

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)  
Trout Springs Allotment Permit Renewal  
Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2009-0030-EA**

**-Western Juniper Treatments and Interim Livestock Grazing Management-**

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) # DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2009-0030-EA (incorporated by reference into this document) for the treatment of Western Juniper (treatment) and implementation of associated interim livestock grazing management (modified from Alternative E, which was selected in the November 13, 2013 Final Grazing Decision), will not constitute a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance; therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects of the vegetative treatment and interim grazing management practices, as will be described in the decision document. The following factors, as described in the above EA, were used in defining significance:

***1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.***

Both beneficial and adverse impacts of the treatment and interim livestock grazing management were assessed. Western juniper was identified as a significant causal factor for the non-attainment of the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health (Standards). The treatment is identified to provide benefits to watershed structure and function. Short and long-term benefits to soils, vegetation, and associated wildlife habitats were identified. The analysis of the treatment, coupled with the interim grazing management prescription, found that significant progress towards the Standards would be made. Therefore, the BLM finds that there would be benefit to overall ecological function of the public lands within the Trout Springs allotment.

The BLM identified adverse impacts with some aspects of the treatments. Specifically, adverse impacts are expected to occur the first spring after the treatments due to loss of vegetative cover which would increase soil erosion potential in the uplands and riparian areas. However, these were short-term in nature and the long-term benefits to the ecological health of the system outweighed the short-term adverse impacts.

None of the environmental impacts, beneficial or adverse, disclosed in the EA for the treatment and interim grazing prescription are considered significant.

**2) *The degree to which the action affects public health or safety.***

The use of prescribed fire during treatment projects would result in a moderate short-term negative effect on air quality and visibility during and immediately following the burning activities. Air quality effects will be in the form of smoke and dust emissions predominantly in the Particulate Matter (PM) 10 and PM 2.5 size ranges. This activity is not expected to exceed any State and/or Federal air quality standards based on the types of fuels and size of burns. Smoke will be noticeable over a wide area of western Owyhee County for 1-2 days following the burns. Although an increase in carbon emissions will occur in the short-term, treatments are expected to have a long-term indirect effect of decreased carbon emissions and increased soil carbon sequestration by potentially reducing high intensity wildfires, slowing the rate of carbon turnover, and providing long-term carbon storage into the soil. Because of the short duration of the event and not exceeding air quality standards, no significant impacts to public health and safety were identified in the EA (Section 3.12.2.2).

The selection of Alternative E, as modified for the interim grazing prescription will not result in substantial or adverse impacts to public health or safety. Grazing of livestock has occurred within the area for decades with limited effects to public health and safety; this is a familiar activity to the public land user.

**3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.***

There are no park lands, areas designated to be prime farmlands, or areas of critical or environmental concern (ACECs) within the geographic area. However, the North Fork Owyhee Wilderness occurs within the Trout Springs Allotment; the North Fork Owyhee River corridor serves as the northern boundary of the allotment. The treatment boundaries do not occur within the wilderness; no major impacts were identified in the EA from the treatment or from the interim grazing management prescription. Various cultural resources have been identified within the treatment area; effects to sites (known or unknown) are expected to be negligible (EA at 3.12.2.2).

**4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.***

The EA addresses the foremost issues (EA at Section 1.4) in the analysis of the treatment and various interim grazing prescriptions. Although the treatment of juniper with the use of prescribed fire is considered to be controversial by some groups and individuals, the effects on the quality of the human environment from this proposal are not considered highly controversial based on: 1) the number and content of the comments received from the public regarding the treatment, and 2) our review of the scientific literature conducted when completing the effects analysis (Appendix C and Section 7 of the EA).

**5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.***

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Research and similar treatments in similar range types has given the BLM and the public good knowledge of anticipated effects from the treatment and the interim grazing prescription. Therefore the effects of the proposed action on the human environment are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

**6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.***

The analysis showed how the alternatives would implement objectives of the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) and will not establish precedent for any future actions. The Proposed Action is to implement the treatment and interim grazing (Alternative E as modified by the implementation of rest). The activities are not connected to any other future actions of this nature. Management and resource issues may be similar in nature; however, all future actions regarding juniper treatment and possible interim grazing prescriptions will be assessed on an individual and site-specific basis.

**7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.***

The analysis did not identify any known significant cumulative or secondary effects (EA at Section 4.0). Additional juniper treatments that involve cutting and burning were identified as past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions within the cumulative effects analysis area. Other actions such as livestock grazing, range improvements, wildfire, noxious weed treatments/infestations, agriculture, and road construction/maintenance were all identified as additional past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities. No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified in the EA in combination with these activities. Any adverse impacts identified for the preferred alternative, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible to minor impacts to natural and cultural resources.

**8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.***

The action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act. The analysis in the EA showed that only negligible effects to cultural or historical resources will occur through implementation of the treatment and implementation of interim grazing management as (Sections 3.10.2.2). The terms and conditions of the annual authorization for the interim grazing prescription will continue to provide for general protection of cultural resources.

**9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.***

No threatened and endangered plant or animal species listed under the ESA occur within the Trout Springs Allotment, although several candidate animal species are present. The alternatives analyzed will improve habitat conditions (both upland and riparian). Implementation of the treatment and interim grazing management prescription will improve identified candidate species' habitat conditions, specifically in the long term. Long-term improvements will have similar effects to habitat for special status species identified in the EA. The actions and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) comply with the Endangered Species Act, in that potential effects of the Trout Springs Juniper Treatment decision and Interim Grazing decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented.

**10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.***

The treatment and interim grazing management prescription identified will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law for the protection of the environment (Sections 1.7).

*/s/ Loretta V. Chandler*

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*May 1, 2014*

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Date