

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

Twin Falls District  
Jarbidge Field Office  
2536 Kimberly Road  
Twin Falls, ID 83301

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

**NEPA No. ID-DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2014-0011-DNA**

**BLM Office:** Jarbidge Field Office

**Lease/Serial/Case File No.:** NA

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** West Jarbidge Sagebrush Planting Project

**Location of Proposed Action:** The proposed project areas are located on Blackrock Pocket, about 12 miles west of Murphy Hot Springs, Idaho, and Juniper Butte, directly west of Juniper Butte military range and 15 miles north of Murphy Hot Spring, Idaho. Blackrock Pocket covers portions of the following: T15S R7E Sections 14, 15, 21-23, 26-28, and 33-35; and T16S R7E Sections 2-4, 9-11, and 14-15 (Map 1). Juniper Butte covers portions of the following: T12S R8E Sections 32-34; T12S R9E Sections 31-32; T13S R9E Sections 4-9, 14-15, 17-20, 22-23, and 29-32; T14S R9E Sections 5-6; T15S R7E Sections 14, 15, 21-23, 26-28, and 33-35; T16S R7E Sections 2-4, 9-11, and 14-15 (Map 2). The proposed project areas are located in the Poison Butte, Inside Desert and Blackrock Pocket allotments.

**Applicant (if any):** N/A

**A. Description of the Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to hand plant up to 200,000 Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*) seedlings over an area about 13,516 acres in size in the fall, 2014. The objective of the proposed action is to re-establish sagebrush cover in areas burned by wildfires over the past decade, primarily the 2007 Murphy Complex, that are currently dominated by native perennial grasses, including bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*), and Sandbergs bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). This supplemental planting is proposed to enhance and accelerate recovery of habitat for sage-grouse, a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other sagebrush-obligate wildlife, as well as crucial mule deer winter range. Additionally, all of the units in the Juniper Butte area are within or adjacent to occupied and proposed critical habitat for slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*), a species proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Habitat for this species has also been substantially altered by past wildfire. This area is dominated by crested wheatgrass and provides limited protective cover and vegetative structure for the slickspots peppergrass. Reestablishing sagebrush will improve cover

and structure to promote long-term wildlife and slickspot peppergrass habitat health and help return the sites to a more historic fire regime.

The proposed project areas are within Sage-grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat and currently classified as R1 restoration habitat. R1 habitat is defined as areas dominated by perennial grass but lacking a shrub overstory. The proposed project would connect sagebrush habitats adjacent to project perimeters. Identified planting locations occur on the Loamy 8"-12" Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass – Thurbers Needlegrass and Loamy 10"-13" Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass ecological sites.

Containerized Wyoming big sagebrush seedlings would be hand-planted in mid- to late fall. Holes would be dug using hand tools such as planting bars and hoe-dads, resulting in a disturbance area of about 2-3 inches diameter. Shrub seedlings would be planted in patches of about 500-1000 plants. Patches would generally be oriented in a north-south arrangement to facilitate natural dispersal of seed by wind. Shrub seedlings would be spaced no closer than 10 feet from each other, and placed at least 25 feet from existing, live mature or seedling shrubs, including rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa* or *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*). Shrubs could be placed less than 25 feet from dead sagebrush for sun and wind protection and to access soil nutrients and mycorrhizal fungi that are associated with areas under sagebrush canopies. Shrub seedlings would not be planted in areas with obvious existing populations of invasive plants (primarily cheatgrass, (*Bromus tectorum*) or noxious weeds to reduce potential for competition or unintentional herbicide treatment. Seedlings would not be planted in slickspot microsites.

Full-size vehicles would be restricted to existing roads. Limited temporary use of off-road vehicles such as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) could be used to access remote planting locations. Limited use would be implemented in a manner such that tracks to and from planting locations would have low visibility and impacts to soils and vegetation would be minimal or negligible. This would include locating staging areas on rocky or otherwise hardened areas and using different routes for ingress and egress. Temporary travel corridors would be identified prior to implementation for specific planting locations.

