United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Decision Record
DOI-BLM-UT-W010-2015-0021-Other_NEPA
August 2015

Dry Basin Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatment

Location: Box Elder County, Utah; Salt Lake Meridian, Township 10 and 11 North, Range 16 West, various sections.

Applicant/Address: Not Applicable.

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DECISION RECORD
Dry Basin Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatment
Determination of NEPA Adequacy

It is my decision to implement the Dry Basin Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatment project (# RA68) as identified in the Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) Worksheet DOI-BLM-UT-W010-2015-0021-Other_NEPA. This decision authorizes vegetation treatments that will reduce fuel loading and alter the structural orientation, and both vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels to mitigate potential for extreme fire behavior and severity in the project area. The proposed action will alter hazardous fuels in the project area using a variety of techniques including: mechanical, herbicide, green stripping and seeding (Enclosure 1, Map). The proposed action will be implemented with the protective measures/considerations as identified below.

The entire treatment (footprint) is approximately 1,381 acres with implementation beginning in the fall of 2015. Some maintenance activities will be necessary following the initial vegetation treatment to ensure that project objectives are sustained for the long term. The scheduled implementation will be subject to change due to weather, funding, and equipment related issues. The proposed action will be implemented with the protective measures/considerations as identified below.

Approximately 739 acres have been identified for mechanical shredding. Up to 100% of the trees will be mulched in bullhog treatment areas. However, due to the unique and often irreplaceable ecological values that old-growth stands provide for animal and plant habitat, genetic diversity, and long-term climate records, old-growth trees will be avoided. All areas identified for mechanical shredding will be aerially seeded prior to mastication (Enclosure 2, Table 1, Mastication Seed Mix). Approximately 544 acres of early phase juniper encroachment will be lopped and scattered.

Approximately 98 acres of green stripping will be implemented along strategic roadways and natural features (Enclosure 2, Table 2 Green Strip Seed Mix). Sagebrush thinning followed by herbicide application and seeding may be necessary to create the green strips. Sagebrush thinning could occur using mechanical methods (disking, mowing, chain harrow).

If necessary, to control cheatgrass throughout the project area, Plateau® herbicide (or the generic equivalent Panoramic; active ingredient imazapic) may be applied either aerially or by ground. Areas selected for herbicide application will be treated at a rate of 4 to 8 oz. per acre plus up to 1 quart of surfactant per acre. Seeding will be done with the most appropriate equipment for the particular soil type and topography. Treated lands in need of seed will be planted with a diverse seed mixture during the fall using rangeland drills or broadcast aerially. Where seed is applied aerially, mechanical seedbed preparation or cover treatment could be required. This could include the use of a chain-harrow or other similar implement.

The goals of this project are to: reduce fuels and improve habitat for GRSG; limit the expansion or dominance of invasive species; maintain or improve soil site stability, hydrologic function, and biological integrity and ecosystem resiliency; and restore of the fire regime condition class (FRCC) from current state condition class 3 "highly departed from natural conditions" to condition class 1 "natural fire regime."

The objectives of the project include 1) removal of up to 100% of juniper encroaching into selected sagebrush habitats while retaining "old growth characteristic" trees, 2) increase perennial native plant diversity and decrease cheatgrass cover in sagebrush habitats, 3) re-introduction of sagebrush and perennial understory species in existing cheatgrass monocultures, 4) reduction of standing aboveground (fuel) biomass along roadways and other natural fuel breaks.

The proposed action is a collaborative effort between BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and private landowners to protect and enhance sagebrush habitat near the Dry Basin lek. Approximately 1,381 acres have been identified for treatment on BLM managed lands. Treatment will begin in the fall of 2015. Some maintenance activities beyond this period will be necessary to ensure that project objectives are sustained for the long term. The scheduled implementation year listed above could be subject to change due to weather, funding, and equipment related issues.

Wildfire and loss of sagebrush habitat due to juniper encroachment is identified as a major threat to the greater sage-grouse in the Utah State Sage Grouse Conservation Plan. Thus, proactively managing juniper woodlands to reduce fire threat and prevent loss of sagebrush is recommended as a conservation measure to meet sage-grouse habitat objectives. The entire project area occurs within the Box Elder Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) unit number 26b by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, CO. February 2013.

Protective Measures/Considerations

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- Project layout and design will avoid cultural resources that are eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. If undiscovered or previously unrecorded sites area found all activity will cease immediately and the authorized officer will be contacted.
- If paleontological resources are found, all project activity will cease and the authorized officer will be contacted immediately.

