

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

Twin Falls District
Jarbidge Field Office
2536 Kimberly Rd.
Twin Falls, ID 83301

**Worksheet
Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)**

NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2012-0001-DNA

BLM Office: Jarbidge Field Office **Lease/Serial/Case File No.:** NA

Proposed Action Title/Type: Grindstone (GXH2) Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&BAR) Plan

Location of Proposed Action: The Grindstone fire is located in Elmore and Owyhee counties about 15 miles SSW of Glens Ferry, Idaho, and covers multiple sections in T. 07S and 08S, and R. 08E and 09E.

A. Description of the Proposed Action

The Grindstone Fire started on October 1, 2011, at approximately 1613 hours. Fire cause was lightning. The fire burned 4,522 acres of public land administered by the BLM; 16,313 acres of military land within the Saylor Creek Air Force Range; and 769 acres of state land. The entire Grindstone Fire area has burned one or more times in the last 30 years, with the highest frequency in the Saylor Creek Range. The most recent fire was the 2005 Clover Fire, which burned approximately 193,000 acres.

Digital soil survey data (SSURGO, 2008) indicate that most of the BLM portion of the burned area occurs on the Loamy 8-12 Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass-Thurbers Needlegrass ecological site. The Sandy Loam 8-12 Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Indian Ricegrass ecological site occurs in drainages. A small area at the eastern edge of the fire occurs on the Sand 8-12 Basin Big Sagebrush/Indian Ricegrass ecological site. Pre-burn vegetation consisted primarily of crested wheatgrass seedlings established after past fires. Cheatgrass was common throughout the burned area. Wyoming big sagebrush and rabbitbrush occurred as scattered plants. The fire burned grass crowns, but left basal clumps and scattered shrub skeletons. A litter layer resulting from burned cheatgrass remains on the soil surface.

The closest occupied sage-grouse lek is about 10 miles southwest of the burned area. Historic fire frequency has limited success in efforts to restore sagebrush cover in the general area. The fire lies outside the priority sage-grouse habitat zone in the Jarbidge Field Office.

The fire burned portions of the West Saylor Creek and Blue Butte grazing allotments. A portion of the West Saylor Creek allotment occurs within the Saylor Creek Air Force Range. BLM administers grazing on the entire allotment, including U.S. Air Force managed lands.

The proposed action consists of:

- (1) Inventory and treat 4,522 acres for noxious weeds for 3 years.
- (2) Repair 13 miles of burned livestock management fence.
- (3) Evaluate the need to construct 3.5 miles of temporary protection fence in the Blue Butte Allotment in early November. If needed, this fence would be constructed by the livestock grazing permittee using BLM-supplied materials, to BLM standards.
- (4) Close the burned area to livestock grazing.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Jarbidge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: March 23, 1987

The proposed action is in conformance with the Jarbidge RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

- 1) Improve lands in poor ecological condition and maintain existing vegetation improvements (pp. II-28, II-31).
- 2) All grazing licenses issued that include areas recently burned and/or seeded will include a statement concerning the amount of rest needed in the seedings or burned area. Normally two years of rest will be necessary to protect these areas. This rested area may include remnant stands of desirable species that survived the fire (p. II-89).
- 3) BLM will control the spread of noxious weeds on public lands where possible and where economically feasible (p. II-94).

C. Identify the applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document(s) and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

1. Boise District and Jarbidge Field Office Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan (NFRP) EA # ID-090-2004-050, approved May 12, 2005. Applicable treatment objectives for the Grindstone ES&BAR project are: 1) Areas where the soil is susceptible to accelerated erosion either because of soil characteristics, steep topography, or recurrent high winds; and 2) Areas where noxious weeds or exotic annual grasses may readily invade and become established following a wildland fire (p. 10). Treatments include noxious and invasive weed treatments (pp. 14-16), protective fencing (pp. 17-18), fence repair (p. 19), and livestock grazing closure (p. 19).