Planting would not occur within 0.25 mile of livestock water or supplement locations, 50 feet from any two-track road or fenceline, or during muddy or saturated soil conditions. Planting would not occur in perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral drainages. Planting would not occur within 300 feet of the Bruneau River or Cougar Creek canyons for cultural resource protection. Under agreement between the Bureau and the State Historic Preservation Officer, cultural resource inventory is not required for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for hand planting projects. However, known historic properties within the project area would be avoided and the Jarbidge Field Office Archeologist would be notified immediately should previously unrecorded artifacts be found during implementation of the planting project. Planting would occur adjacent to, but not in the Bruneau-Jarbidge Rivers Wilderness. Fuels program specialists would be on-site to insure implementation of planting restrictions.

## **B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance**

Land Use Plan Name: Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP)  
Date Approved/Amended: March 23, 1987

The proposed action is in conformance with the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives):

Planning Objectives for Multiple Use Area-11 (Inside Desert) and Multiple Use Area-16 (Diamond A)

- Improve lands in poor ecological condition (p. II-44, p. II-59).
- Manage big game habitat for mule deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep. Protect all crucial big game winter habitat (p. II-59).
- Priority for habitat management will be given to habitat for listed and candidate Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species (p. II-87)
- Protect and enhance endangered, threatened, and sensitive species habitat in order to maintain or enhance existing and potential populations. (p.II-83)
- Public lands affected by wildfires will be rehabilitated to accomplish multiple use objectives and design to reduce fire size. (p. II-89)
- Seedlings will include appropriate seed mixtures to replace wildlife habitat that is burned. (p.II-89)

In addition, the proposed action addresses the following RMP Resource Management Guidelines:

- Terrestrial Wildlife (pp. II-83 – II-84):
  - Manage all ecological sites on mule deer, pronghorn, elk, bighorn sheep and sage-grouse habitat currently in fair or poor ecological condition, for good ecological condition.
  - Manage all wildlife habitat within the resource area to provide a diversity of vegetation and habitats.

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

The applicable NEPA document is the Jarbidge Field Office (JFO) Programmatic Shrub Planting EA (EA # ID-210-2008-EA-359) and Decision Record signed February 2, 2012. The JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA analyzed the effects of hand and mechanical planting of shrub seedlings to mitigate loss of upland and riparian habitats due to recent and historic fire. The proposed action is consistent with the 2012 Biological Assessment for Programmatic Shrub Planting and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Concurrence Letter (01EIFW00-2012-I-0084).

### Other relevant documents

The proposed action is consistent with current Bureau policy (Instruction Memorandum No.

2012-043) for enhancement and restoration of sage-grouse habitat, specifically:

- Evaluate land treatments (including Greater Sage-grouse habitat treatments) in a landscape-scale context to address habitat fragmentation, effective patch size, invasive species presence, and protection of intact sagebrush communities.
- Coordinate, plan, design, and implement vegetation treatments (e.g. pinyon/juniper removal, fuels treatments, green stripping) and associated effectiveness monitoring between Resources, Fuels Management, Emergency Stabilization, and Burned Area Rehabilitation programs to:
  - Promote the maintenance of large intact sagebrush communities;
  - Limit the expansion or dominance of invasive species, including cheatgrass;
  - Maintain or improve soil site stability, hydrologic function, and biological integrity; and
  - Enhance the native plant community, including the native shrub reference state in the *State and Transition Model*, with appropriate shrub, grass, and forb composition identified in the applicable ecological site description (ESD), where available.
- Pursue a long-term objective to maintain resilient native plant communities. Choose native plant species outlined in the ESDs, where available, to vegetate sites.

The proposed action also directly addresses conservation measures identified in the 2006 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho guiding re-establishment of sagebrush in perennial grasslands (pp. 4-85 through 4-87), including the following:

- Local Working Groups, land management agencies, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and other partners should work closely together to identify and prioritize perennial grasslands (exotic versus native) where plant species diversity or sagebrush is limiting on the landscape; and work cooperatively to identify options, schedules and funding opportunities for re-establishing sagebrush in higher priority areas.
- Transplant bare-root or containerized stock in small, critical areas to establish a seed source.
- Use the “mother plant” technique and transplant bare-root or containerized stock in select locations throughout the area to establish a seed source.

## **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 type of activities explained in proposed action are within the scope of those described and analyzed in the JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA. The location of the proposed action is within the geographic extent of the Programmatic EA. The proposed action also includes design features contained within the Programmatic EA to reduce or eliminate potential for impacts to sensitive resources, including slickspot peppergrass. The impacts of limited, temporary, off-road

travel to access planting locations would be considerably less than those described for mechanical planting, which was analyzed in the Programmatic EA. Design features for staging, ingress, and egress are included and impacts to soils and existing vegetation are anticipated to be minimal to negligible. Allowing this access would provide better dispersal of sagebrush patches within the proposed project area.

