

USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Boise District, Four Rivers Field Office

DECISION RECORD

PUMPKIN BRAINARD FOREST RESTORATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2010-0024-EA

BACKGROUND

The broad landscape around the project area is composed of a mixed ownership including private, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Idaho Department of Lands. The project area is a fire prone landscape and is within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), “where humans and their development meet or intermix with wildland fuel” (Fire in the West, The Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Problem, A Report for the Western States Fire Managers, September 18, 2000). The project area is within 10 miles of rural Idaho towns in four directions: Banks 5 miles to the northwest, Crouch and Garden Valley 8 miles to the northeast, Placerville 8 miles to the southeast, and Horseshoe Bend 9 miles to the southwest. Over 500 homes are within this 10 mile radius. (See map #1)

The landscape is composed of a forest structure that facilitates the rapid spread of fire and prone to frequent fires starts:

- The forest structure contains high tree density, extensive ladder fuels, a high proportion of fire susceptible late seral tree species, and widespread dwarf mistletoe (a tree disease). This structure and disease create an unhealthy and fire prone conditions.
- U.S Highway 55 runs north from Horseshoe Bend to Banks and is within 2 to 10 miles of the project area for the entire length of this highway stretch. Since 1989, three fires started along the road have burned nearly 15,000 acres but were stopped short of the project area. Since 1980, there have been more than 70 documented wildfire starts within three miles of the Pumpkin-Brainard project area. The most recent was the 2007 Chief Parrish fire, which burned 2,600 acres. The largest was the 1992 Cottonwood fire, which burned 6,600 acres.

Recognizing the hazards associated with these conditions, the BLM is seeking to restore a healthy forest that is less susceptible to wildfire. The EA analyzed several treatments to accomplish this restoration. This particular decision is relevant to only one of those treatments as discussed below. Decision(s) on other aspects of the EA will be issued at a later date and in association with a timber sale(s).

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE AND NEPA COMPLIANCE

I have reviewed the plan conformance and NEPA (DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2010-0024-EA) compliance record and have determined that the Pumpkin Brainard Forest Restoration project is in conformance with the Cascade Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (1988) and that no further environmental analysis is required.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

It is my decision to implement the thinning/pruning and disposal of slash on 450 acres of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir (less than 12 inches in diameter) to the west of and within the Pumpkin Creek drainage (see map #2). Slash will be hand piled. Piles will be burned in late fall or winter when there is no danger associated with the burning. Activities will be completed over the next two years. This activity will substantially reduce the high incidence of dwarf mistletoe in the ponderosa pine - Douglas-fir stands.

Funding has recently become available, from the Forest Health Protection section of the U.S. Forest Service, and can only be granted to forest health projects in Fiscal Year 2013 which ends September 30, 2013. Pruning and thinning the project area now would result in a more healthy forest ecosystem and would accomplish the following objectives: 1) The extent and severity of dwarf mistletoe would be substantially reduced, particularly in ponderosa pine; 2) Increased health and vigor would reduce the likely of bark beetle infestation; and 3) The potential of crown fires would be reduced within the treated stands. (EA Section 3.2.2.2)

However, if this project is not able to secure such funding under ongoing budgetary constraints, thinning and pruning would be delayed and may be at risk of not getting done. If this activity does not get completed: 1) Dwarf mistletoe would slowly spread to uninfected trees and the health and vigor of already infected trees would continue to decline; 2) Loss of health and vigor would increase the likelihood of bark beetle infestation; and 3) Increased infections within the tree canopies would increase the severity of crown fires. (EA Section 3.2.2.1)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

The original scoping document was mailed to landowners near the project area and members of the public with known interest in this area or these types of projects in March 2010. At the same time, the proposed project was posted to the BLM Land Use Planning and NEPA Register web site.

Representatives from BLM attended the Jerusalem Grazing Association spring meetings to present the project to local landowners on March 2010, February 2011, and February 2012 in Emmett, Idaho. Scoping documents were sent via mail to all interested members of the Jerusalem grazing allotment (#00003) in April 2010. Written comments were provided via the spring meeting notes and one individual member of the Association. Comments were evaluated during the analysis process.

Upon their request, the Idaho Conservation League (ICL) was sent a scoping document in April 2011 and a more detailed description of the Proposed Action in August 2012. Written comments were provided and evaluated during the analysis process.

Consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes occurred during the April 21, 2011 Wings and Roots Native American Campfire monthly meeting. A copy of the proposed action was submitted to the Shoshone Bannock tribe at the September 26, 2011 meeting in Fort Hall. No comments were provided.

