

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

Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2010-0114-EA

May 2011

Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III

Location:

Daggett County, Utah

T. 3N., Range 23 E.,

Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 28; SLB&M.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III project. 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 Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III.

BACKGROUND

The Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III Environmental Assessment was made available for public comment on March 30, 2010. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance provided comments on the EA on April 30, 2010, and the Decision Record was signed on June 29, 2010. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance then appealed this decision on August 1, 2010, asked for a stay on the project. The Vernal Field Office subsequently requested that IBLA to remand and vacate the Decision as the BLM discovered additional cultural resources not acknowledged during consultation with the Utah State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). BLM revised the EA following the cultural resource surveys and addressed the comments submitted by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III 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.*

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.

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS- Daggett County's General Land Use Plan, as amended in 2007 relative to public land concerns: 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.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

- Partners in Flight Species
- Sage-grouse Brooding, and Winter Habitat
- Elk & Deer Crucial Summer (calving, fawning) Habitat, Elk Crucial Winter Habitat

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 369 acres of hazardous fuels through the use of a Bullhog mastication device mounted on a rubber tired tractor. The Bullhog methodology involves the chipping of the trees with a reciprocating drum mounted on the tractor.

In the project area the Pinyon-Juniper trees have increased in overall density and encroached into the sagebrush habitat type in the project area, increasing the overall fuel loads. The vegetation in the project area is comprised of both Pinyon-Juniper and sagebrush. The sagebrush habitat 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. 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. (Vernal Fire Management Plan, 2009) 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.

The mastication treatment results in bark, sawdust, and wooden chips being left on the ground after treatment is completed. No new access roads would be needed to access the project area and access would be via existing roads and trails. No permanent manmade structures would be established or left remaining after treatment work is completed.

No treatment work would be allowed during times of saturated soil conditions, which exist when ruts greater than 3” in depth are created by the Bullhog machine. The mastication area still has an adequate understory vegetation to protect the soil from erosion, following removal of the P-J trees, thus reseeding this area after treatment would not be required. 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 Henry’s Fork Area Soil Survey (persistent P-J) are mapped out and would not be treated.

Treatment work is expected to occur after August 1 of 2010. 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, 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; annual monitoring of the project area to detect and/or treat weed infestations. The grazing permittee would be advised of the project to avoid conflicts with ongoing grazing operations.

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. All identified riparian areas would be avoided, and no surface disturbance would occur in these areas.

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 Not Analyzed

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.

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. Presently, it is estimated that the density of P-J trees is 300 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, since the size of the debris is substantially larger than the chips and bark that the mastication treatment generates. This alternative was not considered because it would not reduce the accumulation of hazardous fuels.

Hand Treatments with Smaller Slashing and Some Removal of Felled Trees

The use of hand treatments (chainsaws) with the slashing debris cut to a smaller particle size along with some removal of felled trees was considered. It would not be feasible or realistic to require a contractor to spend the time and resources needed to reduce the standing trees down to a smaller particle size than the typical hand treatment produces. The rationale is based on that the average density of trees within the project area is approximately 300 stems/per acre, resulting in the hand cutting of approximately 110, 700 trees. Additional time and effort would then be required to reduce the cut trees debris down to a size comparable to the size resulting from a mastication treatment would be cost prohibitive and deemed unreasonable. Having a portion of the tree boles physically removed by hand from the project site would also be impractical and unfeasible due to the time, effort and expense to physically remove the trees over 369 acres. In addition, relocating felled trees effectively transfers the hazardous fuel from the project site to a nearby site, which would not reduce the fuel loading in the project area. Hazardous fuel contractors typically do not perform this kind of work, due to the high cost associated with this method. Thus this alternative was considered but eliminated based on the rationale discussed above.

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 on the north face of Goslin Mountain near Martin Draw, approximately 20 miles northeast of Dutch John, Utah. The vegetation in the area consists of Pinyon-Juniper, service berry, mountain big sagebrush, larkspur, needle & thread grass, Indian rice grass, and western wheat grass.

