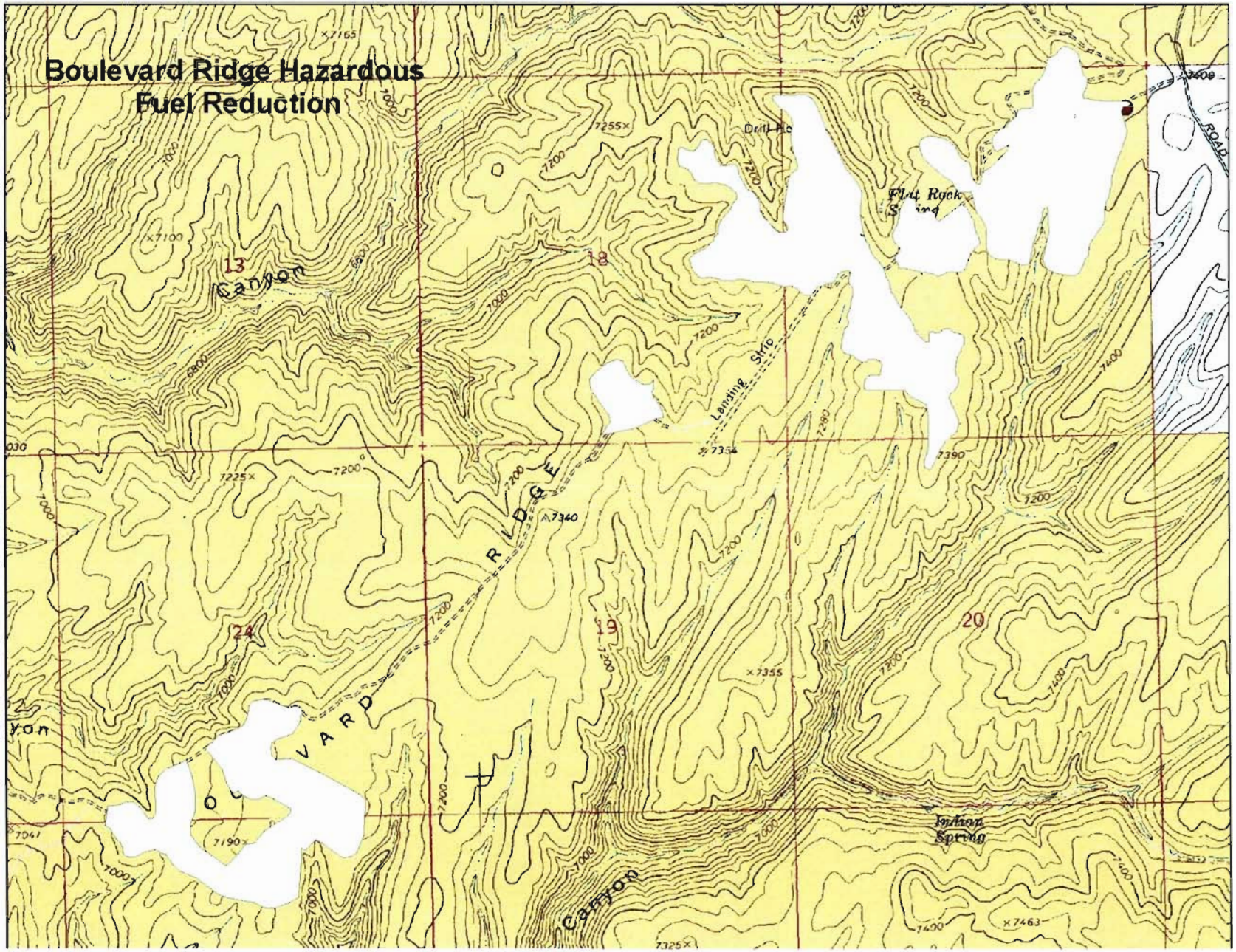
Determi-nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	Review of office files show no T&E species present within the project area. See Wildlife Appendix. Treatment of encroachment or invasion sites can successfully return this area into a grassland/shrubland community, thus enhancing and promoting the return of sagebrush and other perennial understory species which will benefit sage grouse.	Dixie Sadlier	04/11/2011
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	Review of office files show no threatened, endangered or candidate plant species within the project file.	Maggie Marston	5/18/2011
PI	Vegetation	There would be a loss of encroaching P-J trees across 354 acres.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Visual Resources	Class III has been identified. The proposed project is within class III objectives. Class III objectives state: The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. Based on the remote nature of the project and no history of formal or informal complaints from the public based on this activity, the project meets VRM Class III objectives. The Form, Line Color and texture would change with the vegetation removal, however, an overall review of vegetation treatments with the exception of heavy chaining are not noticeable to the casual observer. (Based on wilderness characteristics determination findings in the 2007 Wilderness characteristics review)	Jason West	4/19/2011
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	*Hazardous Waste:* No chemicals subject to reporting under SARA Title III in an amount equal to or greater than 10,000 pounds will be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of annually in association with the project. Furthermore, no extremely hazardous substances, as defined in 40 CFR 355, in threshold planning quantities, will be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of in association with the project. *Solid Wastes:* Trash would be confined in a covered container and hauled to an approved landfill. Burning of waste or oil would not be done. Human waste would be contained and be disposed of at an approved sewage treatment facility.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
NI	Water Quality (surface / ground)	A site reconnaissance showed that there are no surface waters present in the project area, and no subsurface disturbances that would impact ground water.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
NP	Wetlands / Riparian Zones	A review of the Field Office GIS layer files indicates that there are no Wetlands/Riparian areas within the project area.	Steven Strong	2/18/2011
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no Wild and Scenic Rivers present within the Vernal Field Office Boundary	Jason West	4/18/2011
NP	Wild Horses and Burros	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no Wild horse and Burro areas present within the project area.	Steven Strong	2/2/2011
NP	Wilderness/ Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no Wilderness areas present within the Vernal Field Office Boundary. The proposed project does not fall within any WSAs.	Jason West	4/18/2011

