

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-N010-2015-0016-DNA

PROJECT NAME: Five Springs Juniper Reduction

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

COUNTY AND GENERAL LOCATION: The project area is located on Douglas Mt. 8 miles west of Greystone in Moffat County, CO.

T7N R101W section 7
T7N R102W sections 1, 2, 11, 12
T8N R102W sections 26, 27, 34, 35

North Unit - 379 acres BLM
South Unit - 564 acres BLM
943 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 Five Springs Draw area. This treatment would also reduce the wildfire threat to several seasonally occupied nearby cabins 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.

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-N010-2013-0056-EA will be followed pending project approval.



Five Springs Draw.

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-N010-2013-0056-EA, Douglas Mountain Fuels 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, Douglas Mountain Fuels Treatment, DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2013-0056-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-N010-2013-0056-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, the proposed project area lies within a polygon adjacent to the Peterson Draw WSA, and lands managed for wilderness characteristics identified as Dinosaur North. 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-N010-2013-0056-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-N010-2013-0056-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-N010-2013-0056-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	2/18/15
Realty Specialist	Environmental Justice	2/9/15
Environmental Coord. NEPA	Hazardous Materials	2/17/15
Rangeland Management Spec.	Invasive Non-native Species	2/23/15
Rangeland Management Spec.	Sensitive Plants, T&E Plant	1/28/15
Geologist	Water Quality - Ground	2/17/15
Recreation Specialist	WSA, W&S Rivers, LWCs, ACECs	02/03/15
Wildlife Biologist	Animal Communities	02/03/15
Wildlife Biologist	Special Status, T&E Animals	02/03/15
Rangeland Management Spec	Plant Communities	02/01/15
Rangeland	Special Status, T&E Plants	1/28/15

Management Spec		
Hydrologist	Riparian Systems	03/02/15
Hydrologist	Water Quality	03/02/15
Hydrologist	Upland Soils	03/02/15
Fire Management Spec.	Forestry	1/26/15

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. Standards Assessment was conducted in June 2004 by 4 rangeland management specialists, three wildlife biologists, and one soil/water/air specialist.

Wildlife Timing Limitations

- Treatment would not occur between May 15 and July 15 to protect nesting migratory birds.
- Treatment would not occur between March 1 and June 30 to protect greater sage-grouse nesting and early brood rearing habitat.

Cultural Resource Concerns

Federal agencies are mandated by various laws to consider the effect of proposed land use activities on cultural resources (i.e. historic and prehistoric sites). The National Environmental Policy Act directs the federal government to preserve important historic and cultural aspects of the national heritage. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of federal undertakings on cultural resources that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The proposed juniper reduction project will be funded by BLM and therefore is a federal undertaking. In Colorado, the requirements of the NHPA are implemented under the terms of the Protocol Agreement between the Bureau of Land Management and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

A review of cultural resource records (i.e. a Class I inventory) was completed for the two areas involved in the Five Springs juniper reduction project. The Class I inventory revealed that the two areas were not covered by previous, formal cultural resource surveys. However, three previously recorded sites are in the vicinity of the project and include 5MF57, 5MF1758, and 5MF4928. Field evaluations of the eligibility of the sites have been made, but BLM has not yet formally consulted with the SHPO on site eligibility. Site 5MF57 is a historic cabin that is in need of further information to determine its eligibility to the NRHP. The remains of a historic saw mill that was evaluated as not eligible were recorded as 5MF1758. Finally, site 5MF4928 is an eligible lithic scatter.

Pending SHPO concurrence regarding site eligibility, measures will be taken to ensure the juniper reduction project will avoid the eligible lithic scatter and the cabin needing further information to evaluate eligibility. If easy to do so, the not eligible saw mill might also be avoided.

An in-house Class II cultural resource survey of select strips of land within the two project areas will be completed prior to juniper reduction activities. The strips of land to be surveyed are situated adjacent to areas forested with ponderosa pine and juniper. Class II inventory will focus survey efforts in places where juniper trees are most dense and proposed juniper reduction activities will be most intense. Areas within the two project areas that are principally covered with sagebrush grassland and widely scattered junipers will not be examined.