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 Henry's Fork Area soil survey (Version 8, November, 2010), completed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The Henry's Fork 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 in the project area are located primarily on the Garlips gravelly loam. This soil is derived from alluvium derived from metamorphic and sedimentary rock. The Garlips soil is deep and well drained, and occurs on slopes between 25 and 70 percent. The wind erosion hazard is slight, and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Runoff is slow to medium.

The Ecological Site designated for the Garlips soil (by the NRCS) is a Mountain Very Steep Stony Loam (Browse), MRLA047C-047CY474UT.

3.3.2 Vegetation

Studies across the Intermountain West have shown substantial increases in Pinyon-Juniper since the late 1800's. (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.

The project area vegetation is comprised of a sagebrush-browse vegetative community with an understory comprised of western wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, bluegrass, cheatgrass, and various forb species. Pinyon-Juniper have encroached into this vegetative community with an average of density of 300 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 its response to management”. The Ecological Site located within the project area is the Mountain Very Steep Stony Loam (Browse), MRLA047C-047CY474UT.

Since the potential native vegetation in the project area is described by the NRCS as a mountain browse vegetative community, the presence of P -J at the level of approximately 300 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

Fuels and Fire Management

The project area is located within the Goslin Mountain (B9) Fire Management Unit (FMU) identified in the Vernal Fire Management Plan. The Goslin Mountain FMU calls for:

- 1) Approximately 2,000 acres per decade would be treated with prescribed fire. 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, and reduce fuel loads.
- 2) Non fire Fuels Treatments

Treat 2,000 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 a Class to a 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 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

A portion of the project area is located within the Red Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The relevant values for this ACEC are its regional watershed values.

3.3.5 Livestock Grazing

The project area is within the Goslin Mountain Allotment which is an active cattle allotment. The Goslin Mountain Allotment currently has a 6 pasture rotation grazing system. The project would be located within the Lower Goslin Pasture.

3.3.6 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), as amended, 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.

Numerous species may migrate through, or nest within the project area. This section identifies migratory birds that may inhabit the allotment, including those species classified as High-Priority birds by Partners in Flight (indicated by an asterisk *), according to the habitat types found within the project area.

Sagebrush-Steppe - Migratory bird species commonly associated with the sagebrush-steppe community include the horned lark, sage sparrow*, sage thrasher*, Brewer’s sparrow*, western kingbird, Say’s phoebe, prairie falcon, and Swainson’s hawk.

Riparian Habitats - Bird species found in riparian habitats include hermit thrush, veery, yellow-breasted chat, Cordilleran flycatcher, Wilson’s warbler, black-chinned hummingbird*, broad-tailed hummingbird*, and Swainson’s thrush.

Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands - Migratory birds commonly associated with pinyon-juniper woodlands include the 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, and Say’s phoebe.

Greater Sage-grouse (BLM Sensitive, Federal Candidate)

The greater sage-grouse is a BLM sensitive species, and a federal candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. These birds inhabit sagebrush plains, foothills, and mountain valleys. Sagebrush is the predominant plant of quality habitat. Factors involved in the decline in both the distribution and abundance of greater sage-grouse include permanent loss, degradation, and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat throughout the western states including Utah (Heath et al.1996, Braun 1998). Documented severe populations declines (approximately 80%) occurred from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s. Research and conservation efforts in the last 20 years have help stabilize and recover many populations. Populations appear to have taken a slight positive turn in recent years. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) identifies brood, and winter habitat within the project area.

Raptors

Some of the more visible birds in and near the project area include golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, prairie falcons, 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.

Big Game Species

Elk are common in most mountainous regions of Utah, but can also be found in the low deserts. Elk summer range typically occurs at higher elevation. During winter, elk move to lower elevations where they are found most often on south facing slopes, primarily in pinyon-juniper woodlands. Elk have an extremely variable diet and therefore live in a variety of habitats. Elk consume a combination of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Food consumption is also related to the season of use. Elk eat mostly grasses and forbs during summer. In winter, they consume mostly browse. Elk must have a source of available water on all seasonal ranges. Elk require some element of cover for escape and protection. Elk will move long distances to avoid disturbances from humans. Elk calving habitat has been designated within the project area. Portions of the project area have also been designated crucial winter habitat, by the Vernal Field Office RMP.

