

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625

DOCUMENTATION OF LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE AND NEPA ADEQUACY

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0013-DNA

PROJECT NAME: Greystone Area Juniper Reduction

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

COUNTY AND GENERAL LOCATION: The project area is in and around the small town of Greystone in Moffat County, CO.

T8N R100W sections 18, 19, 28 – 33
T8N R101W sections 5, 8, 13, 14, 23, 24

630 acres BLM
1696 acres private
2326 acres total

APPLICANT: BLM

A. Describe the Proposed Action

In order to maintain and improve greater sage grouse habitat, it is proposed to masticate encroaching juniper trees in the greater Greystone area. This proposed treatment would also reduce the wildfire threat to Greystone area residents by reducing the resultant fire behavior. The project area consists of flat or slightly rolling terrain dominated by Wyoming sagebrush with a low density of Utah juniper spreading into the proposed treatment areas. This area is mapped as general sage grouse habitat. Seven treatment units, totaling 2326 acres, are identified on the attached map. Acreage breakdown is as follows:

UNIT	PRIVATE	BLM	TOTAL
1	626	143	769
2	307	110	417
3	618	239	857
4	0	30	30
5	145	0	145
6	0	60	60
7	0	50	50

The NRCS, private landowners, and possibly other groups and agencies would be contributing partners in this project. Implementation would take place over several years with Unit 1 being the highest priority.

Tree mastication would be done with either a large rubber tired tractor (similar to a skidder) with a 6' – 8' hydraulically powered mowing or mulching head or a tracked unit with a similar masticating head. Whole trees would be reduced to small branches and wood mulch. The mastication process scatters mulch across the surface but would be deeper in the immediate vicinity of the tree. Some hand cutting with chainsaws and scattering the slash may also be done but mechanical mastication is the preferred method. All design features and mitigation specified in environmental analysis DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA will be followed pending project approval.



Typical Treatment Unit.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name: Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: October, 2011

Final RMP/EIS, August, 2010

Draft RMP/EIS, January, 2007

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP goals, objectives, and management decisions:

Section/Page:

Wildland Fire Management - page RMP-27:

Give first priority to protection of life or property. Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Identify and reduce hazardous fuels, with an emphasis on urban interface areas. Create an integrated approach to fire and resource management to meet land health standards. Objectives for achieving this goal include:
 - Reduce fire hazards in ecosystems and restore ecological community functions.
 - Use mechanical or other vegetation treatments to reduce fire hazards, when appropriate.

Vegetation – page RMP-15:

Collaborate with stakeholders and resource users in providing an array of habitats, suitably distributed across the landscape, that support biodiversity and viable populations of native plant and animal species. Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Manage for a diversity of seral stages within plant communities.
- Manage for connections between varieties of plant communities on a landscape scale.
- Manage for juniper and other large woody species within their historic range of natural variability.
- Restore natural disturbance regimes, such as fire, and use vegetation treatments to accomplish biodiversity.

Sustain the integrity of the sagebrush biome in order to support viable populations of greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species. Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Maintain large patches of high-quality sagebrush habitats, consistent with the natural range of variability for sagebrush communities in northwest Colorado.
- Maintain connections between sagebrush habitats on a landscape scale, as allowed by the range site condition.

Identify and initiate restoration and rehabilitation of sagebrush habitat while maintaining a mosaic of canopy cover and seral stages. Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Reconnect large patches of sagebrush habitat, consistent with the natural range of variability for sagebrush communities in northwest Colorado.
- Reduce the encroachment of juniper and other large woody species into the sagebrush habitat.
- Restore a diversity of seral stages within sagebrush communities.

- Restore the quantity, species composition, and species diversity of sagebrush understories.

Special Status Species – page RMP-22:

Sustain the integrity of the sagebrush biome to maintain viable populations of greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species, consistent with local conservation plans.

Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Maintain large patches of high-quality sagebrush habitats consistent with the natural range of variability for sagebrush communities in northwest Colorado.
- Maintain connections between sagebrush habitats on a landscape scale.