Noxious/Invasive Weeds

- Application of the herbicide will follow the requirements printed on the herbicide label to eliminate risk to human health and the ecological site. A BASF Corporation's material safety data sheet (MSDS) is located in the fuels project file or go to: http://www.cdms.net/LabelsMsds/LMDfault.aspx?pd=3778&t=1,2,3,4&pid-0
- Any herbicide application will be carefully recorded and documented. Herbicide use information will be reported to the BLM Utah State Office and the BLM Washington Office. A pesticide use proposal (PUP) will be prepared and approved by the BLM State Office prior to application of the herbicide.

- Treated areas will be monitored for 5 years to detect noxious or invasive weeds that may be promoted due to the proposed activity. Any identified invasive or noxious weeds will be treated in accordance with the SLDO Five Year Noxious Weed Control Plan (1996) and the BLM Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides ii Final Programmatic EIS Record of Decision (September 2007). All equipment used on the project will be cleaned and free of any dirt and debris that could harbor weed seeds and be introduced into the project area. Likewise, all equipment will be checked and cleaned once again prior to leaving the project area.
- Inspect and treat weeds that establish at equipment sites;
- During project development, weed infestations are prioritized for treatment in project operating areas and along access routes;
- Project staging areas will be weed free and travel through weed infested areas will be avoided or minimized;
- To prevent conditions favoring weed establishment, reestablish vegetation on bare ground caused by project disturbance as soon as possible using either natural recovery or artificial techniques;
- In areas that are reseeded or otherwise chemically or mechanically treated to alter vegetation composition will be closed to livestock grazing for a minimum of two complete growing seasons (Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for Healthy Rangelands Utah State Office 1997);
- Apply the least amount of herbicide needed to achieve the desired results;
- Follow herbicide product label for use and storage;
- Licensed applicators will apply the herbicide;
- Apply herbicide in favorable weather conditions to minimize drift;
- Notify permitees of the herbicide treatment project to improve coordination and avoid potential conflicts and safety concerns during implementation of the treatment;
- Post signs noting exclusion areas and the duration of exclusion, if necessary; and
- Use protective equipment as directed by the product label.

Greater Sage-Grouse/Raptors/Migratory Birds

- Apply 0.5 mile buffer (no treatment) around sage grouse strutting grounds (leks) between March 15 and June 15.
- Apply a 0.5 mile buffer to active raptor nest sites between March 1 and July 15 each year.
- Avoid activities during the migratory bird breeding season, typically between April 15 and July 15. However, dates may vary depending upon the species and current environmental conditions.

Special Status Species

- Apply a 100 meter buffer around active pygmy rabbit burrow complexes.
- Apply a 600 foot buffer where riparian areas are present to protect the boreal toad.

Wildlife

- Buffers will be placed around wildlife corridors and drainages.
- Include untreated areas for thermal cover usage by wildlife.

Livestock Grazing

- Rangelands that have been burned, reseeded or otherwise treated to alter vegetation composition will be closed to livestock grazing as follows; (1) burned rangelands, whether by wildfire or prescribed burning, will be ungrazed for a minimum of one complete growing season following the burn; (2) rangelands that have been reseeded or otherwise chemically or mechanically treated will be ungrazed for a minimum of two complete growing seasons. Rangelands that meet the criteria discussed above will be protected from grazing by avoidance, fencing, or a combination of the two. Any fencing installed will comply with the wildlife guidelines set forth in the Fencing BLM Manual Handbook H-1741-1 Dec. 1989 and be fitted with bird deflectors.
- A grazing program decision will be issued or letter of agreement will be entered into with the permittee to implement grazing deferral.

Access

- Any new routes created during project work, by equipment and support vehicles, will be rehabilitated to prevent further use by off-highway vehicle (OHV) users. Some areas may require the installation of signs stating 'closed to motorized vehicles' to prevent OHV use until the evidence of the tracked or rubber tired pathways are obscured by vegetation cover.

Air Quality

- If project work is causing localized dust that is impeding vehicular traffic or visibility in the area, a water tender will be used to spray the road surface with water to improve visibility.

A cultural resource Class III inventory of the project area was conducted in fall 2011. State Historic Preservation Office consultation occurred following the field survey. No historic properties, sites eligible or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, were found.

The proposed action posted to the Bureau of Land Management's NEPA/Planning Register on 6/9/2015. Letters soliciting input and invitations to consult were sent to local tribes (Northwest Shoshone, Western Shoshone, Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Skull Valley Band of the Goshute Tribe, and Jemez Pueblo on 6/19/2015.