Mule deer are common state wide in Utah where they can be found in many types of habitat, ranging from open deserts to high mountains to urban areas. Mule deer usually spend the warmer months at higher elevations. During the winter mule deer typically move down to lower elevation foothill areas. This species, much like elk, relies on a combination of browse, grasses, and forbs, depending on their availability throughout the year. Deer fawning habitat has been designated within the project area, by the Vernal Field Office RMP.

Other wildlife species that are likely to occur in the project area include cottontail rabbits, black-tailed jackrabbits, bobcat, coyote, fox, skunk, raccoon, badger, and various species of rodents. 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 bullhog operations; therefore, they will not be discussed further in this document.

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 Vegetation/Fuels and Fire Management:

Under this alternative, there would be 369 acres of fuel reduction activities. The Pinyon-Juniper trees would be removed and there would be a minor amount of shrub loss from being crushed by the rubber tired tractor. Following the Pinyon-Juniper treatment, the desirable grasses, shrubs, 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. The treatment is expected to reduce the fuel loadings to the extent that the Condition Class would be reduced from a Class II to a Class I condition.

4.2.2 Area of Critical Environmental Concern

The proposed action would result in the removal of Pinyon-Juniper trees that have encroached into sagebrush habitat. The proposed action is expected to improve overall watershed conditions in the long term, as 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. The increase in productivity of these desirable species is expected to increase the overall watershed conditions as ground cover increases. The expected improvement in watershed conditions would be consistent with the relevant values of the Red Creek ACEC, which is to improve watershed conditions.

4.2.3 Livestock Grazing

There could be a short term reduction in forage because of the disturbance created by the mechanical treatment. A small amount of vegetation in the treatment area would be crushed. In the long term, the proposed action would provide for increased livestock forage in terms of both quantity and quality because of the reduction in pinyon pine and juniper and the expected increase in grasses and forbs. The proposed action would not require the pasture to be rested from livestock grazing.

4.4.4 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

Migratory Birds

Migratory bird species may be present during the breeding/nesting season from May 1- August 1. If bullhog 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 and nesting season can cause nest abandonment.

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, see proposed action. Also, the proposed hazardous fuel reduction project targets younger pinyon-juniper trees and not the older, mature stands of pinyon-junipers which are favored by most pinyon-juniper bird species. Although there may be some short-term direct impacts to pinyon-juniper bird species, the long term benefit of the hazardous fuel reduction project would benefit sagebrush/grassland bird species, several of which are currently identified as BLM State Sensitive Species.

Greater Sage-grouse

The nearest known leks are located approximately 2 miles to the east of the project area. The UDWR as designated the project area as potential brood rearing, and winter habitat. Treatment activities could occur from May - October. Sage-grouse habitat use and requirements change through the annual flow of the seasons and life functions. Early brood-rearing (May-July) habitat generally occurs relatively close to nest sites. As herbaceous plants mature and dry, hens move their broods to late brood-rearing (July-September) habitats which consist of more succulent vegetation. Winter habitat almost exclusively consists of sagebrush, which is the main diet of sage-grouse in the winter. Treatment activities could affect individual sage grouse through temporary displacement (flushing). 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 in the long term.

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. Nesting trees occupied by any of these species would be avoided, with a .5 mile buffer of no disturbance around each identified nesting tree, during the nesting period.

Big Game Species

Crucial elk calving and deer fawning habitat, as well as crucial elk winter habitat has been designated by the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan. 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 mature stands of Pinyon-Juniper or other conifer trees. Tree-dominated habitats offer a place to retreat from severe weather, but offer little in the way of food. That is why it is important to maintain mosaic patterns of habitat that can provide food, cover, and water. Both deer and elk can be found within the project area during the summer and winter months. An increase in human presence during this time frame could cause

short term impacts (increased stress, increased energy expenditure) to big game species. 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 big game habitat in the long term.

Mitigation: Do not conduct treatment activities from May 15 June 30, in order to protect elk calving and deer fawning activities.