APPEAL PROCEDURES

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR 5003, protests of this decision may be made within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice of decision will be published in the Idaho Statesman newspaper on July 18, 2013.

To protest this decision a person must submit a written protest to Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field Manager, 3948 Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83647, by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on August 2, 2013. A written protest electronically transmitted (e.g., email, facsimile, or social media) will not be accepted as a protest. A written protest must be on paper.

The protest must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error. Any objection to the project design or my decision to go forward with this project must be filed at this time in accordance with the protest process outlined above. If a timely protest is received, this decision will be reconsidered in light of the statements of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available and the BLM shall serve a decision in writing on the protesting party (43 CFR 5003.3).

IMPLEMENTATION

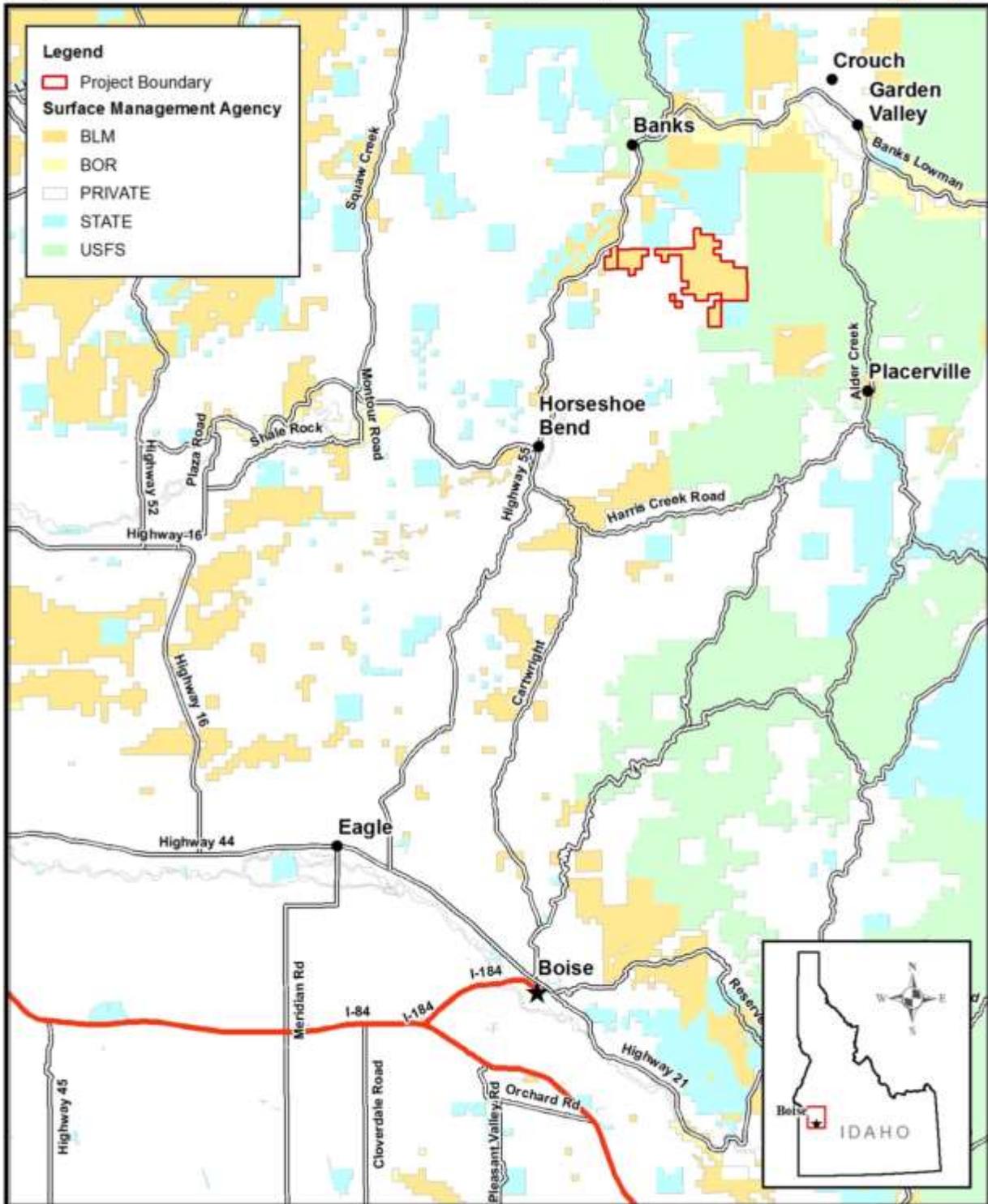
If no protest is received within 15 days after publication of this Decision Record, the decision will become final. The planned implementation date is September 2, 2013. For additional information, contact Frank Marsh (208) 384-3389; or Four Rivers Field Office, 3948 Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83705.