This project was developed and reviewed by the West Box Elder Coordinated Resources Management committee which represents stakeholders of both private and public lands in West Box Elder County, Utah. This project is part of a larger proposal presented to the Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative in January of 2014.

Authorities: This project is authorized under Title I, Section 102 (8) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2776 43 U.S.C. 1761).

Compliance and Monitoring: This project will be monitored internally by the BLM fuels and wildlife programs. Multiple vegetation monitoring plots will be established and read within the project area. Plant cover, frequency, species richness and abundance will be recorded. Photos will be taken and a qualitative site condition assessment completed. Greater sage-grouse occupancy will also be assessed within the plots. Data will be collected pre, 1, 3, and 5 years post treatment.

Plan Conformance and Consistency: The proposed action was determined to be in conformance with the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Box Elder Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1986), as amended by the Decision Record for the Salt Lake District Office (SLDO) Fire Management Plan (FMP) 1998 Alternative 2-Proposed Action/Integrated Fire/Resource Management Plan page seven and eight. The SLDO FMP specifically mentions the action (treatment methods), and is consistent with the objectives identified above to emphasize greater use of vegetation management to meet resource management objectives.

Alternatives Considered: The proposed methods and impacts have been analyzed under the 2009 Grouse Creek Hazardous Fuels Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-UT-020-2009-0013-EA.The ecological sites, geographic, and resource conditions are sufficiently similar that comparable results post treatment are expected. The alternative analyzed for the proposed action is based on the best available information. This action addressed environmental concerns, interests and resource values. As stated in the DNA at Section D.2, the alternatives identified in these documents remain appropriate for this proposed action. No other alternatives were considered or brought forward by the public.

Protest/Appeal Language: The decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on the date signed below. Within 30 days of this decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the authorized officer at the Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake Field Office, 2370 South Decker Lake Boulevard, Salt Lake City, UT 84119. 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, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the authorized officer. Instructions for filing an appeal are contained on the enclosed Form 1842-1 (Enclosure 3).

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4.21(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall 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, and
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If a petition for stay is submitted with the notice of appeal, a copy of the notice of appeal and petition for stay must be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the IBLA at the same time it is filed with the Authorized Officer.

A copy of the notice of appeal, any statement of reasons and all pertinent documents must be served on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the Office of the Regional Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, 6201 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84138-1180, not later than 15 days after filing the document with the Authorized Officer and/or IBLA.

