

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District
Jarbidge Field Office
2536 Kimberly Road
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301
Phone: (208) 736-2350
FAX: (208) 735-2076

**DECISION RECORD
for the
Jarbidge Fuel Breaks Project
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2011-0006-EA**

I. Decision

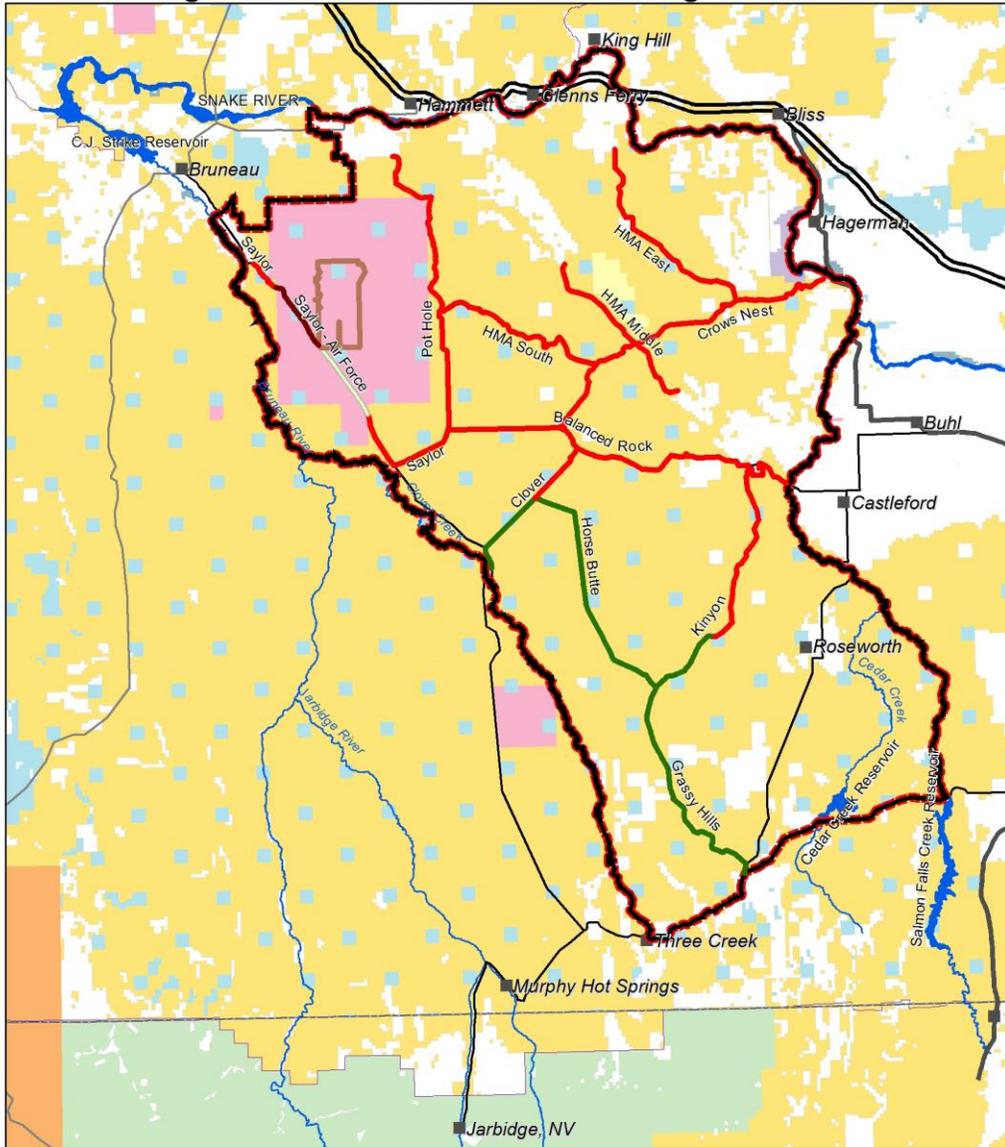
I have decided to select a combination of the proposed action and Alternatives 4 and 5 for implementation as described in the 2014 Jarbidge Fuel Breaks Project Environmental Assessment (EA). Based on my review of the EA and project record, I have concluded that the proposed action and alternatives were analyzed in sufficient detail to allow me to make an informed decision. The proposed action [Buffered Forage Kochia (*Kochia prostrata*) Fuel Breaks] and Alternative 4 (Short-statured Native Fuel Breaks) will be implemented according to Table 1 and Map 1. If portions of treatment areas meet criteria for a functional fuel break in plant composition and density, maintenance treatments could be applied to untreated segments to remove shrubs and/or noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Table 1. Summary of BLM miles and acres that could be treated for each fuel break segment under the proposed action and Alternatives 4 and 5.

