

Worksheet
Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: Humboldt River Field Office, LLNVW01000

TRACKING NUMBER: DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2012-0056-DNA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Buffalo (G250) Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION

<i>Aerial Seeding</i>	T. <u>33</u> N., R. <u>41</u> E., sec.11, portions of 15, 10, 02
<i>Ground Seeding</i>	T. <u>33</u> N., R. <u>41</u> E., sec. 14, portions of 11, 12, 13
<i>Invasives Mgmt.</i>	T. <u>33</u> N., R. <u>41</u> E., sec. 11, 14, 12, 13
<i>Fencing project</i>	T. <u>33</u> N., R. <u>41</u> E., portions of sec. 11, 12, 13, 14

APPLICANT (if any): Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Buffalo Fire was human caused and started on June 29th at approximately 0940. Fire activity was consistent with the wind events predicted and moved quickly from the southwest into the piedmont slopes and valley bottom and northwest into the upper elevation slopes and drainages of Buffalo Mountain. It was controlled after four days of fire activity.

This area is utilized heavily by several wildlife species: it is a year-round pronghorn use area, and over 47% of the burned area is classified as Preliminary Priority Habitat or Preliminary General Habitat for sage grouse. Sage grouse depend on this area primarily during the winter months; leaves of live, vigorous sagebrush plants provide >99 percent of the foods eaten during the winter period--early December until early to mid-March, so habitat restoration in these areas is critical to ensure forage needs are met (Patterson 1952; Remington and Braun 1985; Wallestad and others 1975). This area also serves as Crucial Winter Range for mule deer; rehabilitation would be integral in preventing

habitat loss and providing forage and thermal cover for mule deer during the vulnerable winter months.

The fire area spanned two main ecological sites. 35% of the fire occurred on eastern slopes, and lower mountains between 6,100 and 7,156' in elevation on a Loamy Slope 12-14 P. Z. ecological site (R024XY021NV); potential vegetation for this site consists of several grass components: Thurber's needlegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, basin wildrye, and Sandberg's bluegrass. Mountain big sagebrush is the dominant shrub species. 54% burned along the lower piedmont slopes of a Droughty Loam 8-10 P. Z. site (024XY020NV). Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, needleandthread as well as Sandberg's bluegrass are the prevalent grasses with shadscale, spiny hopsage and winterfat as the shrub components.

This fire occurred within two prior fire areas; 189 acres were previously burned in 2007 during the Horse fire, and the entire perimeter is within the 1985 Dixie burn. While no rehabilitation efforts occurred during the Horse fire, approximately 900 acres were drill seeded with two cultivars of crested wheatgrass, Hycrest and Nordan, in the Dixie fire at a rate of 7.4 lbs/acre. Monitoring data indicates that the treatment was successful and met objectives within three years. Data also suggested the presence of desirable forbs within the seeding including phlox and globemallow, both of which were observed on June 2nd during ocular evaluations of areas adjacent to the Buffalo fire. In order to re-establish the native species diversity and structure, both aerial and drill seeding desirable species would be necessary.

While pre-burn conditions included invasive annual components, the site has not yet transitioned into an annual grassland; Because annual grasses typically increase in abundance and density post-fire, seeding with competitive perennial grasses and desirable shrubs would be necessary in order to prevent invasives from further establishment in the area. These treatments would also reduce competition for germinants from existing native seedbanks as well as seeded species establishment, which would assist in restoring the habitat needed to support diverse wildlife needs. Noxious weed surveys, treatment, and monitoring would also be necessary.

The fire occurred in the North Buffalo Grazing Allotment which is managed by the Battle Mountain District according to agreement number BLM-MOU-NV020-62. In order to ensure seedling establishment as well as native species recovery, and because the burned portions in this area are susceptible to soil and water erosion, livestock closures would need to be implemented in the impacted areas. Temporary fences may need to be constructed in order to restrict livestock access. All decisions would be communicated and coordinated with the administering district as per the MOU.

Coordination with Nevada Department of Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Tribal consultation by the Native American Coordinator occurred for this project. A pre-planning field trip occurred on 07/12/2012 with the Interdisciplinary team to assess the fire area and possible treatments.

A. Description of the Proposed Action with attached map(s) and any applicable mitigation measures.

Closures

Full or partial closures would be implemented on the Buffalo allotment depending on the Battle Mountain District's closure agreement.

Aerial Seeding

Project proposes to aerially seed 500 acres with a seed mix containing Mountain big sagebrush, Forage kochia, Western yarrow, and perennial blue flax in Preliminary Priority Sage Grouse habitat and Preliminary General Habitat. Aerial seedings would be focused in drainages to increase chances of successful seedling establishment and would not disturb soils. The treatment would occur between December 2012 and February 2013.