**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 JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA considered two alternatives: the Proposed Action, which included planting upland shrubs utilizing hand and mechanical methods, and the No Action Alternative to not plant shrubs. Seeding of shrubs was considered as a method of establishment, but was not analyzed in detail because it would require reduction in existing vegetation cover, creating a need for additional treatment methods, including prescribed fire and possible chemical treatment.

The currently proposed project is consistent with the purpose and the need described in the Programmatic EA and Bureau policy regarding sage-grouse habitat restoration. The planting locations were identified in coordination with Idaho Department of Fish and Game to address both sage-grouse and big game habitat concerns.

**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 analysis contained in the JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA is still valid. No new information or changed circumstances were identified that would cause the BLM to consider a new or revised proposed action. The most recent lists of ESA listed, proposed and candidate species (<http://www.fws.gov/idaho/species/IdahoSpeciesList090612.pdf>, accessed April 22, 2014) and BLM sensitive species ([http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/id/wildlife/sensitive\\_species.Par.71825.File.dat/Sensitive\\_Species\\_list\\_for\\_WEBSITE\\_508.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/id/wildlife/sensitive_species.Par.71825.File.dat/Sensitive_Species_list_for_WEBSITE_508.pdf), accessed April 22, 2014) were reviewed. The BLM sensitive species list does not include sage-grouse as a Type 1 (candidate) species; however the updated status of the species was considered in project planning. The proposed action would improve habitat for sagebrush-dependent special status species, including sage-grouse, and BLM sensitive species such as Brewers sparrow and sage sparrow. In addition, information presented in the the 2012 Biological Assessment for Programmatic Shrub Planting remains valid and appropriate design features to avoid impacts to slickspot peppergrass or its habitat have been included in the proposed action.

**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 JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA adequately analyzed the environmental effects that would result from implementation of the current proposed action. The analysis in the existing NEPA document continues to be current and accurate. Impacts from the proposed action are anticipated to be similar to or less than those described in the Programmatic EA.

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

**Yes.** Development of the JFO Programmatic Shrub Planting EA included posting on the Idaho NEPA Register in March, 2008, and sending scoping letters to 18 members of the interested public on April 5, 2010. One comment was received via email on April 14, 2010, in response to scoping efforts. There was concern over lack of detailed information regarding where the shrubs would be planted, potential impacts of livestock grazing, and the spread of noxious weeds due to mechanical planting. These issues were addressed in the design features incorporated into the Programmatic EA, the Decision Record for the Programmatic EA, and the current proposed action.

The Bureau initiated tribal consultation at the March 24, 2011, Wings and Roots Meeting between the Twin Falls District and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. Comments were received from the Tribes at the April 28, 2011, meeting. The Tribes supported the shrub planting proposal because it would restore native shrubs. Consultation was concluded on April 28, 2011.

In addition, a Biological Assessment analyzing the potential impacts to ESA-listed species was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on January 10, 2012. Concurrence for the determination that the proposed programmatic action is not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species was received on January 27, 2012.

**E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Resource/Agency Represented</b>
Jeff Ross	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources
Jim Klott	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife
Kate Forster	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries, Riparian
Thomas Stewart	Botanist	Special status plants
Erik Kriwox	Rangeland Management Spec	Range-Blackrock Pocket Allot.
Krystle Wengreen	Wild Horse and Burro Spec	Range- Poison Butte, Inside Desert
Julie Hilty	Fire Ecologist	Fuels