Fuel Break Segment	BLM Miles			BLM Acres		
	Proposed Action	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Proposed Action	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
Balanced Rock	29	0	29	1,777	0	199
Clover	4	6	10	269	390	72
Crows Nest	25	0	25	1,641	0	181
Grassy Hills	0	17	17	0	1,153	127
HMA East	16	0	16	1,027	0	113
HMA Middle	14	0	14	904	0	98
HMA South	14	0	14	941	0	104
Horse Butte	0	18	18	0	1,157	127
Kinyon	12	6	18	817	374	131
Pothole	22	0	22	1,493	0	163
Saylor	10	0	10	693	0	75
Total	146	47	193	9,562	3,074	1,390

Map. 1

Jarbridge Field Office Wildfire Fuel Break Segments - Decision



Legend

Fuel Breaks	Towns/Communities	Bureau of Land Management	Fish and Wildlife Service
Proposed Action	Major Waterways	Bureau of Reclamation	National Park Service
Alternative 4	Major Water Bodies	Military, Department of Defense	Native American Reservation
Proposed Green Strip - Air Force	Main Travel Routes	Bankhead-Jones Land Use	Private, other
Existing Green Strip - Air Force	U.S. Interstate	Department of Energy	State
Existing Brown Strip - Air Force	U.S. Route	National Grasslands	State Fish and Game
Project Boundary	State Hwy	Forest Service	
	BLM Offices		
	NW States		

Scale: 0 4 8 12 Miles

Map Created on: 2014-12-09
Data Displayed in NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_11N Projection

BLM data are provided by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and may contain errors or omissions. The user assumes the entire risk associated with use of these data and bears all responsibility in determining whether these data are fit for the user's intended use.

Alternative 5 (Unvegetated Fuel Breaks) could be implemented on any of the segments under the following conditions:

1. Implementation of vegetated fuel breaks is not possible due to funding, time, or work capacity.
2. Unvegetated fuel breaks will be rigorously maintained to reduce the potential for establishment and spread of invasive plants and noxious weeds.
3. If unvegetated fuel breaks are found to be ineffective or maintenance schedules cannot be maintained, unvegetated fuel breaks will be converted to vegetated fuel breaks per Table 1.
4. A non-BLM entity such as a Rangeland Fire Protection Association, environmental organization, permittee, etc., desires to create and maintain an unvegetated fuel break and through written agreement with the Twin Falls District commits dollars and/or equipment to establish and maintain the fuel break to BLM standards.

All design features associated with the proposed action and Alternatives 4 and 5 will be implemented. Fuel break width for segments implemented under Alternative 4 will be reduced from 300 feet to 275 feet on either side of the road, consistent with the Proposed Action. This is not expected to result in a decrease in fuel break effectiveness.

The annual treatment target for implementation of vegetated fuel breaks will be about 1,000 to 2,000 acres (about 15 to 30 miles) per year. Vegetated fuel breaks may take up to 10 years to implement. Treatments will be protected using a variety of methods, including, but not limited to, herding, avoidance by trailing, shutting off water sources, removing salt or mineral sources, temporary fencing, or incorporation into a rest/rotation schedule. If circumstances arise where none of these tools will provide adequate protection, pasture closure may be considered.

Implementing the proposed action in combination with Alternative 4 effectively addresses the purpose and need identified in the EA, which is to protect and enhance greater sage-grouse habitat, reduce impacts to wild horses in the Saylor Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA), and enhance firefighter safety and capability through establishment and maintenance of strategically-placed, self-sustaining vegetative fuel breaks. These actions are far less detrimental to wildlife, including sage-grouse, and wild horses compared to long-term habitat loss from repeated fires. While Alternative 5 did not meet the purpose of establishing strategically-placed, self-sustaining vegetative fuel breaks, I recognize that placement of unvegetated fuel breaks could provide for protection of human life, property, and natural resources until vegetated fuel breaks can be established. Unvegetated fuel breaks also allow another alternative for non-BLM partners who do not like the proposed action or Alternative 4 to participate in the project through long-term commitment of dollars and/or equipment.