2. Decision Record for the Boise District and Jarbidge Field Office Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment, EA #ID-100-2005-265, approved January 25, 2007. This EA analyzed chemical, mechanical, and biological control methods for managing noxious and invasive weeds (pp. 5-6). The Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EA also includes general design features that would be applied (pp. 7-10).

3. Record of Decision for Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States approved September 29, 2007. Appendix B of the Record of Decision includes a list of standard operating procedures that would be used for vegetation treatments using herbicides.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes. The proposed activities included in the Grindstone ES&BAR plan were analyzed in the Boise District and Jarbidge Field Office NFRP and the Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EAs. The proposed action in the Grindstone Fire area includes repairing/replacing 13 miles of existing livestock management fence, constructing 3.5 miles of temporary protection fence, close burned portions of the area to grazing, and inventory and treat 4,522 acres for noxious weeds for 3 years. All of these treatment types have been analyzed in the NFRP and Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EAs and meet the criteria for protecting and stabilizing burned areas.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?

Yes. The alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA documents are appropriate to the proposed action. Two other alternatives were analyzed in the NFRP EA. These included a No Action alternative that would have continued implementation of the 1987/1988 NFRPs, and an alternative not to implement ES&BAR treatments. The latter alternative was eliminated because it is inconsistent with the current BLM policy. The proposed action of this project is intended to protect soils and vegetation within the burned area from degradation.

In addition to the selected alternative, four other alternatives were considered in the Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EA. These included a no action alternative that would have continued implementing the 1998 weed control program, an alternative that considered not using herbicides, an alternative that considered not treating weeds, and an alternative limited to treating juniper and sagebrush. The noxious weed treatments proposed in the Grindstone ES&BAR

project are designed to control the expansion of noxious weeds and are consistent with the selected alternative.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, or updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. The existing analyses continue to be valid because no new information or changed circumstances have been identified that would cause the BLM to consider a new or revised proposed action. During the interdisciplinary review, team members consulted the most recent list of Threatened and Endangered species and BLM sensitive species for the Jarbidge Field Office. The burned area contains 4,166 acres of uninventoried potential habitat for slickspot peppergrass. Design features were added per programmatic conference reports for slickspot peppergrass that were prepared in 2006 by the Boise District Office for Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment (144-2006-IC-0918) and Normal Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (14420-2006-IC-0975) programmatic actions. These programmatic actions were developed to include all field offices in the Boise District, which, at that point in time, included the Jarbidge Field Office. These Conference Reports were confirmed December 15, 2009 (14420-2010-TA-0103).

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The NFRP and Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EAs adequately analyzed the environmental effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action. No new treatment types have been identified that will deviate from those analyzed in the NFRP and Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EAs. The analysis in the existing NEPA documents continues to be current and accurate in analysis of these actions.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. Development of the NFRP and Noxious and Invasive Weed Treatment EAs included scoping letters sent to individuals, agencies, and organizations.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Resource/Title	Name	Agency Represented
Operations	Scott Uhrig	BLM
Botanist	Thomas Stewart	BLM
Cultural Resources/Archeologist	Jeff Ross	BLM
Rangeland Management Specialist	Dan Strickler	BLM
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Krystle Pehrson	BLM
Wildlife Biologist	Jim Klott	BLM
Range Technician/Resource Advisor	Erik Kriwox	BLM
Idaho Department of Fish and Game Regional Habitat Biologist	Frank Edelmann	IDFG
Chief, Conservation, Saylor Creek Air Force Range	Sheri Robertson	USAF

CONCLUSION

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the 1987 Jarbidge Resource Management Plan and that the existing NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

/s/ Julie Hilty 10/27/2011
Julie Hilty, Project Lead Date

/s/ Jeff Ross 10/27/2011
Jeff Ross, NEPA Coordinator Date

/s/ Codie Martin, Acting for 10/27/2011
Brian Davis, Field Office Manager Date