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 Beckerman

Date 3/19/15

Signature of NEPA Coordinator Kathy McKinstry

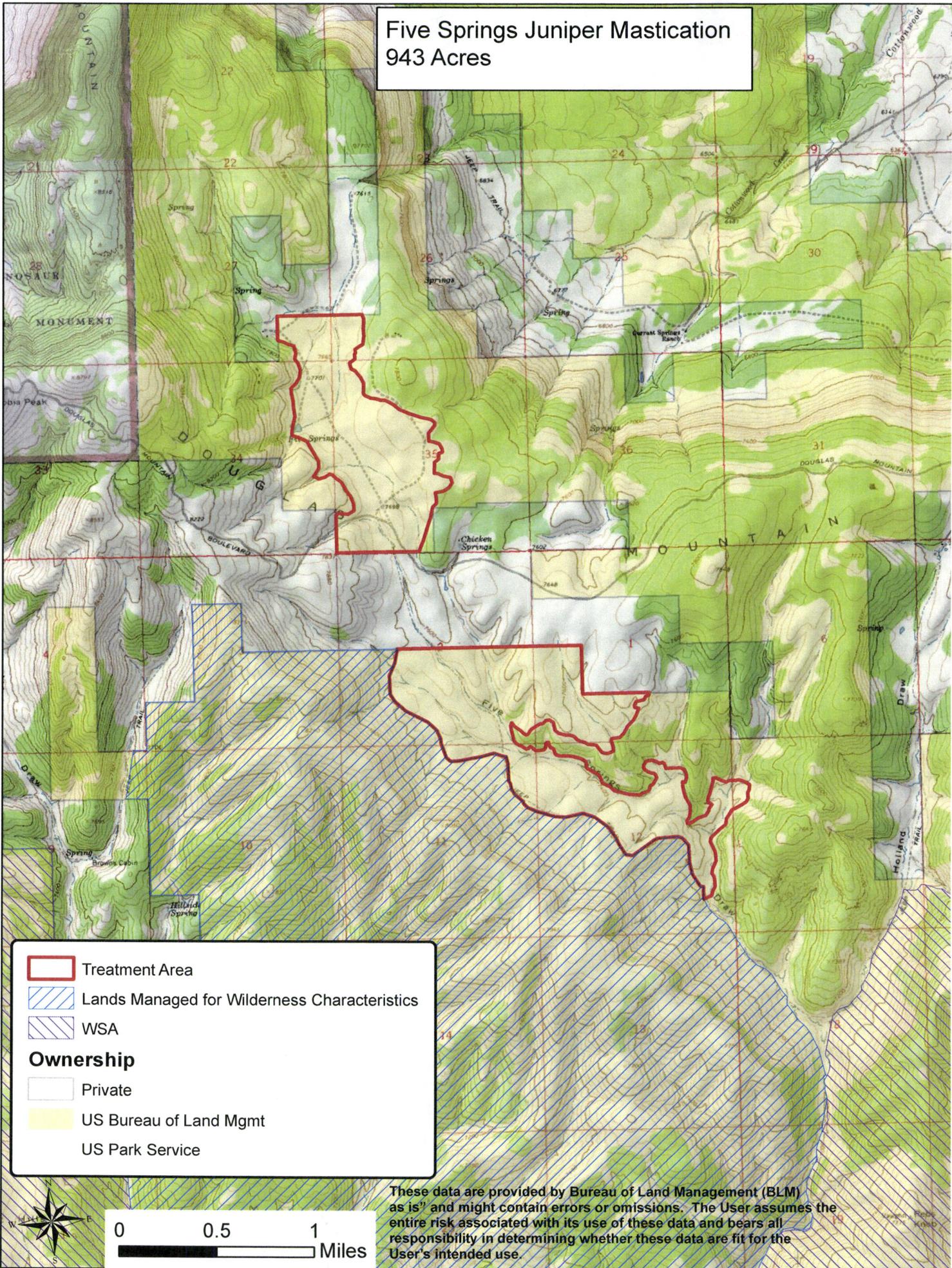
Date 3/20/15

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.

Five Springs Juniper Mastication 943 Acres



Treatment Area
 Lands Managed for Wilderness Characteristics
 WSA
Ownership
 Private
 US Bureau of Land Mgmt
 US Park Service

These data are provided by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as is and might contain errors or omissions. The User assumes the entire risk associated with its use of these data and bears all responsibility in determining whether these data are fit for the User's intended use.

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DECISION RECORD

Five Springs Juniper Reduction **DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0016-DNA**

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0016-DNA, authorizing the removal of encroaching pinyon and juniper trees on 943 acres in T7N R101W section 7, T7N R102W sections 1, 2, 11, 12, and T8N R102W sections 26, 27, 34, 35.

Design Features/Mitigation Measures

All applicable design features described in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2013-0056-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-N010-2013-0056-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 01/27/15. No comments were received.

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 several nearby cabins 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