Identify and initiate restoration and rehabilitation of sagebrush habitat while maintaining a mosaic of canopy cover and seral stages. Objectives for achieving this goal include:

- Reconnect large patches of sagebrush habitat consistent with the natural range of variability for sagebrush communities in northwest Colorado.
- Reduce the encroachment of juniper and other large woody species onto sagebrush habitat.

C. Identify applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA, LSFO Juniper Encroachment Treatment.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as Amended (43 USC 1752)

Federal Land Assistance, Management and Assistance Act of 2009.

Northwest Colorado Fire Management Program Fire Management Plan, 2014.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the current proposed action substantially the same action (or is a part of that action) as previously analyzed? Is the current proposed action located at a site specifically analyzed in an existing document? Yes. The current proposed action is part of the proposed action in the previously approved Environmental Assessment Record, Little Snake Field Office, LSFO Juniper Encroachment Treatment, DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA.

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, and resource values? Yes. The Environmental Assessment Record for DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA analyzed the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action in the DNA is a part of the listed activities covered in the EA. The current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values are essentially the same as those analyzed in the EA.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances? Yes. The Proposed Action would have no disproportionate impacts on minority populations or low income communities per Executive Order (EO) 12898 and would not adversely impact migratory birds per EO 13186.

Subject to WO-IM 2011-154 and in accordance with BLM policy, some of the proposed project areas (Unit 1 and 2) falls within an area greater than 5000 acres which may be suitable as lands with wilderness characteristics (CON-010-011). The proposed action may impact but not impair wilderness characteristics; however, actions to control the expansion of invasive species, improve habitat, and protect property are appropriate and consistent with applicable requirements of law and other resource management considerations, and are approved by the field manager.

4. Do the methodology and analytical approach used in the existing NEPA document(s) continue to be appropriate for the current proposed action? Yes. The Environmental Assessment Record DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to this Proposed Action.

5. Are the direct and indirect impacts of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA document(s)? Does the existing NEPA document analyze site-specific impacts related to the current proposed action? Yes. Direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action are unchanged from those identified in the existing NEPA documents. DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA analyzed the direct, indirect, and site-specific impacts of the area covered under this present Proposed Action.

6. Can you conclude without additional analysis or information that the cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the current proposed action substantially unchanged from those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Yes. The cumulative impacts that would result from the implementation of the Proposed Action would remain unchanged from those identified in the existing environmental assessment DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA. No additional activities have been implemented that would change the impacts resulting from the Proposed Action.

7. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action? Yes. Public outreach through scoping and involvement of the public and other agencies occurred during the development of the EA.

E. Interdisciplinary Analysis:

Title	Resource	Date
Hydrologist	Air Quality, Floodplains Prime/Unique Farmlands, Soils, Water Quality – Surface, Wetlands/Riparian Zones	03/02/15
Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Concerns	2/13/15
Realty Specialist	Environmental Justice	1/13/15

Environmental Coord. NEPA	Hazardous Materials	01/22/15
Rangeland Management Spec.	Invasive Non-native Species	1/13/15
Rangeland Management Spec.	Sensitive Plants, T&E Plant	1/21/15
Wildlife Biologist	T&E Animals	01/22/15
Geologist	Water Quality - Ground	03/02/15
Recreation Specialist	WSA, W&S Rivers, LWCs, ACECs	02/03/15
Wildlife Biologist	Animal Communities	01/22/15
Wildlife Biologist	Special Status, T&E Animals	01/22/15
Rangeland Management Spec	Plant Communities	02/01/15
Rangeland Management Spec	Special Status, T&E Plants	1/21/15
Hydrologist	Riparian Systems	03/02/15
Hydrologist	Water Quality	2/17/15
Hydrologist	Upland Soils	03/02/15
Fire Management Spec.	Forestry	02/01/15

Land Health Assessment

This action has been reviewed for conformance with the BLM's Public Land Health Standards adopted February 12, 1997. This action will not adversely affect achievement of the Public Land Health Standards and should help to improve identified deficiencies in winter and breeding sage grouse habitat and implements the recommendation to treat juniper encroachment areas to benefit sagebrush obligate species, including greater sage grouse. This project falls within the Green River and Little Snake Landscape Assessment Areas. Standards Assessment for the Little Snake Landscape was conducted by an interdisciplinary team beginning in 1998 and continuing through 2009. The Green River Landscape was assessed in May and June of 2005. The ID team consisted of 4 to 9 people of various specialties and interested parties.

