

DECISION RECORD

Recommendation: The recommendation is to select the Proposed Action Alternative, as analyzed in EA # **DOI-BLM-WY-030-2014-0066-EA**, to implement prescribed fire and/or wildland fire managed for resource benefits vegetation treatments in the Smith Mountain project area.

Location:

Township 26 North, Range 74 West, Sec(s) 4,5,6.
Township 27 North, Range 74 West, Sec(s) 31,32,33,
Albany County

Rationale for Recommendation:

Compared to the no action alternative, the proposed action best meets the standards and direction of the various guiding laws, regulations, and directives that apply in this matter, including the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act* (43 USC 35). The Proposed Action is in conformance with the RFO, RMP, Record of Decision December 24, 2008, and the HDD FMP dated 2011, and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act 2003. Coordination with affected parties resulted in support for the proposed action from both the WGFD and affected landowners.

The proposed action will benefit all resources, specifically the identified wildland urban interface issues presented in the Smith Mountain Prescribed Fire EA. The reduction in fuel loading to the immediate area will decrease the possibility of large scale wildfires to the Smith Mountain area, and provide an increase in natural fuel breaks should a wildfire occur. The proposed action will also increase vegetative health to the area's sagebrush/grassland, mixed sagebrush/mountain shrub range types, and decadent/diseased timber communities. The proposed action will help diversify the age-class and structure of the predominant vegetation types within the project area. Additionally, the proposed action will result in benefits to riparian area health and vigor. The proposed action will mitigate identified big game habitat concerns and increase habitat quality and quantity for established antelope, elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep populations. The implementation of the proposed action will have little impact on established Greater Sage Grouse populations, with no core habitat disturbance.

Air resources, soils, vegetation, hazardous fuels, wildlife, recreation, cultural resources, grazing resources, and visual quality are described in the affected environment section and effects to these resources are analyzed in the environmental effects section. The entire project area has been cleared archaeologically and all wildlife-related issues resolved. A wildlife consultation form has been completed and is contained in the project file. The project area was evaluated for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and the Recreation Specialist identified the project area as void of the required characteristics. No additional stipulations are needed. The proposed action will not cause any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation and will provide for improvement to existing vegetation communities.

Adoption of this action will improve livestock and wildlife use distribution and habitat conditions within the analysis area. This action will also result in improved watershed health by increasing vegetative ground cover, decreasing bare ground, and diversifying existing vegetative age classes. The proposed action is in conformance with and will meet standards and guidelines for "Healthy Rangelands," in the Lower Laramie River and Shirley Basin watersheds. Public safety will be addressed and a burn plan will be developed to identify project specific implementation requirements (i.e. logistical operations and environmental characteristics required for completing the proposed action.)

Compliance and Monitoring:

Compliance and monitoring of the effects of the proposed action are described in the attached environmental assessment. These monitoring studies conform to the RFO monitoring standards.



Fuels Management Specialist

4/2/14

Date

Decision:

Based on the environmental analysis and attached Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), it is my decision to implement the proposed action for the **Smith Mountain Prescribed Fire EA # DOI-BLM-WY-030-2014-0066-EA**.

Authority:

H. R. 1904 – The Healthy Forest Restoration Act, 2003. An Act to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest Systems lands and BLM lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfires, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.

As per 43 CFR 5003.1(b) ... the BLM may make a wildfire management decision made under this part and parts 5400 through 5510 effective immediately or on a date established in the decision. Wildfire management includes but is not limited to: (1) Fuel reduction or fuel treatment

such as **prescribed burns** and mechanical, chemical, and biological thinning methods (with or without removal of thinned materials).

In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2 (a), this decision will be effective immediately following publication of a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located.

This decision may be protested within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation (43 CFR 5003.3). Protests should be filed with the BLM Authorized Officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Rawlins Field Office
P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301

Alternatives Considered:

Proposed Action – Conduct vegetation treatments through the use of prescribed fire and/or naturally ignited wildland fire management for resource benefits within the proposed Smith Mountain project area.

No Action – no vegetation treatments utilizing prescribed or management of naturally ignited fire for resource benefits would be authorized within the proposed Smith Mountain project area.

Appeals:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. If an appeal is taken (see 43 CFR 4.410), your notice of appeal must be filed within 30 days (see 43 CFR 4.411) from receipt of this decision to:

Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Rawlins Field Office
P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why you think the final decision is in error (see 43 CFR 4.412).

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulations at 43 CFR 4.21 for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay:

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

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

If you decide to submit a petition for stay of the decision, a copy of the notice of appeal, statement of reasons, and petition for stay should be simultaneously filed with the Office of Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 755 Parfet Street, Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215.

If you have questions concerning this decision please contact Christopher Otto at the BLM, RFO at (307) 328-4250.



Rawlins Field Manager

4/3/14

Date