

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Cottonwood Field Office  
1 Butte Drive  
Cottonwood, ID 83522

## **Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of Departmental Categorical Exclusion 1.13**

Big Cougar Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan  
DOI-BLM-ID-C020-2015-0002-CX

### **Description of the Proposed Action**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to implement treatments prescribed in the Big Cougar Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation plan. The need for these treatments is to address resource and safety concerns on BLM lands impacted by the Big Cougar Fire south of Lewiston, Idaho. Treatments categorically excluded include seeding of perennial grass, planting of conifer seedlings, road maintenance, removal of remnant materials from burned structures and old fences, and stabilization and protection of a cultural resource site.

Seeding of perennial grasses will take place on small sites on uplands in the Corral Creek watershed totaling approximately 12 acres. This seeding is being implemented to increase the density of desired perennial grasses in these areas. The seed will be broadcast spread using a seeder spreader mounted on a UTV then seed coverage will be accomplished by dragging a chain harrow over the site. Hand spreading of seed adapted to riparian sites on up to five acres may be accomplished along Corral Creek in areas where fire severity was higher and resprouting of existing vegetation is not occurring. Weed free straw mulch would be applied where needed to provide seed coverage in the riparian areas.

Conifer seedlings will be planted on 8 acres in T. 32 N., R. 4 W., Sec. 19 at a restocking density of 250 trees per acre to replace seedlings planted after the 2007 Chimney Fire. This site is the north-eastern site in section 19, at the top of the attached map. The remainder of the seedling planting areas totaling approximately 886 acres will be surveyed for conifer mortality. Sites lacking adequate conifer density will be prioritized and approximately 175 acres will be planted at fifty trees per acre to provide seed stock promoting long-term recovery of conifers in these areas. All of these sites have burned in two fires in the last fourteen years with the areas in Cave Gulch burning three times. Resource specialists are concerned that there may be a lack of mature trees and seedlings adequate to ensure recovery of overstory species in these areas in an adequate timeframe.

Road maintenance will occur along 11 miles of the Eagle Creek Road. A majority of the work will occur along the upper elevation sections of the road to restore drainage. An archeology site will be stabilized on the lower section of the road by hauling base rock and gravel that will overlay geotextile to armor the section and prevent disturbance of native soils.

A barn existed in Corral Creek when BLM acquired the property. This structure burned leaving a large amount of galvanized tin, nails, wire etc. This debris will be gathered and hauled away. Numerous fences exist in the area which are no longer required for livestock management. The fire burned wooden posts reducing the fence integrity and causing a safety hazard to wildlife and recreational users from loose barbed wire. Approximately five miles of fencing will be removed to reduce this safety hazard. Known fences are shown on the map. During assessment activities in the fire area, it is expected that additional fences will be located and included in the removal.

## **1. Location**

Nez Perce County, Idaho

Boise Meridian, T. 31 N., R. 3 W., sections 7, 17, 18, 20 and 21

T. 31 N., R. 4 W., sections 1, 6, 7, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 28

T. 31 N., R. 5 W., sections 1, 12, 13 and 24

T. 32 N., R. 4 W., sections 19, 22, 26, 27, 30, 31, 35, and 36

T. 32 N., R. 5 W., section 24

## **2. Land Use Plan Conformance**

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), this proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with the Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved December 21, 2009. It is consistent with the following decisions from the RMP:

### ***Vegetation – Riparian and Wetlands (VR)***

**Objective VR-1.1** – Strive to improve degraded riparian and wetland vegetation relative to site potential and potential natural vegetation composition and habitat diversity.

**Action VR-1.1.1** – Improvement of riparian condition may be accomplished in a variety of ways, examples include: (1) riparian restoration (e.g., plantings, seedings) .

### ***Vegetation – Forests (VF)***

**Objective VF-1.2** – In areas not included in Objective 1 . . . manage for multiple resource values that include but are not limited to habitat management, grazing, etc.

### ***Vegetation – Rangelands (VN)***

**Objective VN-1.2**—Plant communities dominated by nonnative annual plants will be managed to promote soil stability and rehabilitation opportunities.

**Action VN-1.2.3**—Implement actions to accomplish the conversion of nonnative plant communities to desired plant communities. Consider the use of available technologies and plant materials to achieve the desired outcome.

### ***Cultural Resources (CR)***

**Objective CR-1.2**—Identify cultural properties requiring physical or administrative protection measures to protect site integrity and implement necessary measures.

**Action CR-1.2.3**—Implement site protection measures to protect at-risk sites.

### ***Wildland Fire Management (WF)***

**Objective WF-1.4**—Determine appropriate response, rehabilitation actions, and fuels treatment type based on resource values to be protected and values at risk identified in the RMP, through the fire planning process and documented in the fire management plan.

**Action WF-1.4.3**—Use rehabilitation and emergency stabilization to mitigate the adverse effects of fire on the soil, vegetation, and water resources in a cost-effective manner.

### ***Transportation and Travel Management (TM)***

**Objective TM -1.4**—Implement the RMP travel management decisions, including area-wide designations. . . environmental monitoring, and facility maintenance.

**Action TM - 1.4.6**—Implement Road Management Guidelines for road planning, design, and maintenance.

## **3. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with 43 CFR 46.210 (l). This CX is for “post-fire rehabilitation activities” and includes all land treatments proposed in the project description. Application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

## **4. Persons and Agencies Consulted**

The Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and internal specialists were consulted regarding the development of the proposed action.