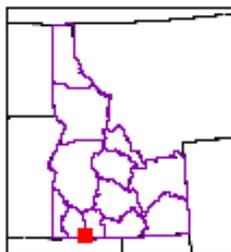
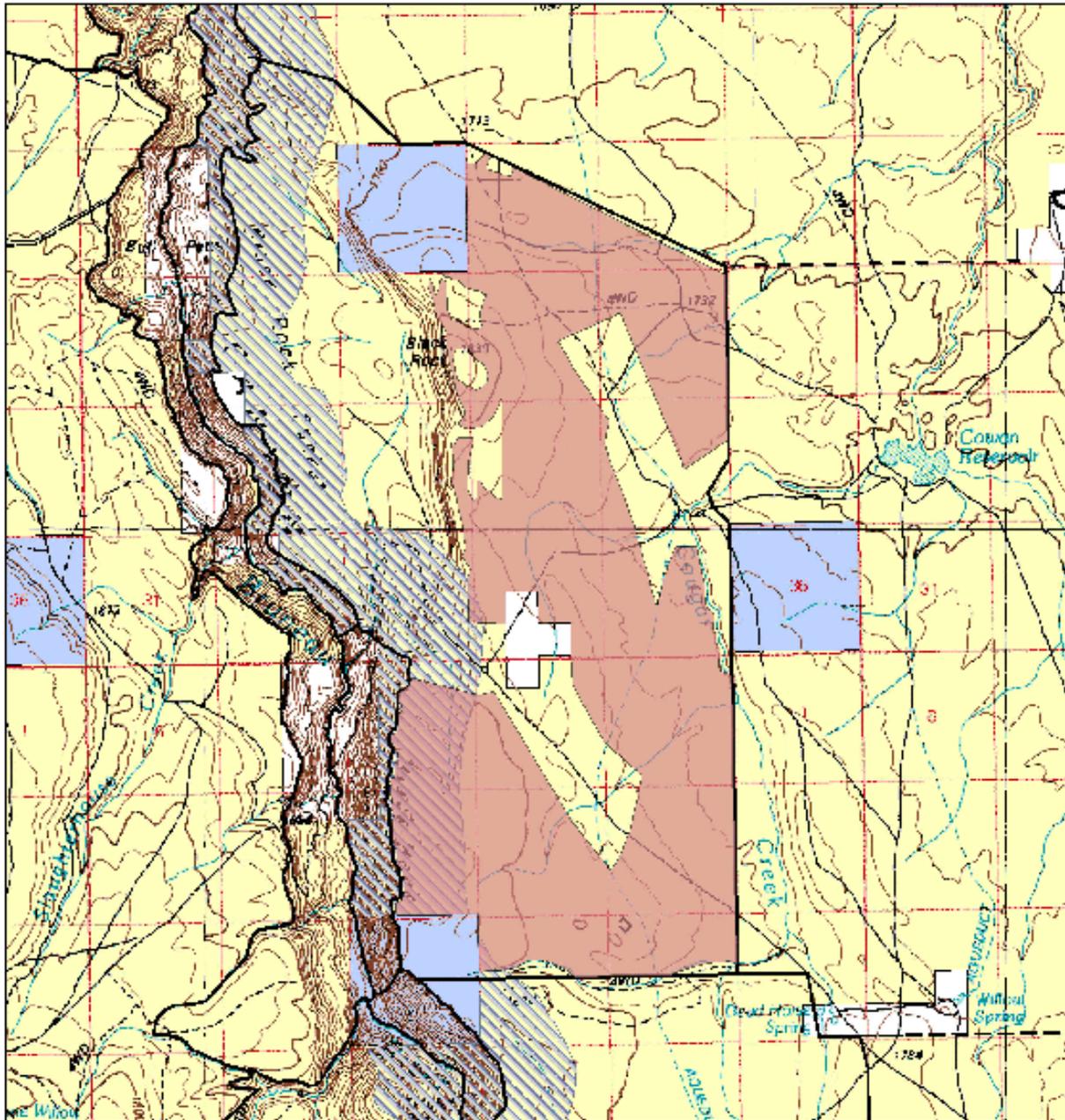
## CONCLUSION

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

/s/ Erik Valdez	5/1/14
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Erik Valdez, Project Lead	Date
/s/ Krystle Wengreen	5/1/14
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Krystle Wengreen, NEPA Coordinator	Date
/s/ Codie Martin	5/2/14
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Codie Martin, Field Office Manager (Acting)	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.