4.3 Alternative B – No Action:

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

4.3.1 Vegetation/Fuels and Fire Management

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of the Pinyon-Juniper trees across the project area. Over time the Pinyon-Juniper 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. Over time, the fuel loading would continue to increase, eventually shifting the project area from the existing Condition Class II to a Condition Class III situation. Eventually, an unplanned fire is expected to occur, and since the fuel loadings would have increased, the severity of the fire event is also expected to be greater. Since the increased amount of Pinyon-Juniper densities would have correspondingly decreased the amount of understory plants, the loss of trees from an unplanned fire event would most likely result in increased soil erosion due to the lack of ground cover remaining following the fire event.

4.3.2 Area of Critical Environmental Concern

Under this alternative there would be no fuel reduction actions, and existing resource conditions and trends would continue. Over time, the P-J trees would eventually dominate the project area, and there would be a long term loss of desirable perennial vegetation. This would result in an overall loss of ground cover, which could result in an increase in erosion rates. If an unplanned fire event were to occur in the future with the increased amount of Pinyon-Juniper tree densities then it would be expected that there would be accelerated soil erosion following the fire due to the lack of residual ground cover to protect the soils resource. Both of these scenarios would result in increased erosion and sedimentation rates within the Red Creek ACEC, which would diminish the relevant values of watershed.

4.3.3 Livestock Grazing

Under this alternative there would be no vegetative manipulation treatments and no impacts to the vegetation or soils from the bullhog machinery. The pinyon pine and juniper trees would maintain their present vegetative condition. Over time their cover would continue to increase, a process which could result in a slow and steady decline in forage for livestock grazing, which could necessitate a reduction in the amount of authorized grazing use over time.

4.3.4 Wildlife and Special Status Animal Species

Under this alternative, there would be no removal of Pinyon-Juniper trees within the sagebrush. Encroachment by Pinyon-Juniper into sagebrush habitats is 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 369 acres of sagebrush habitat type.

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.

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.

Vegetation:

The Cumulative Impact area for vegetation is the Vernal Field Office Area. 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 50,000 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.

Red Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern:

The cumulative impact area for this project is the boundary of the Red Creek Area of Environmental Concern (24,400 acres). Direct and indirect impacts to the watershed are expected to be beneficial on 379 acres (1% of the cumulative impact area) under the proposed action alternative. The action would lead to long term maintenance of the sage brush vegetation type and vegetation diversity. Impacts to the watershed and ecosystem would be negative on those same 369 acres under the no action alternative due to increased erosion through lost ground cover (sage, grass, and forb species) due to the encroachment of P-J trees.

Livestock Grazing:

The cumulative impact area for this project for livestock grazing is the Goslin Mountain Allotment, an area of approximately 49,703 acres. The proposed bullhog treatment is another one in a series of treatments that have been completed within the allotment between 2006 and 2009. The current proposal would treat an additional 369 acres within the allotment. This is less than 1 % of the entire allotment and is about 6 % of the Lower Goslin Pasture. To date approximately 4,774 acres, or less than 10 % of the allotment, has been treated with lop and scatter or bullhog treatments. Together the treatments are expected to reduce cover of pinyon pine, juniper, and sagebrush and increase cover of grasses, forbs, and a younger age class of brush which should improve quantity and quality of forage for livestock and wildlife. Increased ground cover of grasses and forbs should also reduce erosion.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Introduction

During preparation of the EA, public involvement consisted of a 30-day public comment period, conducted from March 30, 2010 through April 30, 2010. The proposal was also posted on the Utah BLM Environmental Notification Bulletin Board (ENBB) on December 15, 2009. Comments are addressed in the following section.