Treatments prescribed under the Proposed Action were selected for implementation in the northern portion of the project area for the following reasons:

- 1) Analyses for fuel break effectiveness indicate that forage kochia fuel breaks will be the most effective in reducing fire surface rate of spread, fire line intensity, and flame length when compared to other alternatives (EA, p. 50-62). Therefore, the

proposed action will best meet the need to reduce the potential for large, repeated wildfires.

- 2) Environmental conditions in the northern portion of the project area are consistent with parameters that favor establishment of forage kochia (EA, p. 53). Thus, the potential for fuel break establishment and persistence is greatest in this portion of the project area.
- 3) Vegetation in the northern portion of the project area has been modified by past fire and vegetation treatments. Therefore, there will be little additional modification of native plant communities (EA, pp. 43-47).
- 4) Potential for slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*) to occur in most of the northern portion of the project area is low due to past disturbance history and vegetation treatments (EA, pp. 82-85).
- 5) Risk of forage kochia spread to occupied slickspot peppergrass habitat will be very low due to distance and design features. Forage kochia fuel breaks will be about 15 road miles (13 air miles) distant from slickspot peppergrass occupied habitat. This distance substantially exceeds the 1.5 mile buffer between forage kochia plantings and slickspot peppergrass element occurrences (occupied habitat) agreed upon by the Bureau and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the 2014 Conservation Agreement for Slickspot Peppergrass. In addition, fuel breaks are downwind from occupied habitat according to prevailing winds, further reducing potential for forage kochia spread by wind (EA, pp. 89-90).

Treatments prescribed under Alternative 4 were selected for implementation in the southern portion of the project area for the following reasons:

- 1) Soil moisture increases and soil temperature decreases from north to south. Conditions that favor establishment and persistence of forage kochia decrease with these parameters. Therefore, establishment of functional forage kochia fuel breaks is less likely in the southern half of the project area (EA, p.53).
- 2) A greater amount of the vegetation in the southern portion of the project area is dominated by native vegetation. Implementation of fuel breaks under Alternative 4 will protect remaining native and recovering shrubland plant communities while eliminating conversion to non-native vegetation through fuel break implementation (EA, pp. 43-47).
- 3) Although slickspot peppergrass was not located in the project area during past or current inventories, potential for slickspot peppergrass to occur is higher in the vicinity of the Horse Butte, southern Kinyon, and northern Grassy Hills segments. The southern portion of the Clover segment was included to be treated under Alternative 4 to further reduce the potential for forage kochia spread to occupied slickspot peppergrass habitat (EA, p. 82-85).

My decision is in conformance with the 1987 Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP), accompanied by a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). The alternatives chosen for implementation conform to the following objectives and management guidelines identified in the Jarbidge RMP:

- Maintain existing vegetative improvements (pp. II-22 – II-56).
- Improve lands in poor ecological condition (pp. II-22 – II-59).
- Protect and enhance endangered, threatened, and sensitive species habitats in order to maintain or enhance existing and potential populations within the planning area (p. II-83).
- Manage wildlife habitat within the resource area to provide a diversity of vegetation and habitats (p. II-83).
- Rehabilitation of areas, particularly large areas, that have a high potential for fires or have a high frequency of fires, will utilize irregular buffer strips with seed mixtures that are fire resistant and/or meet watershed protection, wildlife and riparian objectives. These buffer strips will receive first priority for seeding prior to reseeded the rest of the burned area (II-89).

The Idaho and Southwestern Montana and Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments and EISs are currently in progress. The RODs for these planning efforts will amend the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The 90 day comment periods for the draft EISs closed January 29, 2014, and the Final EISs and proposed land use plan amendments are scheduled for completion and public review in winter 2015. Any components of this action that have not been completed by the time the ROD has been signed will be reviewed for conformance with the amended RMP at that time.

In addition, the Jarbidge Field Office is revising the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The protest period for the Proposed RMP and Final EIS ended September 22, 2014. The Final RMP and ROD will be released following the RODs for the land use plan amendments referenced above. Any components of this action that have not been completed by the time the ROD for the revised RMP has been signed will be reviewed for conformance with the revised RMP at that time.

My decision also complies with laws and policies as described in Chapter 1 – Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans, and analyses contained in the following Chapter 3 sections: Vegetation, Including Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants, and Fuels Management; Air Quality; Water Quality; Special Status Plants; Special Status Animals and Migratory Bird Species of Conservation Concern; Wild Horses; Visual Resources; and Cultural and Historic Resources. Design features referenced in these analyses are described for the proposed action and are common to Alternatives 4 and 5.

II. Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed activities documented in the EA for the Jarbidge Fuel Breaks Project (DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2011-006-EA). I have also reviewed the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the project record for this analysis. I have determined treatments including prescribed burning; disking; broadcast and drill seeding of grasses, forbs, and forage kochia; mowing, cutting, or mastication of shrubs; and herbicide use to establish and maintain vegetated and unvegetated fuel breaks as described in the EA will not

significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

III. Other Alternatives Considered

Alternative 2 (Native and Introduced Species Fuel Breaks; EA, pp. 32-37) consisted of implementing 105 miles of 600-foot wide fuel breaks in the northern portion of the project area using prescribed fire and herbicide seedbed preparation treatments, then drill seeding using a rangeland, minimum-till, or no-till drill a seed mix consisting of native and non-native grasses and forbs. The seed mix for Alternative 2 included native and non-native species of variable height, texture, and potential ripening dates to diversify fuel structure in the treatment areas. Alternative 3 (Native Species Fuel Breaks; EA, p. 37) consisted of implementing 105 miles of 600-foot wide fuel breaks in the northern portion of the project area using prescribed fire and herbicide seedbed preparation treatments, then drill seeding using a rangeland, minimum-till, or no-till drill a seed mix consisting of native grasses and forbs. The seed mix for Alternative 3 included native species of variable height, texture, and potential ripening dates to diversify fuel structure in the treatment areas. Predictive models that were run using BehavePlus software indicated that fire surface rate of spread, fire line intensity, and flame length for these types of fuel breaks would be greater than for forage kochia fuel breaks implemented under the proposed action and Alternative 4 fuel breaks. Therefore it was determined that fuel breaks implemented under Alternatives 2 and 3 would be less effective at slowing the trend of large, repeated wildfires.

Additionally, two alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail (EA, p. 41). These alternatives were to create and maintain fuel breaks strictly by mowing, and the use of targeted grazing. For reasons detailed in the EA, these alternatives were not carried forward for analysis.

IV. Public Involvement

The Jarbidge Fuel Breaks Project has been listed in the Idaho NEPA Database since December, 2010. Scoping packages detailing the purpose and need for the action, preliminary issues, and potential alternatives for action were mailed to the public for comment in May and June, 2011. Copies were delivered to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and 88 individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and county agencies. In addition, the scoping package was made available on the Idaho BLM web site. The proposed project was presented to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes in government-to-government consultation meetings on May 26 and June 30, 2011. No formal comments were received from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes support efforts to reduce landscape-scale wildfire, restore and protect native vegetation, and protect resources that are of cultural or religious importance to the tribes. Site visits were requested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Western Watersheds Project. These visits took place on June 2 and June 21, 2011, respectively.

Scoping comments were submitted to the Jarbidge Field Office via mail or email. Six letters were received following issuance of the scoping packet: two from individuals, one

from an organization, two from state agencies, and one from a federal agency. In addition, comments from a previous scoping proposal for the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area (HMA) Wild Horse Release and Fuel Breaks were also considered. Individuals and state and federal agencies that provided scoping comments on the current proposal also provided comments on this previous scoping effort. The resultant EA and decision included only actions for wild horse release back into the Saylor Creek HMA following the 2010 Long Butte Fire. Verbal public comments received following the 2012 Kinyon Road Fire were also considered.

Each comment was reviewed and comments were identified as substantive or non-substantive. Substantive comments challenge the accuracy of the information present; challenge the adequacy, methodology or assumptions of the environmental analysis (with supporting rationale); present new information relevant to the analysis; or present reasonable alternatives (including mitigation) other than those presented in the document. Substantive comments were utilized in development of the alternatives and analysis. Non-substantive comments include, but are not limited to, comments such as open ended questions, opinions without supporting rationale, or comments about other projects or activities that are not relevant to the currently proposed project. These were not utilized in development of the alternatives and analysis. Relevant comments focused primarily on fuel break design and use of forage kochia. Public comments resulted in development of design features to reduce potential impacts to sensitive resources as well as Alternatives 4 and 5, elements of which have been chosen for inclusion in this Decision Record.

