

**Bureau of Land Management
Casper Field Office
DECISION RECORD**

for

**Forest Management on Casper Mountain, Negro Hill, and Banner Mountain
WY-060-EA10-88**

In accordance with 43 United States Code 1701 *et seq.*, it is my decision to approve the proposal to silvicultural treatments, based on the analysis conducted in Environmental Assessment WY-060-EA10-88 and the attendant Finding of No Significant Impact.

Conditioned through mitigation measures, I find that this action will not result in significant impacts on the human environment pursuant to Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27 (a) and (b) (1) through (10) and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. I further find this action in conformance with the Casper Resource Management Plan (Dec 2007) and that it will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation. The mitigation measures are listed below.

Specifically, the approval action consists of proposes to implement silvicultural treatments in the forest /woodland stands, mountain shrub communities, and open meadows on the Laramie Mountain Range to encourage a mosaic of stands and vegetation with varying ages, density and species diversity to modify insect/disease movement, fire behavior and limit the size of escaped fires. Forest Health issues would be addressed by these treatments and alpine meadows would be encouraged, maintained and enhanced.

These treatments would occur on BLM-administered public lands within the EA boundary, but may not cover the entire stand and would be limited by topography, slope, streamside management zones, cultural resources, and the desire to retain some undisturbed areas of the forest stands. The specific treatment methods would include precommercial and commercial thinning, patch clearcuts for the removal of tree mortality and trees infected with insects and disease, mastication and burning (pile and understory in ponderosa and aspen type), soil scarification for reproductive purposes, fuel hazard reduction with the Casper Mountain Community and the City of Casper and tree planting and seeding. Environmental site factors (slope, exposure, soils, etc.) and desirable outcome would determine the prescription applied to each stand and/or project. See Tables 2.2-1 Proposed Action Forest Treatments and 2.2-2 Proposed Action Vegetation Treatments for additional details.

Priority would be given to the areas that have been identified as currently presenting a fuel hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), areas infested with insect and disease and/or mortality, alpine meadows, and areas accessible to the public for the removal of forest products. Since each species has different growth and stand characteristics, and some stands are a mixture of species, an array of prescriptions and

treatments would be applied to consider these factors.

Natural biological advantages exist in forest stands with a mixture of species and age classes, since insects and diseases of forest trees are limited rather sharply to one or a few host. These mixed stands offer less opportunity for epidemics. Therefore the emphasis on management would be to encourage these mixed stands of vegetation and vegetation type.

Species (major canopy component)	Acres*	Basal Area or Trees per Acre	Treatments	Basal Area or Trees per Acre After Treatment
Ponderosa Pine (including mixed woodland species)	2,358	>170	Thinning, understory burns, pile burns, removal of meadow expansion, removal of insect/disease infested trees, small clearcuts	< 160 (60-100)
Lodgepole Pine	1,468	>150	Thinning, irregular shaped clearcuts of 5- 10 acres, burning	<(80-100)
Mixed Conifer (including Subalpine Fir)	471	>190	Thinning, understory burns, removal of meadow expansion, removal of insect/disease infested trees, small clearcuts, burning	<170
Aspen/Conifer	290	>30	Thinning, understory burns, removal of meadow expansion, removal of insect/disease infested trees, small clearcuts, burning	<30
Limber Pine	<130	>160	thinning for stand health; Mechanical removal in meadow expansions, mechanical removal of insect infested and diseased trees	<80

*Acres reflect BLM-administered public lands only.

Species (major canopy component)	Acres*	Treatments
Mesic Meadow Systems, sagebrush meadows, and mountain shrublands	1000	Mastication, hand cutting, burning,
Riparian	179	Hand cutting removal of conifers encroaching into riparian areas.
Intermittent Drainages	114	Hand cutting, burning; removal of conifers encroaching into intermittent drainages.

* Acres reflect BLM-administered public lands only.

Mitigation Measures:

- Prior to any silvicultural treatment the area should be surveyed for the presence of occupied migratory bird nests. No disturbances would be allowed to trees in the vicinity of any nests occupied by MBTA protected species.
- To protect special status raptor nesting habitats, activities or surface use will not be allowed from February 1st through July 31st within certain areas (TLS). The BLM authorized officer, who will consider topography and special status raptor prey (excluding bald eagles) habitats surrounding the nest site, will determine the size of a buffer zone on a case-by-case basis. Usually the buffer zone will be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.
- No tree cutting would be authorized within the eagle roost boundaries as indicated in Appendix 1.
- In general, there are three best management practices (BMP) which guide all cultural undertakings. Simply stated these are, in order of preference: avoid, minimize, and mitigate. Significant sites will be avoided if possible. If sites cannot be avoided, the undertaking will minimize its physical surface imprint and a variety of design and coloring techniques will be implemented to minimize its impact to a no effect or no adverse effect determination. If the previous steps do not achieve a no effect or no adverse effect finding then a mitigation plan will be developed in conjunction with BLM, SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and interested parties.
- All BLM permitted activities in the study area will contain the following standard cultural stipulation:

The permittee is responsible for informing all persons in the area who are associated with this project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during construction, the operator is to immediately stop work that might further disturb such materials, and contact the Authorized Officer of the BLM Casper Field Office. Within five working days the Authorized Officer will inform the operator as to: (1) whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; (2) the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary); and, (3) a timeframe for the Authorized Officer to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800.11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the finds of the Authorized Officer are correct and that mitigation is appropriate. The Authorized Officer will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the Authorized Officer that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction measures.