/s/ Terry A. Humphrey
Signature

7/15/2013
Date

Terry A. Humphrey
Field Manager
Four Rivers Field Office

Map #1 - Pumpkin Brainard Vicinity Map

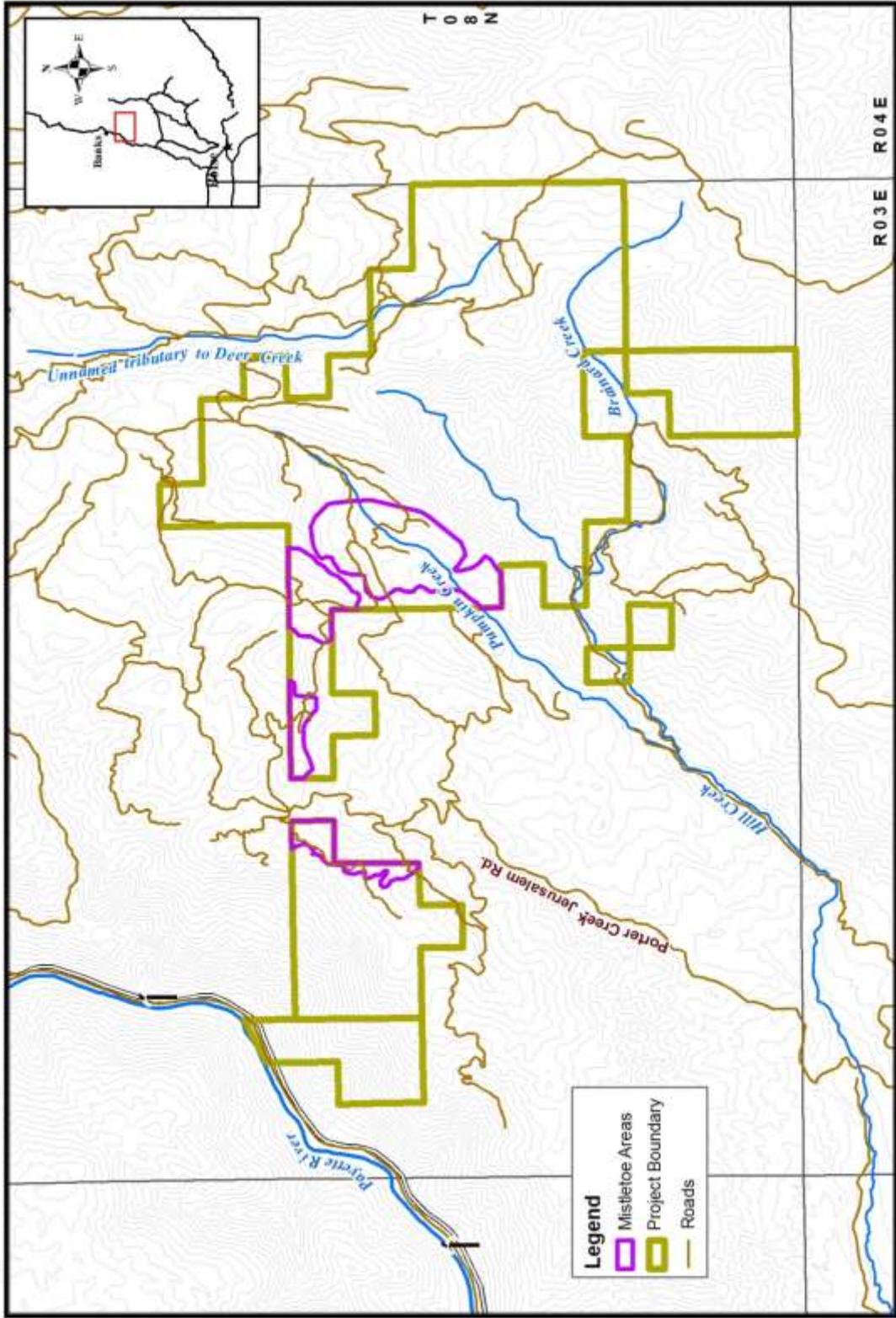


The sources of the data are from Idaho BLM Corporate Data, and the USGS 2/26/2012



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Map #2 - Pumpkin Brainard Mistletoe Areas



The accuracy of this data was from Idaho-ELM, Corcoran files, and the USGS 2582012.

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