



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office

HC33 Box 33500 (702 N. Industrial Way)

Ely, Nevada 89301-9408

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html



JAN 3 2013

In Reply Refer To:
9214 (NVL0044)

Dear Interested Public,

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing a hazardous fuels reduction and habitat improvement project within Duck Creek Basin. The Duck Creek Basin project area is comprised of approximately 29,000 acres of which treatments would not exceed 45% or 13,000 acres. The purpose of the proposed action is to reduce the risk of wildland fire to structures, infrastructure and crucial wildlife habitat as well as improve crucial wildlife habitat located within the Duck Creek Basin Watershed. The proposed action includes the treatment of sagebrush on selected sites where high canopy cover is affecting lek and brood rearing habitat, the establishment of fuel breaks in strategic locations, and the removal of pinyon and juniper through manual, mechanical and prescribed fire methods.

The objectives for the proposed action are to:

- Create defensible space around structures and installations within the Duck Creek Basin Area.
- Coordinate with adjacent landowners and cooperators to treat BLM and adjacent non-BLM properties to achieve the objectives across ownership boundaries.
- Strategically establish green strips where they would retard fire establishment and progression as well as aid fire suppression efforts.
- Conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects to create a mosaic of vegetation types and seral classes that would slow potential fire progression and aid fire suppression.
- Move the Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) rating for Duck Creek Basin closer to FRCC1.
- Improve current habitat for yearlong sage-grouse use and improve lekking conditions at established leks.
- Improve and protect valuable big game habitat within the watershed.
- Conform to VRM class II objectives within the Duck Creek Basin Watershed.

Within the project area there are numerous structures and infrastructures as well as identified crucial wildlife habitat for big game and Greater sage-grouse. Both human uses and fuel loading have increased within the project area which has resulted in an increasing potential for large uncontrollable wildland fires that could pose a threat to life, property and crucial wildlife habitat.

The project area has been divided into five separate treatment units for planning purposes (see attached maps). Within the Bird Creek Treatment Unit, Timber Creek Treatment Unit, Worthington Canyon Treatment Unit and the Peacock Spring Treatment Unit, it is proposed that no more than 50 percent of the units would be treated. Treatments would include manually and mechanically removing pinyon and juniper within sagebrush sites. Manual methods of tree removal would include the use of hand crews and chainsaws to remove the trees. Mechanical methods would include the use of machinery to remove individual trees upon the site. Chaining is not proposed as a method of tree removal within the proposed action.

In mountain brush, mountain sagebrush and curl-leaf mountain mahogany communities the slash resulting from the removal of the pinyon and juniper may be piled and burned to promote the establishment of desirable understory and browse species.

Within the Peacock Spring Treatment Unit it is proposed to treat higher elevation basins through the use of prescribed fire to reduce the amount of pinyon and juniper, and to promote the herbaceous understory. Prescribed fire would be implemented in a way that would create a mosaic of burned and unburned areas breaking up the continuity and quantity of the present fuels.

Within the Duck Creek Treatment Unit it is proposed that no more than 25 percent of the unit would be treated. Treatments include the manual and mechanical removal of pinyon pine and juniper within sagebrush sites. Sagebrush may be mowed in areas to improve sage-grouse lek and brood-rearing habitat. Areas where the sagebrush could be mowed may also be drill seeded in order to establish an herbaceous understory to improve sage-grouse brood rearing habitat.

Green strips (fuel breaks) may be established along existing roads or in strategic locations to retard potential fire growth as well as aid in fire suppression. Green strips are areas where brush and grass would be removed (typically through the use of a brush mower) and fire retardant native and non-native species would be seeded within the strip. These strips are typically narrow treatments that would occur in strategic locations based upon topography, structures, infrastructures, fire potential and typical weather patterns. Herbicides may be utilized within green strips to suppress the establishment of invasive annual grasses. Herbicide applications would be in accordance with BLM policy and all applicable labels.

Within all of the treatment units, biomass resulting from pinyon and juniper removal would be left on site to naturally degrade, chipped on site, piled and burned or may be removed from the site. Biomass would be made available to greatest extent feasible as fuel wood, wood chips or other products. In areas that are visible from highly utilized roads within the treatment area, biomass would be removed from the site, chipped and spread on the site to naturally degrade or piled and burned.

In areas suitable for bitterbrush establishment and where machinery is to be utilized, bitterbrush may be seeded to promote desirable browse.

Aspen stands within the project area would be evaluated on a stand by stand basis and would be treated if necessary. Treatments may include the removal of conifers from within and adjacent to

the stands. Slash may be removed from the stand or may be scattered and/or piled for prescribed burning. Stands may be fenced following treatment to prevent herbivory of aspen shoots. In stands that exhibit diseases that may be detrimental to the stand, a BLM forester would identify the best treatment for the diseased trees and to protect the stand. These treatments may include the use of pesticides and removal and disposal of infected trees. All use of pesticides would be in accordance with BLM policy and would implement necessary safety precautions and best management practices.