5.3 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

Utah State Historical Preservation Office
 Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
 Steve Pierson, Grazing Operator
 Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 Vermillion Ranches, Grazing Operator

5.4 List of Preparers

Steven Strong	Team Lead	Soils, Fire Management, Flood Plain, Riparian, Water Quality
Kathie Davies	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious concerns	Impact analysis for Cultural Resources, and Native American Religious concerns
Jannice Cutler	Livestock Grazing, Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	Impact analysis for Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines.
Jessie Salix	Invasive, No-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Plant,	Impact analysis for Invasive, No-native Species, Threatened Endangered or Candidate sensitive Species Plant, Vegetation including Special Status

	Vegetation including Special Status plant Species	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 and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas, Lands with wilderness characteristics, Wild Lands	Impact analysis for Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources, Natural Areas, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Wild Lands
Stephanie Howard	Environmental Planning Coordinator	Impact analysis for Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Environmental Justice, Farmlands (Prime and Unique)

6.0 REFERENCES

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U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 2008. *Record of Decision for the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan*. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Utah.

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Utah Steering Committee (USC). 2005. Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation In Utah. Intermountain West Joint Venture.

**APPENDIX A
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST**

Project Title: Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2010-0114-EA

Project Lead: Steven Strong

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: (Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for significant impact analyzed in detail in the EA; or identified in a DNA as requiring further analysis

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section C of the DNA form.

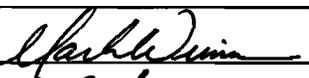
Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Air Quality	Air quality impacts from the projected levels of emission are expected to be negligible. Minimum quantities of dust emissions are anticipated because the volume of traffic from this proposal would be less than one or two vehicles per day during the project, and the project is estimated to take 10 days to complete.	Steven Strong	12/22/09
PI	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	A portion of the proposed project is located within the Red Creek ACEC.	Jason West	12/22/09
NI	BLM natural areas	A review of the Field Office GIS layer files indicates that there are no BLM natural areas within the project area.	Jason West	12/22/09
NI	Cultural Resources	The area of potential effect (APE) is considered to be the area within the polygons for the project. Access will be on existing roads, and no new roads will be constructed. A Class I inventory was conducted on the project area and an onsite was conducted in the project area on 4-28-11. Zig-zag patterns were walked in areas with potential cultural material. None were identified. A consultation letter was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on 5-5-11 recommending "no historic properties affected" for the undertaking. We received a concurrence letter from the SHPO on 5-13-11.	Kathie Davies	5/18/11
NI	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	No standards or thresholds have been established by any applicable regulatory agency for greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change relationships, presently, are not well understood and require additional study and testing. Regional or local modeling has yet to be developed and is not available to determine the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on a scale commensurate with the scope of this project. Consequently, greenhouse gas emissions will not be brought forward for analysis in this document.	Mark Wimmer	05/17/10
NP	Environmental Justice	No minority or economically disadvantaged communities or populations are present which could be affected by the proposed action or alternatives.	Steve Strong	12/22/09
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	No prime or unique farm lands have been identified in Daggett County by the Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey; therefore this resource will not be carried forward for analysis.	Mark Wimmer	03/27/10