Wildlife Timing Limitations

- Treatment would not occur between May 15 and July 15 to protect nesting migratory birds.
- Pronghorn antelope crucial winter habitat will be closed to surface disturbing activities from December 1 to April 30.

Cultural Resource Concerns

A review of cultural resource records (i.e. a Class I inventory) was completed for the seven proposed juniper reduction areas. The Class I inventory revealed that proposed juniper reduction area #4 has already been adequately inventoried for cultural resources with negative results. Two prehistoric campsites that have been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are in the vicinity of proposed juniper reduction areas. The sites are recorded as

5MF4340 and 5MF5628. Measures will be taken to ensure they are avoided by juniper reduction activities.

An in-house Class II cultural resource survey of select strips of land adjacent to the wooded sides of drainages will be completed for BLM lands in the project areas. The Class II inventory will focus survey efforts in places where juniper trees are most dense and proposed juniper reduction activities will be most intense. The tops of flat-top ridges in the project areas that are principally covered with sagebrush grassland and widely scattered junipers will not be examined.

Previous cultural resource surveys in the Greystone area have shown that most cultural resources are prehistoric sites that tend to be located in locations that overlook adjacent drainages. Therefore, the above-described Class II survey strategy will also direct survey effort to areas that are the most likely to contain cultural resources.

The Class II survey in conjunction with a stipulation that juniper reduction be performed only when the ground is not saturated is expected to prevent the proposed project from adversely affecting important cultural resources. If the survey finds important sites (i.e. those evaluated as eligible or potentially eligible to the NRHP), the juniper reduction project will be redesigned to avoid them. Any important sites that may be present in unexamined areas are not expected to be adversely affected by juniper reduction if the work is performed when the ground is not saturated.

Conclusion

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's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Signature of Lead Specialist Dale Beekman