- No surface-disturbing and wildlife disturbing activities are allowed from November 15 through April 30 (TLS) on all crucial big game winter ranges. The authorized officer can grant exceptions.
- Incorporate all design specifications as stated for Jackson Canyon ACEC
- All trees would be visually inspected prior to treatment to ensure the absence of an occupied migratory bird nest. No tree containing such a nest shall be disturbed.

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Public Involvement:

A meeting with the Natrona County Firewise Committee and the Wyoming State Forestry was held to discuss future plans, vegetation treatments, and partnerships for Casper Mountain in the fall of 2010. The Casper Mountain Environmental Analysis was discussed by the Bureau of Land Management, as a necessary component of the planning process and a field trip with Natrona County Firewise and Wyoming State Forestry, was held in the summer of 2012, to designate some of the project locations and partnership opportunities. The projects included in this tour captured lands from various ownership types, including private, state and federal. The vegetation treatments discussed and suggested for implementation would require a cooperative effort to be productive and beneficial to all landowners and Casper Mountain. Partnerships with private landowners and Wyoming State Forestry will be developed where applicable and any access issues will be addressed by BLM and contractors.

Rationale for the Decision:

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment and the attendant FONSI (WY-060-EA10-88) for the proposed silvicultural treatments. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Record of Decision and Approved Casper Resource Management Plan dated December 7, 2007 and it will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation.

Protest:

This decision to implement this forest management project may be protested under 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 5003, Administrative Remedies. As outlined in 43 CFR 5003 (a) protests of a forest management decision may be made within 15 days of the publication of the decision notice or a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation. (b) Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer (Attn: Joe Meyer, Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Casper Field Office, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604), and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. (c) Protests received more than 15 days after publication of the notice of decision are not timely filed and shall not be considered. (d) Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him/her. (e) The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of his/her review, serve his/her decision in writing on the protesting party. (f) Upon denial of a protest filed

under paragraph (a) of the section the authorized officer may proceed with implementation of the decision.

As interpreted by BLM, the regulations do not authorize acceptance of protests in any form other than a signed, paper document that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM office within the 15- day period. Therefore, e-mail, verbal, or facsimile protests will not be accepted.

Authorized Officer: Rhen M. Etzelmiller Date: 9/25/13
Rhen M. Etzelmiller
Assistant Field Manager, Resources

Sample format for Notice of Forest management decision other than timber sales for Newspaper Notice of Decision Publication:

NOTICE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT DECISION – BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT – IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREST MANAGEMENT ON CASPER MOUNTAIN, NEGRO HILL, AND BANNER MOUNTAIN; REFERRED TO AS THE CASPER MOUNTAIN PROJECT.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Casper Field Office (CFO), will implement the silviculture treatments in the forest /woodland stands, mountain shrub communities, and open meadows on the Laramie Mountain Range to encourage a mosaic of stands and vegetation with varying ages, density and species diversity to modify insect/disease movement, fire behavior and limit the size of escaped fires. Forest Health issues would be addressed by these treatments and alpine meadows would be encouraged, maintained and enhanced.

The project boundary includes all of what is commonly referred to as Casper Mountain and Coal Mountain, as well as a portion of the Laramie Range south of I-25 between Casper and Glenrock. The area between Casper and Glenrock includes Negro Hill and Banner Mountain

Priority would be given to the areas that have been identified as currently presenting a fuel hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), areas infested with insect and disease and/or mortality, alpine meadows, and areas accessible to the public for the removal of forest products. Since each species has different growth and stand characteristics, and some stands are a mixture of species, an array of prescriptions and treatments would be applied to consider these factors. This decision is consistent with the *Record of Decision and Approved Casper Resource Management Plan*, as amended.

The decision to implement this forest management project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 – Administrative Remedies. As outlined in 43 CFR 5003 (a) and (b), protests of a forest management decision may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. In accordance with regulations, this notice constitutes a decision for the purpose of protests, which must be filed by close of business (4:30 p.m.) on (date), with Joe Meyer, Field Manager at the BLM Casper Field Office, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, W.Y. 82604. As interpreted by BLM, the regulations do not authorize acceptance of protests in any form other than a signed, paper document that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM office within the 15-day period. Therefore, e-mail, verbal, or facsimile protests will not be accepted.