## **5. Decision and Rationale on Action**

I have decided to implement the proposed action to address resource concerns and safety hazards that resulted from the Big Cougar Fire. These actions meet the need for action. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformatnce with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

## **6. Implementation date**

In accordance with 43 CFR 4190.1, this project will be implemented on or after December 1, 2014 with most components occurring during the summer of 2015.

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Will Runnoe  
Field Manager

11/18/14

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **7. Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 CFR 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed with the Cottonwood Field Office Field Manager, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood, Idaho 83522.

Any person whose interest is adversely affected by a final decision may appeal the decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge, following the requirements in 43 CFR 4.411. You are allowed thirty (30) days from the date the final decision becomes effective to file such an appeal with me at the above address (43 CFR 411). Any appeal must state clearly and concisely why you think this decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of this decision, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

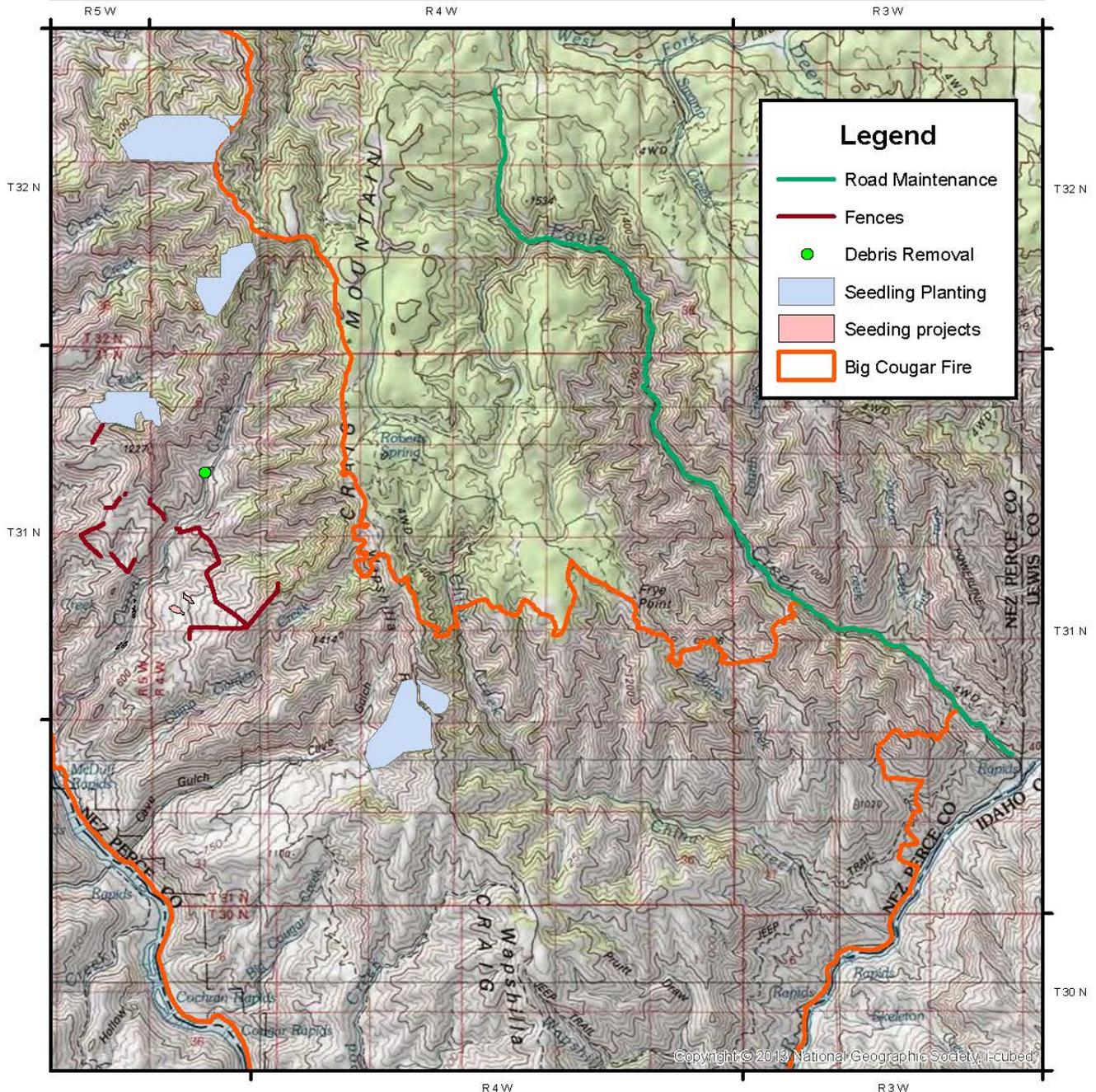
- The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
- Whether or not the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

## **8. Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this review, contact: Lynn Danly, Natural Resource Specialist, Cottonwood Field Office, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood, ID 83522, Telephone (208) 962-3797, email [ldanly@blm.gov](mailto:ldanly@blm.gov).

# Big Cougar Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation





Map Created: 10/6/2014

The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

*No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed. The following cannot be made Section 506 compliant. For help with its data or information, please contact the BLM Idaho State Office Webmaster at 208-373-4000.*

1:90,000



Map Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N