Determi-nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Waters of the U.S.	Site visit indicated that there are no live waters or ephemeral drainages in project area	Steven Strong	2/2/2011
NP	Woodland / Forestry	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no commercial woodlands present within the project area	Steven Strong	2/2/2011

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer/Title	Signature	Date	Comments
NEPA/Environmental Coordinator	[illegible]	9/6/11	2011-0128
Authorized Officer	[illegible]	9/12/11	

Appendix B
Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction Map



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Decision Record
Environmental Assessment
For
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0128-EA

September, 2011

Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Location: Uintah County, Utah;

Township 13 South, Range 25 East, Sections 8, 17, 18, 20, 24, and 25; SLB&M. SLB&M.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
Phone: 435-781-4400 FAX: 435-781-4410

BLM

DECISION RECORD
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-2010-G010-2011-0128-EA
Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Decision: Based on my understanding of the information contained in the *Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction* EA and my subsequent finding of no significant impact, it is my decision to authorize the actions needed to restore the sagebrush vegetation type as set out in DOI-BLM-GO10-2011-0128 EA
The following actions will be realized:

- Apply the mastication treatment to the project area.
- Apply ongoing weed control efforts following treatment.

Rationale for Decision: My decision to authorize implementation of the proposed action alternative will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation to wilderness characteristics, threatened or endangered species, cultural resources, or matters pertaining to Native American religious freedoms or their customs. Realization of the proposed action is in conformance with the existing Vernal RMP (2008) and is consistent with the Uintah County Land Use Plan. The No Action Alternative was not selected because that alternative would not meet the stated purpose and need of reducing the hazardous fuel loads.

Implementation of the proposed action will result in the improvement towards a vigorous and healthy mountain big sagebrush vegetative type. The treatment will result in the following positive result:
1) Reduction of the existing hazardous fuel load and decrease the risk of unplanned fire events from.
2) There would be increased forage for both livestock and big game species.
3) Habitat values for sagebrush related keystone species would be improved.

Protest and/or Appeal Provision:

The decision or approval may be appealed to the Interior Board Of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR 4.21. Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, an appeal must be filed to: Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, Virginia, 22203. A copy of the notice of appeal must also be filed in the Vernal Field Office at 170 South 500 East; Vernal, Utah, 84078, as well as with: Office of the Solicitor, 125 South State Street, Suite 6201, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84138. Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on September 9, 2011. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR 3150.2(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and 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 appellants success on merits,
(3) The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted, and
(4) Whether the public interest favors the granting of the stay

Troy Suwyn
AFM for Division of Fire

8/12/11
Date

BLM

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
For
DOI-BLM-UT-2010-0128-EA

September, 2011

Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Location: Uintah County, Utah
Township 13 South, Range 25 East, Sections 8, 17, 18, 20, 24, and 25; SLB&M.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
Phone: 435-781-4400
FAX: 435-781-4410

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2010-0128-EA

Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the *Boulevard Ridge Hazardous Fuel Reduction* Environmental Assessment (EA), and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

Authorized Officer

Date 9/12/11