Ground Seeding

Project proposes to drill seed 1,055 acres with Scarlet globemallow, Siberian wheatgrass, Sandberg's bluegrass, four-wing saltbush, and shadscale. Drill seeding activities would not occur within 30 meters of any drainages within the proposed project area. Drill seeding activities would disturb surface soils to a depth less than 10 cm, and would contour with slope (if any) to reduce or eliminate potential for surface erosion. This would occur in the identified areas between October 2012 and February 2013

Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds Management

Noxious weeds and non-native invasive plants would be inventoried within the proposed project area. Located infestations, if any, would be treated with BLM approved herbicides as appropriate, and in compliance with BLM operating procedures and label requirements for BLM approved herbicides. Approximately 20 acres are anticipated/proposed for treatment. Treatments may include one or more of the following chemicals depending on species present in project location:

Imazipyr

Glyphosate

2,4-D

Picloram

Dicamba

Metsulphuron methyl

Clorsulphuron

Construction of Temporary Fence

Project proposes to construct 5 miles of temporary fence to exclude livestock, primarily

from areas subjected to drill seeding. The fence would be constructed according to temporary fence specifications and would consist of 4 wires (3 wire barbed with smooth bottom wire); T-posts would be spaced 20' apart and easy panels would be used for all corner and stress panels. The fence would be constructed between October 2012 and April 2013. The temporary fence would be removed three years from the fire containment date.

Monitoring

All treatments would be monitored using established protocols for treatment efficacy and efficiency.

Burned Area Rehabilitation Treatments:

Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds Management

Continued noxious weed and non-native invasive plant inventory (project-wide) and associated chemical treatments (approximately 20 acres)

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name*_ Sonoma Gerlach Management Framework Plan (MFP)

Date Approved__1982_____

Other document_ Winnemucca District Fire Management Plan ____

Date Approved__September 2004__

*List applicable LUPs (for example, resource management plans; activity, project, management, or program plans; or applicable amendments thereto)

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

The proposed treatments are in conformance with **the Sonoma-Gerlach Standard Operating Procedures**, .45 Soil-Water-Air which states in part;

1. "Consider rehabilitating areas which have had protective vegetative cover destroyed by wildfire....." "Utilize seed and other watershed stabilization techniques as required."
2. "Increase existing forage by artificial methods wherever appropriate. Land treatment is defined as vegetation manipulation (i.e. plowing, burning, spraying and/or seeding)."

The proposed treatments are in conformance with the **Winnemucca Field Office Fire Management Plan, 2004**, which states:

1. “Break up monocultures through the use of chemical, biological, and/or mechanical means to stop the spread of the affected area especially in areas that border important habitats.”
2. “Seed areas with perennial grass species to reduce the dominance of cheatgrass... Non-fire fuels treatments would be utilized to achieve resource goals and objectives based on site-specific habitat conditions”

Post Fire Rehab & Restoration Strategies state: “Seeding would occur on sites that do not have the likelihood of naturally recovering from a fire.”

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objective, terms, and conditions):

Sonoma-Gerlach MFP (1982)

Although not specifically addressed, stabilization and rehabilitation treatments conform to wildlife and watershed objectives WL-1, which state in part; “Provide for improvement or maintenances of wildlife habitat in the planning area in order to assure that sufficient quantity, quality and diversity of habitat exists to accommodate the needs of all species of wildlife...”

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

- **Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States Environmental Impact Statement** Record of Decision 1991.
- **Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment** EA# NV-020-04-21, Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact 8/19/04.
- **Vegetation Treatment Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Seventeen Western States Programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement**, Record of Decision 9/29/07.
- **Integrated Weed Management Environmental Assessment** NV-020-02-19, Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact 8/27/02.

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (e.g., biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

Biological Assessment for the Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan (August 2004)

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA documents(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?

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Yes, the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan EA NV-020-04-21 (DR/FONSI 8/19/04), addresses the proposed treatments including drill seeding, broadcast seeding, aerial seeding and installation of temporary fencing. Control of noxious weeds is analyzed in the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan EA NV-020-04-21 (DR/FONSI 8/19/04), Integrated Weed Management EANV-020-02-19 (DR/FONSI 8/27/02) and the Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States EIS (ROD 9/29/07).

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

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Yes, the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA documents are appropriate with respect to the current proposed action and current environmental concerns, interests, resource values and circumstances.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, 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?

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Yes, the existing analysis is adequate and there is no new information or circumstances known at this time.

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?

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Yes, the analytical approach used in the existing NEPA documents continues to be appropriate for the current proposed action.

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

Documentation of answer and explanation:

Yes, public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA documents are adequate. In addition, there has been coordination with Nevada Department of Wildlife, and livestock grazing permittees.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name /Title	Resource/Agency Represented	Signature/Date	Comments (Attach if more room is needed)
Wes Barry	Range	/s/ 9-10-2012	Talked to Allie about the fence
Rob Burton	Veg/Soils	/s/ 9-6-2012	
Mark Hall	NAC and Cultural	/s/ 9-7-2012	
John McCann	Hydrology/Riparian	/s/ 9-10-2012	
Nancy Spencer-Morris	Wildlife	/s/ 9-6-2012	
Greg Lynch	Fisheries	/s/ 9-6-2012	
Allie Henson	GIS	/s/ 9-6-2012	
Eric Baxter	ESR Lead	/s/ 9-6-2012	
NEPA	Lynn Ricci	/s/ 9-17-2012	
NEPA	Zwaantje Rorex	/s/ 9-17-2012	
Wild Horse and Burro	Melanie Mirati	/s/ 9-10-2012	

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Conclusion *(If you found that one or more of these criteria is not met, you will not be able to check this box.)*

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM' compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

Eric Baxter /s/ _____

Signature of Project Lead

____Zwaantje Rorex /s/_____

Signature of NEPA Coordinator

____Ken Loda /s/_____ 9-12-2012

Signature of the Responsible Official

Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.