

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2011-0002-DNA
June 30th, 2011

Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project

Fuels Reduction Project

North Spring Valley

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**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SCHELL FIELD OFFICE**

INTRODUCTION

I have reviewed the Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2011-0002-DNA, for the *Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project*, dated June 30, 2011, taking into consideration the project design specifications.

I have also considered the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA:

Context:

The project area analyzed in the DNA is located within North Spring Valley located between the Schell Creek Mountain Range on the west and the Antelope Mountain Range on the east and bounded by Dolan Trap Canyon to the north and Snowbank Canyon to the south. The project is a site specific proposal involving approximately 2,500 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional or statewide importance. All of the lands within the proposed project area occur on lands administered by the Schell Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

The area is located in the following legal land descriptions (Mt. Diablo Base and Meridian):

T21N., R65E, S1, 12, 13, 24.

T21N., R66E, S5, 6, 7, 8.

T22N., R65E, S1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26..

T22N., R66E, S4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36.

T23N., R65E, S1, 2, 3, 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 33. 34. 35. 36.

T23N., R66E, S15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

T24N., R65E, S26, 35, 36.

The proposed action does not have impacts or influence outside the watershed within which the project occurs. The proposed action does not have any regional or global implications that would expand the context of the impacts.

Intensity:

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

All impacts, both beneficial and adverse have been analyzed and disclosed within the NEPA documents referenced under section C of the DNA worksheet. In general the impacts associated with the Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project are considered to be improving the quality of the human environment through reducing vegetative departure within the watershed.

All applicable mitigation measures and standard operating procedures have been incorporated into the proposed action as design features. The implementation of the proposed action would result in reducing late seral and decadent sagebrush, increasing the herbaceous understory of treated areas, allow more flexibility in implementing treatments to more effectively accomplish the objectives, and provide additional water sources to support small game and big game populations within the area. Short term displacement of livestock and recreation may result, however in the long term the impacts of the proposed action would lead to better forage for livestock, wild horses and wildlife.

2) *The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety:*

All applicable mitigation measures and standard operating procedures have been incorporated into the proposed action to prevent impacts to public health and safety. There are no anticipated impacts to public health or safety as a result of the proposed action.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historical or cultural resources, parks lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:*

The proximity to historical or cultural resources is not known at this time but will be determined based on the results of pending cultural resources inventories. Identified cultural sites would be recorded and evaluated to determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible cultural resources would be avoided or impacts mitigated as necessary before any surface disturbing treatments are initiated. A standard 30 meter buffer would be in place for any treatments utilizing heavy equipment. If determined appropriate by the authorized officer and appropriate technical specialist the area around the sites would be cut with chainsaws and the vegetation would be lopped and scattered. The Pony Express trail is adjacent to the proposed project area. There are no anticipated impacts to the Pony Express Trail. There are no national parks lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas in the vicinity of the proposed project area.

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

There are no highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment anticipated as a result of implementation of the proposed action. The Ely District has successfully completed similar projects throughout the district in very similar habitat conditions without causing any adverse effects on the human environment. The projects have resulted in improved ecological site conditions, improved habitat conditions and overall improved watershed values. A portion of the proposed action occurs within Visual Resource Management (VRM) class II where the objectives are to “retain the existing character of the landscape”. Reducing departure of vegetation from the desired future condition as well as the reference condition would result in a more natural appearance and would be in compliance with the objectives of VRM class II.

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

There are no known effects which are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks to the human environment. The Ely District has successfully completed several similar projects throughout the district in very similar habitat conditions without causing adverse effects to the human environment. The projects have resulted in improved ecological site conditions, improved habitat conditions and overall improved watershed values.

- 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 proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. All future actions would be subject the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act and the guidance provided by the Council on Environmental Quality.

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

All cumulative impacts have been disclosed within the NEPA documents listed within Section C of the DNA. The Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project occurred within the same project area and all potential cumulative impacts have been analyzed and disclosed. Cumulative impact analysis conducted in the previous NEPA document is sufficient when considering the impacts of the proposed action with the ongoing Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project and other past, present and future actions. The addition of the mowing and drill seeding acres would continue to meet the objectives listed for the proposed action and the original NEPA documents. Any other project proposed within the area would be required to comply with the NEPA and the requirements therein.

- 8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources:*

As previously mentioned, the proximity to historical or cultural resources is not known at this time but will be determined based on the results of pending cultural resources inventories. If any eligible sites are discovered, there will be no ground disturbing activities authorized within those areas. The Pony Express trail is adjacent to the proposed project area. There are no anticipated impacts to the Pony Express Trail or the visual aspects associated with the trail. Reducing departure of vegetation from the desired future condition as well as the reference condition would result in a more natural appearance and would be in compliance with the objectives of VRM class II and the management of the Pony Express Trail.

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

It has been determined that no federally listed threatened or endangered species occur within the proposed project area.

- 10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have concluded that the analysis in the documents listed in Section C of the DNA is sufficient to determine that the proposed action would not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

/S/ Tye Petersen
Tye Petersen
Fire Management Officer
Ely District Office

June 30, 2011
Date