Determination	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	12/22/09
PI	Fuels / Fire Management	Project is designed to reduce hazardous fuel loads	Steve Strong	12/22/09
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	12/22/09
NI	Hydrologic Conditions	The proposed action is designed to increase ground cover, which would improve Hydrologic conditions.	Steven Strong	1/20/10
NI	Invasive Plants / Noxious Weeds	Adequate weed control measures are incorporated into the proposed action to control any newly established weed populations within the project area.	Jessie Salix	12/22/09
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	12/22/09
PI	Livestock Grazing	The reduction of pinyon pine, juniper trees, and sagebrush would be a positive impact for livestock as the overall forage production would be increased in the long term.	Jannice Cutler	12/22/2009
NP	Non WSA Lands with Wilderness Character	<p>The Goslin Mountain review area is contained within the 1979 Home Mountain Wilderness Inventory situation report (UT-080-101).</p> <p>On February 14th, 1979 it was recommended the area did not qualify for further wilderness inventory. The Recommendation was approved on February 21, 1979.</p> <p>The Goslin Mountain review area was not reinventoried for inclusion in the 1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003). SUWA/UWC submitted the Goslin Mountain Proposed Wilderness Unit to the BLM Vernal Field Office on December 15,2001. Their submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered for the 1979 Home Mountain Wilderness Inventory situation Evaluation Report concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos.</p> <p>The Goslin Mountain review area is encompassed within the SUWA/UWC submittal. In November 2002 the BLM Vernal Field Office prepared an Evaluation of New information report that determined the conclusion reached in the 1979 inventory review was still valid that the area does not contain wilderness characteristics.</p> <p>On February 7, 2007 a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the 1979 Home Mountain Wilderness Inventory Situation Evaluation Report; The September 2001 SUWA/UWC submittal; and, the BLM Vernal Field Office Evaluation of New Information Report of November 2002. The 11 member team also reviewed changes to the area since 2002 that could affect the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics.</p> <p>As a result of interdisciplinary review, the team determined that the decisions previously reached in the BLM inventories that the area lacks wilderness character is still valid.</p> <p>Wilderness character has not been found in the proposed project area consistently by different and diverse groups of interdisciplinary teams for 32 years. The BLM believes the current inventory is accurate. No</p>	Jason West	3/31/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		wilderness character exists. Consequently the BLM determined in the Vernal Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (2008) that no wilderness characteristics exist and that the area would not be managed for wilderness characteristics or as a natural area.		
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	Tribal consultation was conducted with thirteen western Tribes on December 24, 2009. There were no adverse comments received.	Kathie Davies	12/22/09
NI	Paleontology	No subsurface disturbance would occur that could impact Paleontology resources	Steven Strong	12/22/09
NI	Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	Rangeland health assessments were conducted on the Goslin Mountain Allotment in 2007. The proposed project would be done in the Lower Goslin Pasture of the Goslin Mountain Allotment. Two upland sites were assessed in the Lower Goslin Pasture; both of these sites were determined to be meeting rangeland health standards. The proposed action is designed to improve the condition and vigor of understory plants through reducing competition from pinyon pine, juniper trees, and brush. There is expected to be a long term increase in vegetative ground cover and a reduction in soil erosion.	Jannice Cutler	12/22/2009
NI	Socio-economics	Due to the small scale project size, socioeconomic are not expected to be measurably impacted by this proposed project.	Steve Strong	12/22/09
NI	Recreation	Hunting takes place within the project area, ATV use is limited to designated trails and travel within the project area. The proposed vegetation manipulation project is not expected to deter these activities.	Jason West	1/05/09
NI	Soils	Project is designed to improve long term vegetative cover which would reduce soil erosion potential, and there would be no surface disturbing actions during saturated soil conditions.	Steven Strong	12/22/09
PI	Special Status Animal Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species e.g. Migratory birds.	Migratory bird species may be present during the breeding/nesting season.	Dixie Sadlier	01/05/10
NP	Special Status Plant Species other than USFWS candidate or listed species	Review of office files show no special status plants to occur within the project area.	Jessie Salix	12/22/09
PI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	Review of office files were reviewed, and show no threatened or endangered animal species. See Wildlife Appendix. Greater sage-grouse brood and winter habitat has been identified within the project area. 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	01/05/10
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	Review of office files show no threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species within the project area.	Jessie Salix	12/22/09
PI	Vegetation	There would be a loss of encroaching P-J trees across 379 acres.	Steven Strong	12/22/09
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed action falls within VRM Class III. The project is designed to blend in with existing form, color and texture of the surrounding landscape, and is not expected to draw attention from the casual observer, which is within the guidelines and prescriptions for the VRM Class III area.	Jason West	1/05/09
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	<i>Hazardous Waste:</i> 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	Steven Strong	12/22/09

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		defined in 40 CFR 355, in threshold planning quantities, will be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of in association with the project. <i>Solid Wastes:</i> 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.		
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	12/22/09
NI	Wetlands / Riparian Zones	All designated riparian areas would be avoided per the proposed action.	Steven Strong	12/22/09
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	1/05/09
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	12/22/09
NP	Wilderness	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no Wilderness areas present within the Vernal Field Office Boundary	Jason West	1/05/09
NI	Waters of the U.S.	Site visit indicated that there are no live waters within project area	Steven Strong	12/22/09
NP	Woodland / Forestry	VFO GIS layers indicate that there are no commercial woodlands present within the project area	Steven Strong	12/22/09