**Map 1. Blackrock Pocket Sagebrush Planting Area**



**Legend**

- Planting project boundary
- ACEC

**MGMT\_AGENCY**

- BLM
- PRIVATE
- STATE



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

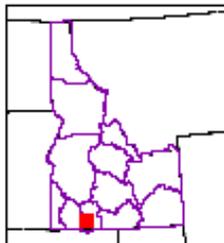
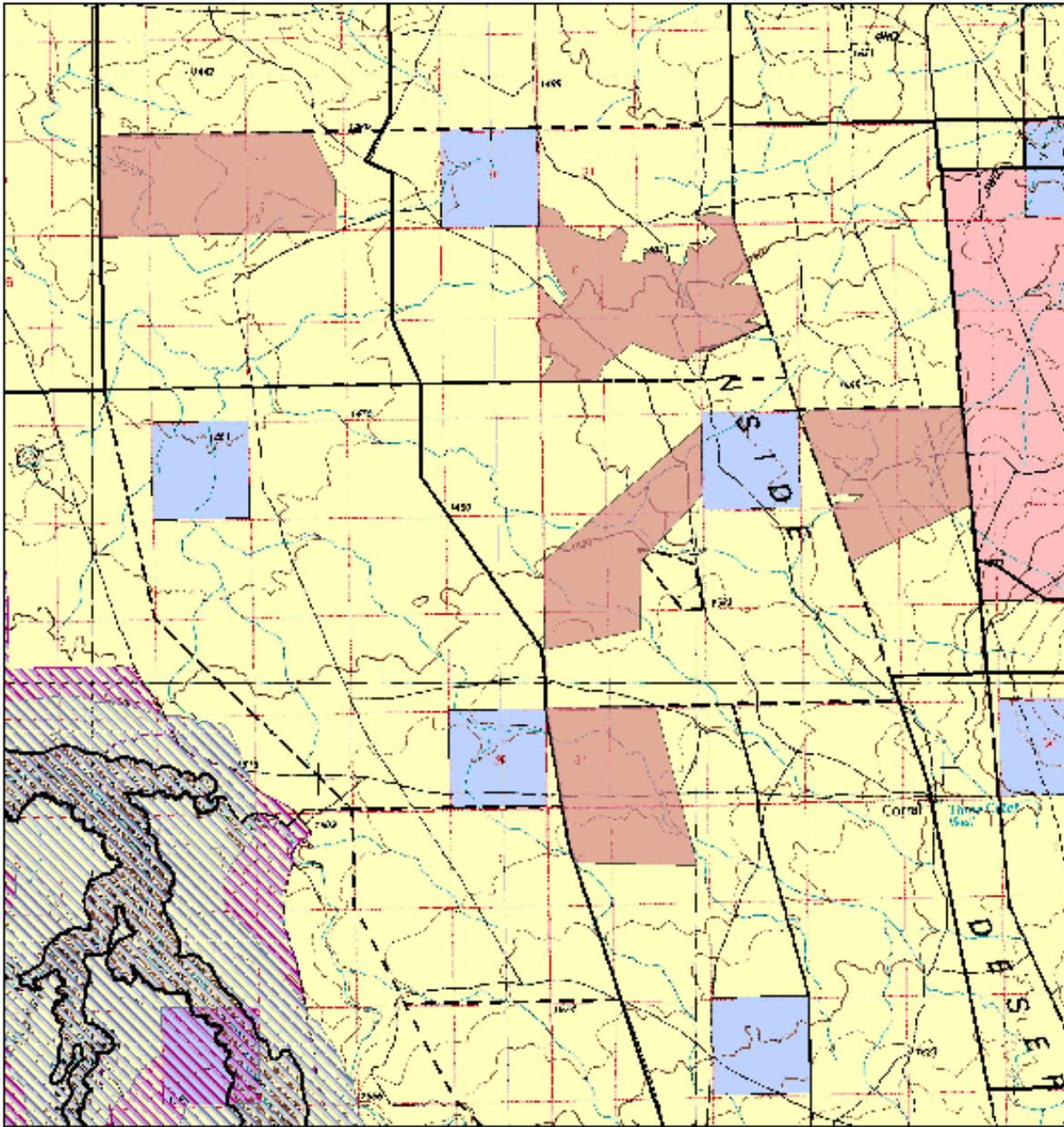


The Blackrock Pocket Sagebrush Planting Area is a BLM project. The project is a partnership between the BLM, the State of Idaho, and the Snake River Watershed Council. The project is a partnership between the BLM, the State of Idaho, and the Snake River Watershed Council.



Map Created By: Erik Valdez  
 Date: April, 2014  
 Datum: NAD 1983  
 Projection: UTM

## Map 2. Juniper Butte Sagebrush Planting Area



- Legend**
-  Planting project boundary
  -  ACEC
  -  Wilderness
  - Ownership**
  -  BLM
  -  MIL
  -  STATE



0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
1964 National System of Public Lands  
BLM Logo



Map Created By: Erik Valdez  
Date: April, 2014  
Datum: NAD 1983  
Projection: UTM