Riparian areas within the treatment unit would be evaluated on a case by case basis and treated if necessary. Treatments may include the removal of conifers and/or the planting of riparian vegetation such as willows. Lotic riparian systems would be evaluated for bank stability and bank restoration needs. Bank restoration may include the placement of large woody debris, bank contouring and/or the installation of bank structures. The installation of bank structures may include the use of heavy machinery to perform the work.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) public participation requirements to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470(f) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources of value within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA. Tribal or individual concerns, including impacts and potential impacts to culturally valued areas, will be given due consideration.

The Ely District Office, Bureau of Land Management is proposing to prepare an Environmental Assessment for the proposal. The BLM is encouraging the public to comment on the current proposed action. There will be a public scoping meeting held at the Ely District BLM office located at 702 N. Industrial Way on February 21st, 2013 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Please provide comments by March 8, 2013 to the attention of Matt Rajala at the address above.

Before including address, phone number, email-address, or any other personal identifying information in your comments, be advised that your entire comment, including personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While individuals may request that the BLM withhold personal identifying information from public view, the BLM cannot guarantee it will be able to do so. If you wish us to withhold your personal information you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, available for public disclosure in their entirety.

If you have any questions, please contact Matt Rajala, Fire Planner at (775) 289-1821. If you would like to remain on the mailing list for this project, please notify Matt Rajala by the above date.

Thank you for participating in the planning process for this project.

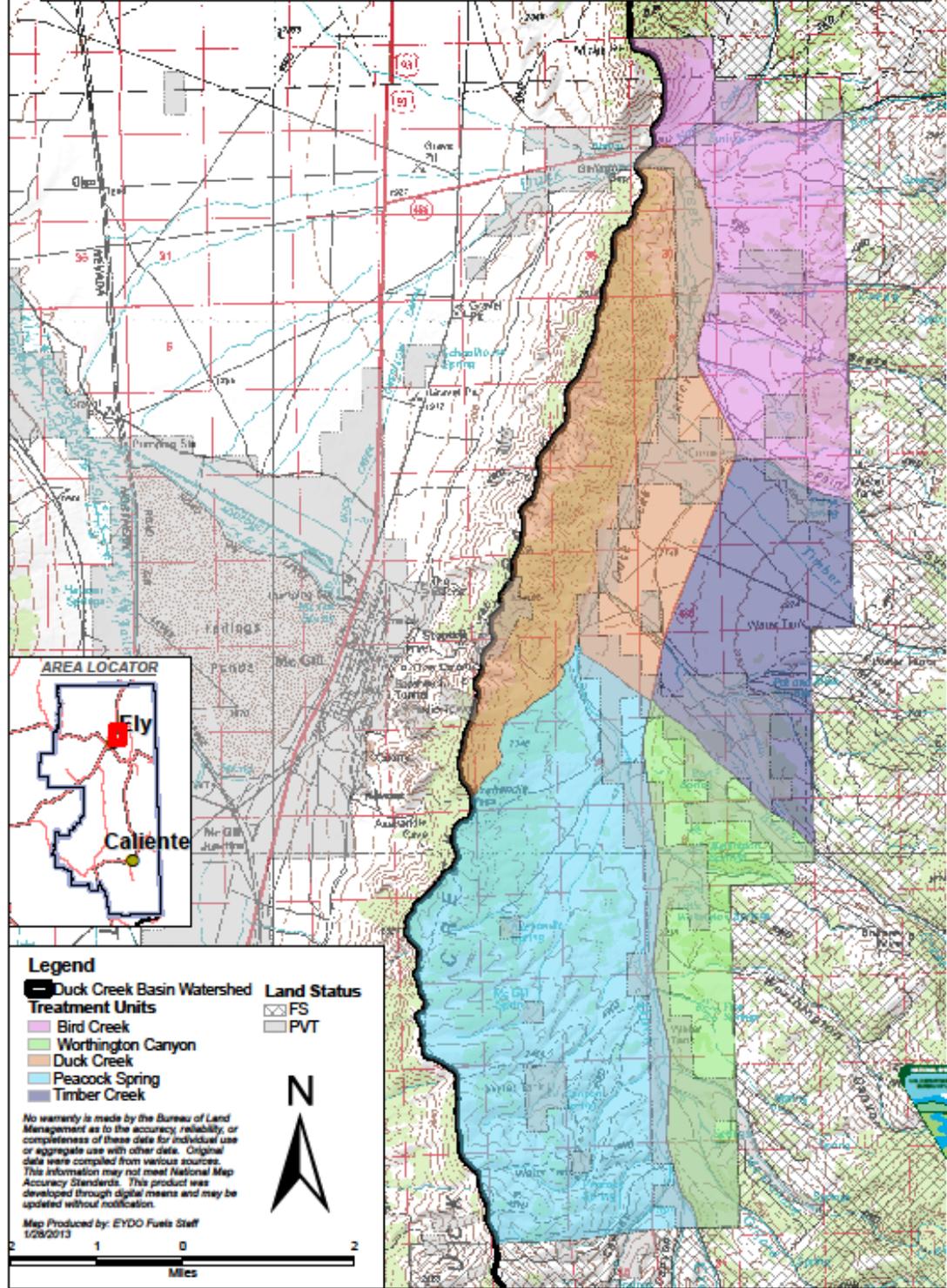
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tye Petersen', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tye Petersen
Fire Management Officer
Ely District Office

Enclosure

DUCK CREEK BASIN HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



BLM

Ely District Office