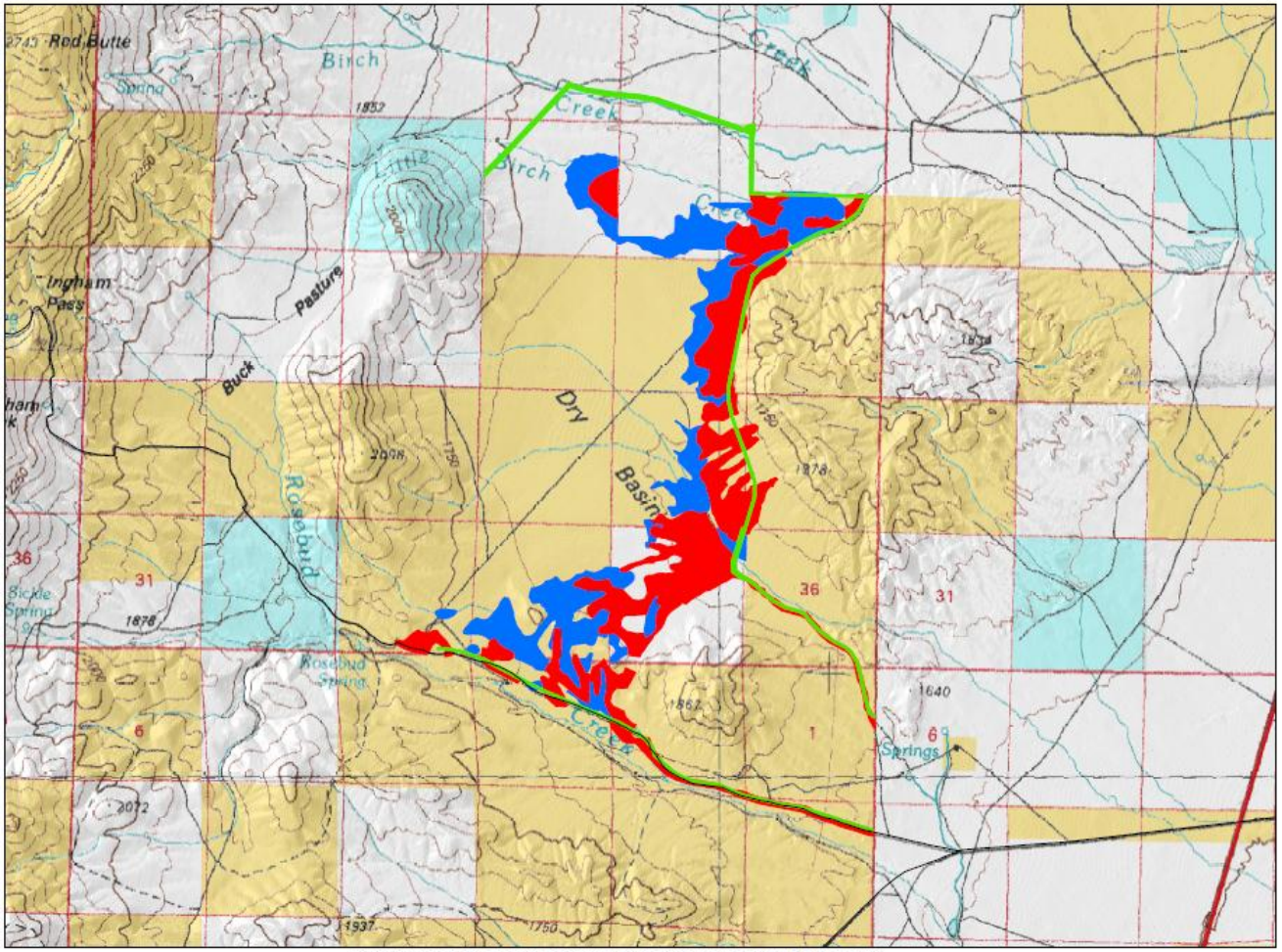
/s/ Rebecca Hotze	*8-3-2015*
Salt Lake Field Office Manager	Date

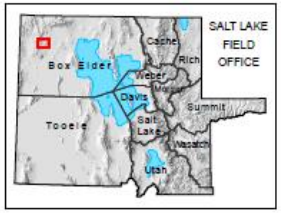
Enclosures:

1. Map
2. Seed Mixes
3. Appeal Form 1842-1

Enclosure 1, Map

Dry Basin Juniper Treatment Project





FY15_DryBasin_p_Greenstrip
FY15_DryBasin_p_Bullhog
FY15_DryBasin_p_Slashing

Priority Areas for Conservation (PAC)
State Boundary

Land Status

Bureau of Land Management
Private
State

Interstate Highway
Principal Highway
Other Paved Road
Unpaved Road

0 0.5 1
Miles

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February 19, 2015

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WEST DESERT DISTRICT

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Enclosure 2, Seed Mix Tables

(1) BLM Managed Lands Mastication Seed Mix

Seed: Common Name	Seed: Scientific Name	Variety	Bulk Pounds per acre
Sainfoin	*Onobrychis viciifolia*	Eski	1
Small Burnet	*Sanguisorba minor*	Delar	2
Alfalfa	*Medicago sativa*	Ladak	0.5
Blue Flax	*Linum perenne*	Maple Grove	0.15
Western Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*	Any	0.05
Canby Bluegrass	*Poa canbyi*	Canbar	0.75
Western wheatgrass	*Agropyron smithii*	Any	1
Russian Wildrye	*Elymus junceus*	Any	1
Bluebunch wheatgrass	*Agropyron spicatum*	Anatone	1
Snake River Wheatgrass	*Elymus wawawaiensis*	Secar	1.5
Indian Ricegrass	*Oryzopsis hymenoides*	Nezpar	1

(2) BLM Managed Lands Greenstrip Seed Mix

Seed: Common Name	Seed: Scientific Name	Variety	Bulk Pounds per acre
Western Wheatgrass	*Agropyron smithii*	Any	2
Canby Bluegrass	*Poa canbyi*	Delar	0.5
Thickspike Wheatgrass	*Agropyron dasystachyum*	Bannock	1
Blue Flax	*Linum perenne*	Appar	0.2
Small Burnet	*Sanguisorba minor*	Any	2
Forage Kochia	*Kochia prostrata*	Canbar	2
Western Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*	Any	0.1

Seed mixes could be adjusted based on funding and availability.

Enclosure 3, Appeal Form