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
NEPA / Environmental Coordinator		5-25-11	2010-0114 EA
Authorized Officer		5-26-11	

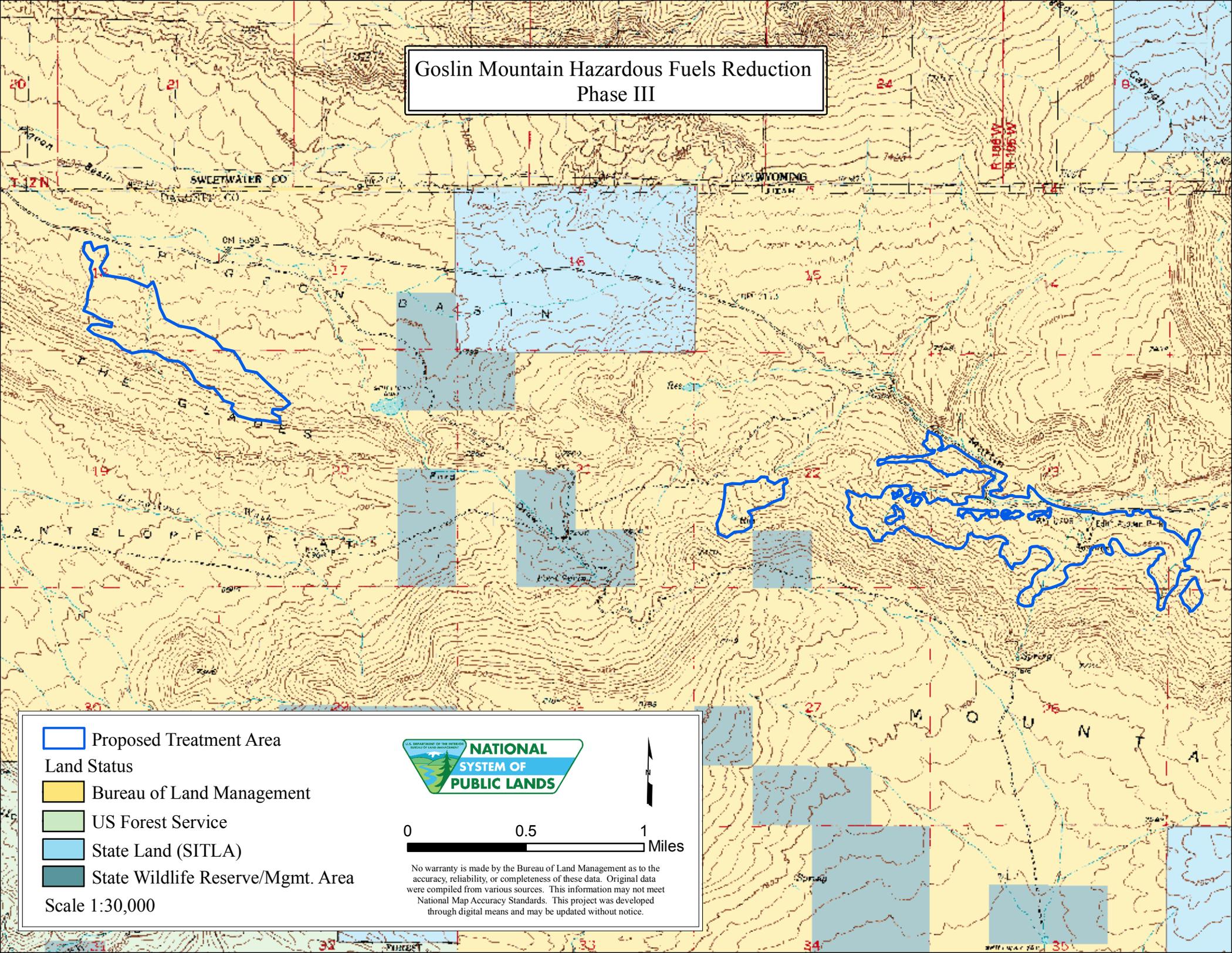
APPENDIX B: RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COMMENT
Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III
Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-UTG010-2010-0114-EA

Comments in common to several groups or individuals were combined into one comment, where applicable; and subsequently addressed in one response. Comments that were not considered substantive (e.g. opinions or preferences) did not receive a formal response, but were considered in the BLM decision-making process. One comment letter/email was received from an organization following the issuance of the Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III Environmental Assessment, DOI-BLM-UTG010-2010-0114 EA comment period. Comments were reviewed and considered in the decision making process. BLMs responses to substantive comments are identified in the table below.