Date 3/19/15

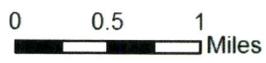
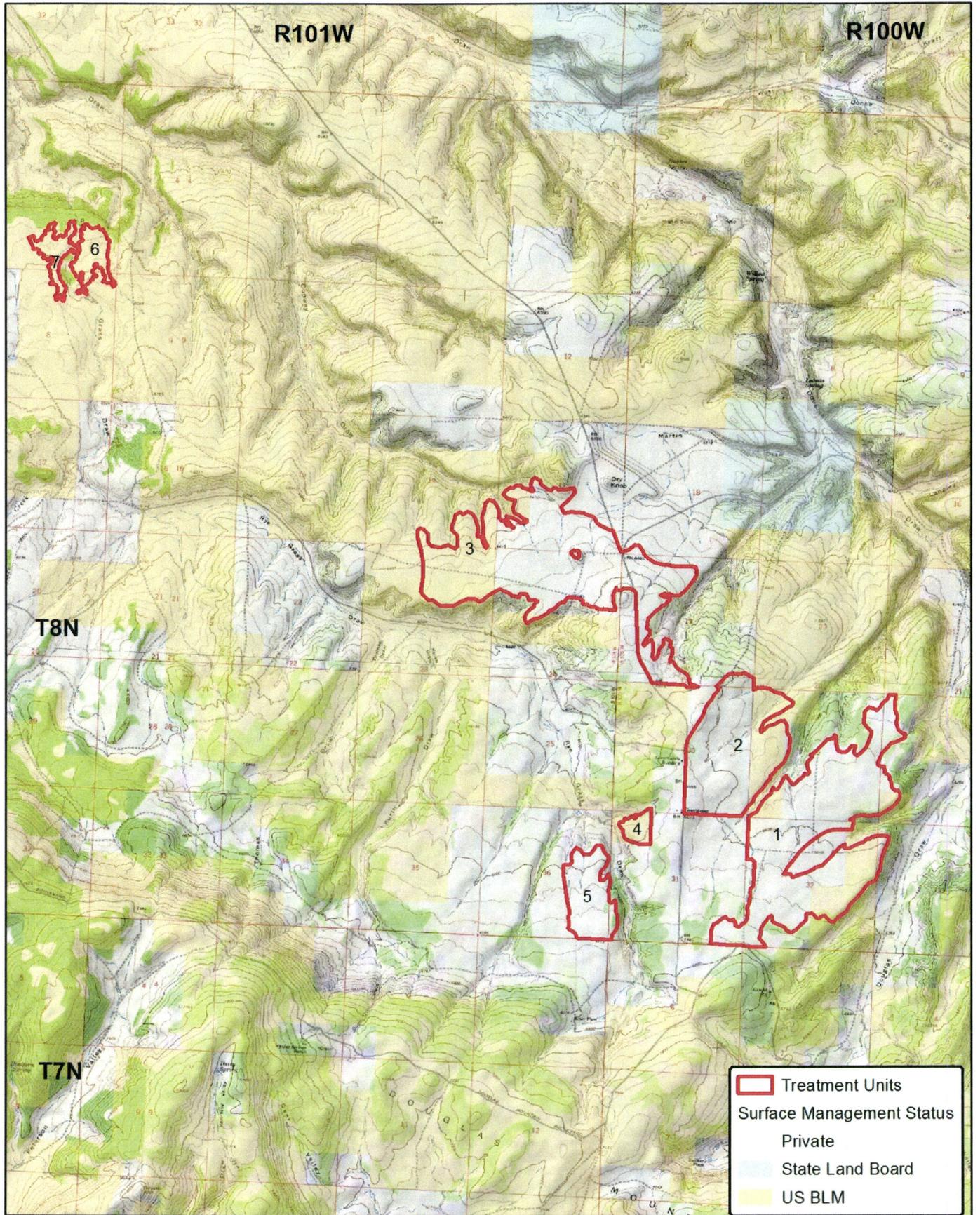
Signature of NEPA Coordinator Kathy Mykinsty

Date 3/24/15

Signature of the Authorizing Official Wendy Reynolds
Wendy Reynolds, Field Office Manager

Date 3/23/15

Note: The signed Conclusion on this document 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.



**Greystone Area
Juniper Reduction Treatments**

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson St
Craig, CO 81625**

DECISION RECORD

Greystone Area Juniper Reduction **DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0013-DNA**

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0013-DNA, authorizing the removal of encroaching pinyon and juniper trees on 2326 acres in T8N R100W sections 18, 19, 28 – 33., and T8N R101W sections 5, 8, 13, 14, 23, 24

Design Features/Mitigation Measures

All applicable design features described in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0039-EA will be implemented in this project.

Compliance with Laws & Conformance with the Land Use Plan

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 2011 Little Snake Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

Environmental Analysis and Finding of No Significant Impact

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-N010-2014-0039-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

Public Involvement

This project was posted on the LSFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 01/15/15. One comment was received to which a response was given. No further comments were received concerning the response.

Rationale

Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

Approval of this project will enhance habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (GRSG). GRSG are believed to avoid areas where conifer trees are encroaching into otherwise suitable sagebrush

habitats due to the unsuitable structural habitat characteristics and increased vulnerability to predation by raptors utilizing young conifer as hunting perches. This treatment will also reduce the wildfire threat to Greystone area residents by reducing the resultant fire behavior.

Monitoring and Compliance

Monitoring to determine the effectiveness of the project will be conducted by the BLM Little Snake Field Office staff along with staff from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife and/or the NRCS.

Administrative Remedies

Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson St., Craig, CO 81625 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

Signature of Authorized Official


Field Manager

3/23/15
Date