V. Appeals

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Any appeal must be filed within 30 days of this decision. Any notice of appeal must be filed with the Jarbidge Field Office Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 2536 Kimberly Road, Twin Falls, Idaho 83301. The appellant shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs on each adverse party named in the decision, not later than 15 days after filing such document (see 43 CFR 4.413(a)). Failure to serve within the time required will subject the appeal to summary dismissal (see 43 CFR 4.413(b)). If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the IBLA, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U. S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Jarbidge Field Office Manager.

Notwithstanding the provisions of 43 CFR 4.21(a)(1), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of the decision. If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal.

A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

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

In the event a request for stay or an appeal is filed, the person/party requesting the stay or filing the appeal must serve a copy of the appeal on the Office of the Field Solicitor, 960 Broadway Ave., Suite 400, Boise, ID 83706.

/s/ Jesse German
Jesse German
Jarbidge Field Office Manager, Acting

1/9/2015
Date

cc:

Interested Public

Certified Mail Receipt

Lindsey Manning, Tribal Chairman, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes	7013 1710 0001 2575 4802
Nathan Small, Tribal Chairman, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	7013 1710 0001 2575 4819
Toby Boudreau, Idaho Department of Fish and Game	7013 1710 0001 2575 4826
Pat Brown, Idaho Department of Lands	7013 1710 0001 2575 4833
Meribeth Lomkin, Idaho Department of Lands	7013 1710 0001 2575 4840
John Marvel, Western Watersheds Project	7013 1710 0001 2575 4857
Travis Bruner, Western Watersheds Project	7013 1710 0001 2575 4864
Ken Cole, Western Watersheds Project	7013 1710 0001 2575 4871
Stan T. Boyd, Boise District Grazing Board	7013 1710 0001 2575 4888
Elias Jaca, Boise District Grazing Board	7013 1710 0001 2575 4895
Scott Jensen, Owyhee Cattlemen's Association	7013 1710 0001 2575 4901
Michael Stanford	7013 1710 0001 2575 4918
John Robison, Idaho Conservation League	7013 1710 0001 2575 4925
Marty Marzinelli, Sierra Club (Middle Snake Group)	7013 1710 0001 2575 4932
Sean Woodhead, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	7013 1710 0001 2575 4949
Balthasar Buhidar, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	7013 1710 0001 2575 4956
Rich Bupp, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	7013 1710 0001 2575 4963
Steve Jakubowics, Committee for Idaho's High Desert	7013 1710 0001 2575 4970
Steve Foree, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region #2	7013 1710 0001 2575 4987
Jerry Hoagland, Owyhee County Board of Commissioners	7013 1710 0001 2575 4994
Chad Gibson, Owyhee Range Service	7013 1710 0001 2575 8596
Jim Desmond, NRC Owyhee County Board of Commissioners	7013 1710 0001 2575 8602
John Biar, Idaho Department of Agriculture	7013 1710 0001 2575 8619
Jeff Cook, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation	7013 1710 0001 2575 8626
Desiree Seal, Nevada Cattlemen's Association	7013 1710 0001 2575 8633
Chet and Kim Brackett, Friends of Jarbidge	7013 1710 0001 2575 8640
Aaron Utz, Idaho Power Company	7013 1710 0001 2575 8657
Jared Brackett, Idaho Cattle Association	7013 1710 0001 2575 8664

Jarbidge Fuel Breaks Project DOI-BLM-ID-2011-006-EA
Decision Record

Interested Public

Kathleen R. Greg
Suzanne Roy, American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign
Connie Cunningham
Barry Lehman
Robert and Sabrina Amidon, Friends of the Mustang
DJ Schubert, Animal Welfare Association
Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center
Nell Walton, All Horses Post
Christine Van Boening
Deniz Bolbol, American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign
Barber/Caven Ranches
Blue Butte Grazing Association
J.R. Simplot Company
Devil Creek Ranch
JRS Properties III L.P.
Camas Creek Cattle Association, LLC
Salmon Falls Land and Livestock
Guerry, Inc.
Lakeside Industries, Inc.
David Kinyon
Joe Kinyon
Goodtime Association
Scott Luby
Ronnie Jones
Allen Thompson
Two E Grazing Association, LLC
Wells Juniper Ranch Grazing Association, LLC
Rafters J Grazing Association
Flying Triangle Inc.
Hammett Livestock Company
Joe Leguineche
Barry Duelke
Glenns Ferry Highway District
Owyhee County Highway District
Twin Falls Highway District
Three Creek Highway District
Bruneau Highway Department

Certified Mail Receipt

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