No.	Commenter	Comment	BLM Response
1	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The BLM has failed to take a hard look at whether the Historic Range or Density of the Pinyon-Juniper forest in the Project Area has changed.	Sections 3.3.2 and 4.3.2 (Vegetation) were amended to incorporate language that documents the change in Pinyon-Juniper densities.
2	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The Goslin Mountain EA lacks evidence that Hazardous Fuels have built up.	Sections 3.3.2 and 4.3.2 were amended to provide documentation of the current degree of hazardous fuel accumulation.
3	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The Goslin Mountain EA lacks evidence that Vegetation Treatment in the project area will restore Natural Fire Regimes	The BLM agrees with this comment, and restoration of Natural fire regimes has been Eliminated from the Purpose and Need Section
4	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The Goslin Mountain EA Lacks Evidence that this vegetation treatment will restore or maintain Ecological Functions	Sections 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 4.3.1, and 4.3.2 were amended to incorporate language that discusses ecological functions.

No.	Commenter	Comment	BLM Response
5	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The Goslin Mountain EA Ignores Climate Change Impacts.	Chapters 3 and 4 were amended to provide discussion on Climate Change
6	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The Goslin Mountain EA fails to Consider an Alternative to Remove Pinyon-Juniper by hand	Another Alternative to Remove Pinyon-Juniper by hand with a slight variation from the Hand Treatment alternative was added to the EA. This alternative was considered but not analyzed.
7	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The BLM did not Fully Assess Adverse Impacts to Historic Properties from the Proposed Action	See Appendix A, Interdisciplinary Team Checklist, Cultural Resources.
8	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	The BLM Failed to make Information Regarding Affected Historic Properties Available for Public Inspection.	See Appendix A, Interdisciplinary Team Checklist, Cultural Resources.

Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuels Reduction Phase III



-  Proposed Treatment Area
 - Land Status**
 -  Bureau of Land Management
 -  US Forest Service
 -  State Land (SITLA)
 -  State Wildlife Reserve/Mgmt. Area
- Scale 1:30,000



0 0.5 1 Miles

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This project was developed through digital means and may be updated without notice.

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

**Decision Record
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2010-0114-EA**

May , 2011

Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III

Location: Daggett County, Utah;

*T. 3N., Range 23 E.,
Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 28; 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



DECISION RECORD
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-2010-G010-2010-0114-EA
Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III

Decision: Based on my understanding of the information contained in the *Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III* 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-GO10-2009-0141 EA

The following actions will be realized:

- Treat the project area with the mastication treatment.
- 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.
- 2) There would be increased forage for both livestock and big game species.
- 3) Habitat values for sagebrush related keystone species would be improved.

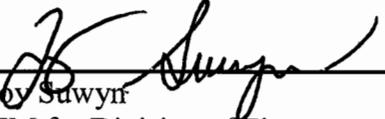
Protest and/or Appeal Provision:

As per 43 CFR 5003.1. (b), this decision is effective immediately.

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 May 26, 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

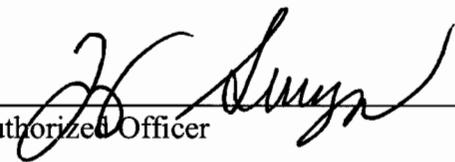


Troy Suwyn
AFM for Division of Fire

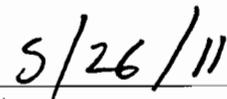
5/26/11
Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2010-0114EA
Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the *Goslin Mountain Hazardous Fuel Reduction Phase III* 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