



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office

702 North Industrial Way, HC 33 Box 33500

Ely, NV 89301

[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely\\_field\\_office.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html)



In Reply Refer To:  
9210 (NVL0044)

### **DECISION RECORD** **Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project**

#### **Background**

The Bureau of Land Management has completed a determination of NEPA adequacy (DNA) to document an interdisciplinary review of existing NEPA documents in relation to the current proposed action. The current proposed action is to add up to 2,500 acres of mowing and drill seeding treatments, up to three wildlife guzzlers and to change the implementation timing to July 15<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup> within the stonehouse project area. The Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2008-0028-EA) is located in North Spring Valley, Nevada on the east and west benches extending from Snowbank Canyon on the south to Dolan's Trap Canyon on the north. The Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project encompasses approximately 23,676 acres in total. A decision was signed on 7/19/2010 that allowed for the treatment of 16,600 to 19,000 acres of sagebrush sites being encroached upon by pinyon and juniper. This project is currently ongoing.

On June 30, 2011 a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed for the Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project documenting that the proposed action was adequately covered by existing NEPA documents as documented in the attached DNA (DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2011-0002-DNA). The FONSI demonstrates that an environmental impact statement pursuant to Section 102(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act is not required.

#### **Decision**

It is my decision to implement the Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project as described in the attached DNA (DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2011-0002-DNA). All actions, design features, standard operating procedures and monitoring as described in the proposed action will be incorporated during project implementation.

This decision is in conformance with vegetation and fire management resource goals, objectives and decisions as described in the Ely District Resource Management Plan (2008). This decision complies with the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (2003). The decision is consistent with plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state and federal agencies and governments including The Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Standards and Guidelines (1997), and all supplemental authorities listed in Appendix A of the H-1790-1.

## Rationale

The decision to implement the Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project as described in the attached DNA is based on the supporting analysis listed in Section C of the DNA and the ability of the proposed action to meet the purpose and need for the treatment. The implementation of the proposed action would treat late seral and decadent sagebrush stands within North Spring Valley resulting in more vigorous shrubs and an increased herbaceous understory. This would reduce the departure of the vegetation from the desired future condition and reference condition thereby reducing the FRCC value. The addition of up to three wildlife guzzlers would allow the addition of water sources within the area to support small game and big game species. Changing the implementation dates would extend the timeframe within which implementation could occur allowing more flexibility to work around weather conditions and the availability of resources. Adequate alternatives have been analyzed within the supporting NEPA documents listed in section C of the attached DNA. The proposed action is the best alternative for the purpose and need described.

## Public Involvement

A public scoping letter describing the project proposal was mailed to interested parties on May 23, 2011. The Ely District BLM office has received three comments in response to the scoping letter during the scoping period. The comments and responses are listed below.

- The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe would like to have a field tour of the proposed project area.
  - A field visit will be scheduled with the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe.
- Southern Nevada Water Authority has requested notification of activities consistent with the request on the Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project.
  - Southern Nevada Water Authority will be notified of activities within the area of interest indicated on the map emailed on January 11<sup>th</sup> and February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- Robert E Dickenson sent a comment letter identifying three concerns.
  - No mention of fencing. How will the grazing problems be addressed if there is no control of livestock, horses, and wildlife?
  - If this not wilderness, why are there such severe restrictions on vehicles?
  - What seed or vegetative species are planned for use in treated land areas?
  - The management of grazing and the specific seed mix have been addressed within the proposed action. The management of vehicle travel is managed under the current Resource Management Plan and is beyond the scope of this proposal.

Curt Baughman, Wildlife Biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, met with BLM fuels staff on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to express concerns about the proposed action. Mr. Baughman expressed concerns relating to the percentage of each treatment unit to be treated, project design, and the targeted sagebrush mortality for the treatment. In response to this concern NDOW will be consulted during project design and implementation.

Previous analysis conducted within the area included adequate public and interagency review relative to the proposal. The previous NEPA documents included both internal and external scoping of issues. External scoping included scoping letters and internet posting of the proposal, tribal consultation, coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, coordination with the Nevada State Clearinghouse, mailing of the preliminary environmental assessment, and responding to comments received.

### **Appeal Procedures**

All of the documents supporting this decision are available for review by the public.

Appeal procedures for this decision are outlined in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4.

In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.410, any party to a case who is adversely affected by the decision of an officer of the Bureau of Land Management shall have a right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (Board). In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.411, a person who wishes to appeal the decision must file a notice that he/she wishes to appeal in the office of the authorized officer who made the decision. In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.413, within 15 days of filing the notice of appeal and any petition for stay, the appellant also must serve a copy of the appeal and any petition for stay on any person named in the decision and on the Office of the Solicitor in the manner prescribed in Title 43 CFR 4.401(c). The office to file notice of appeal and a copy of the notice to appeal:

Bureau of Land Management  
Ely District Office  
HC 33 Box 33500  
Ely, NV 89301

and a copy to

Office of the Regional Solicitor  
Pacific Southwest Region  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-2753  
Sacramento, CA 95825-1890

A person served with the decision being appealed must transmit the notice of appeal in time for it to be filed in the office where it is required to be filed within 30 days after the date of service. In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.411 (b), the notice of appeal may include a statement of reasons for the appeal, a statement of standing if required by Title 43 CFR 4.412 (b), and any arguments the appellant wishes to make. In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.412 (a), if the notice of appeal did not include a statement of reasons for the appeal or the appellant wishes to file additional statements of reasons, the appellant shall file such statements with the Board within 30 days after the appeal was filed. The address to file such statements to the Board is:

Board of Land Appeals  
Office of Hearings and Appeals  
801 North Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22203

If statement of reasons for appealing were filed with the “Notice of Appeal”, no additional statement is necessary.

Pursuant to Title 43 CFR 4.21 (b), an appellant also may petition for a stay of the final decision pending appeal by filing a petition for stay along with the notice of appeal.

At the conclusion of any document that a party must serve, the party or its representative must sign a written statement certifying that service has been or will be made in accordance with the applicable rules and specifying the date and manner of such service [Title 43 CFR 4.422(c)(2)].

### **Approval**

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

June 30, 2011  
Date

#### Attachments:

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)  
Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Project DNA (DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2010-0035-DNA)