

Decision Record  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Gila District  
Safford Field Office  
Navajo County Vegetation Management  
Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA

## **Selected Alternative**

The decision has been made to implement the proposed action as described in the Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA) as the selected alternative. Junipers will be thinned on approximately 48,532 of BLM-managed land in Navajo County. Project Design Features and monitoring measures include:

- Incorporation of conservation measures to reduce impacts to T & E species.
- Incorporation of Best Management Practices to reduce the impacts to wildlife, habitat, WUI infrastructure, and firefighter and public safety.
- Pre- and post-treatment monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed action.

## **Land Use Plan Conformance**

The proposed action is in conformance with the Phoenix District Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, approved in 1992, as amended. This proposed action has been reviewed to determine if it conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5, BLM MS 1617.3.

The proposed action is also in conformance with the Arizona Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Management and Record of Decision (LUPA), approved in 2004. This proposed action has been reviewed to determine if it conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5, BLM MS 1617.3.

The proposed action is consistent with the LUPA Land Use Allocation 1-Wildland Fire Use: Areas suitable for wildland fire use for resource management benefit:

- Areas where wildland fire is desired, and there are few or no constraints for its use. Where conditions are suitable, unplanned and planned wildfire may be used to achieve desired objectives, such as improve vegetation, wildlife habitat or watershed conditions, maintain non-hazardous levels of fuels, reduce the hazardous effects of unplanned wildland fires and meet resource objectives. Where fuel loading is high but conditions are not initially suitable for wildland fire, fuel loads are reduced by mechanical, chemical or biological means to reduce hazardous fuels levels and meet resource objectives (includes WUI areas), (LUPA, pg. 4).

The proposed action is consistent with the LUPA Desired Future Conditions:

- Each vegetation community is maintained within its natural range of variation in plant composition, structure, and function, and fuels loads are maintained below levels that are considered to be hazardous, (LUPA, pg. 4)
- Plains and Great Basin Grasslands-The Desired Future Conditions are for a predominance of perennial grass cover, reduced cover of annual grasses, and for fire to naturally inhibit the invasion of woody shrubs such as rabbitbrush, snakeweed, and big sage brush, (LUPA , pg. 6).

The proposed action is consistent with the LUPA Management Actions:

- In areas suitable for fire where fuel loading is high, BLM will utilize biological, mechanical or chemical treatments, and some prescribed fire to maintain non-hazardous levels of fuels and meet resource objectives, (LUPA, pg. 9).
- For all fire management activities (wildfire suppression, appropriately managed wildfire use, prescribed fire, and mechanical, chemical, and biological vegetation treatments), Conservation Measures will be implemented as part of the Proposed Action to provide statewide consistency in reducing the effects of fire management actions on federally threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate (“Federally protected”) species, (LUPA, pg.9)

## Compliance with Relevant Laws

Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA) was prepared in accordance with the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and any additional Federal, State, and local statutes that may be relevant to the proposed action, to assess the potential environmental impacts anticipated to result from the thinning of juniper (One-Seed Juniper, *Juniperus monosperma*; Utah Juniper, *Juniperus osteosperma*) species on approximately 48,532 acres of BLM land in Navajo County.

Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA) was also prepared in accordance with other applicable laws and authorities, including:

- National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 USC 470);
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 7401 et seq.)
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1251 et seq., 1972
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 USC 703 et seq.)
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. 668-668c)
- Endangered Species Act of 1983, as amended (16 USC 1531)
- Executive Order 12898, “Environmental Justice,” February 11, 1994
- Executive Order 11988, as amended, Floodplain Management, May 24, 1977
- Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 24, 1977

## Scoping and Public Participation

Internal scoping was completed by a BLM Interdisciplinary Team consisting of specialists in Range Management, Fuels Management, Wildlife Management, Cultural Resource Management, and NEPA Planning. Public scoping and participation was accomplished through a public scoping period from March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013 through March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The public was also invited to review and comment on the draft EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact from April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 through May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014. One comment letter was received. The comments and BLM responses are attached to the EA as an appendix (EA Appendix 8-Public comment and Review Period, pg. 63).

## Decision and Rationale on Action

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA), and have made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Navajo County Vegetation Management project. Based on that review and the record as a whole, I approve the proposed action alternative (selected alternative) as described in the Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA. In accordance with 43 CFR §2931.8(b)), this Decision is in full force and effective immediately.

## Appeals

This decision is subject to appeal per the procedures at 43 CFR 4.410-4.415. An appeal may be accompanied by a petition for stay of the decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4.21, pending final determination on appeal. The appeal and petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted below, within 30 days following receipt of this decision:

Bureau of Land Management  
Safford Field Office  
ATTN: Scott Cooke, Field Office Manager  
711 14th Avenue  
Safford, AZ 85546

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant feels that the decision here is in error.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4.21(b)(1) a petition for stay, if filed, must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted.
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

## Implementation Date

This decision will be effective on the signature date below.

/s/ Scott Cooke  
Scott Cooke  
Bureau of Land Management  
Safford Field Office Manager

7/22/2014  
Date