United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Idaho Falls District
Upper Snake Field Office
1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401-2100

In Reply Refer To:

9210

March 18, 2016

NOTICE OF FIELD MANAGER'S DECISION

Decision

After careful consideration, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action outlined in the Shotgun Valley Fuels Reduction and Forest Restoration Project Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-ID-I010-2015-0022-EA).

Under this decision, the following elements of the Proposed Action would be approved:

- Implementation of this decision would focus on reducing hazardous fuel accumulations and improving forest and shrub community health through the use of mechanical treatments (e.g., chainsaws, other hand tools, and heavy mechanical equipment), prescribed fire, and biomass utilization on 2,751 acres throughout the Shotgun Valley and surrounding areas. Implementation would consist of the treatment of approximately two to four areas annually over a 10 year period, with treatment areas ranging in size from 20 to 225 acres. The Proposed Action would be broken up into three treatment priorities: WUI Shaded Fuel Breaks (784 acres), Habitat Improvement/Forest Health (1,716 acres), and Aspen Health (251 acres). The design criteria presented in the EA would apply to the elements discussed below.

  WUI Shaded Fuel Break Treatments:

  WUI treatments would occur on BLM administered lands within a 1,000 foot treatment zone adjacent to developed private property. A variety of treatment methods would be used, including mechanical harvesting, in order to reach fuel reduction goals and objectives. Mechanical harvesting would be employed to reduce costs of the treatment and to facilitate removal of useable wood products. Treatments would be designed to reduce stand density and understory ladder fuels within conifer stands, while increasing tree and crown spacing so as to reduce the occurrence of crown fires. Resulting slash from treatments would be piled and burned, chipped, or removed off site (if accessible and/or feasible). Attempts would be made to promote the utilization of biomass (e.g., chip and/or firewood collection and whole tree utilization such as post and poles) when possible.

Habitat Improvement and Forest Health Treatments:

These treatments would include selective thinning, thinning from below, and small scattered patch cuts (< 2 acres in size). Thinning from below is the removal of intermediate and codominant trees to favor the more mature, high quality trees in the upper crown classes. Treatments would strive to break up the continuity of forest fuels while leaving larger diameter trees and aspen, where present, thereby reducing the potential for ground fires to transition to the forest crown and allowing wildfire to return to a natural cycle, where possible. The thinned material could be offered as firewood, mulch, or post and poles or it may be lopped and scattered or piled. Thinning treatments would reduce tree density and allow remaining trees to receive more sunlight, water, and nutrients, which would improve forest health and vigor, as well as improve drought and disease resistance. Resulting slash from treatments would be piled and burned, broadcast burned, chipped, or removed off site (if accessible and/or feasible). Attempts would be made to promote the utilization of biomass; however, low intensity prescribed fire would be the preferred method where conditions permit and the reintroduction of fire is strategically and environmentally feasible.

The BLM's stewardship contracting tool for managing and restoring federal lands may be used for implementation of portions of the Proposed Action. For the purposes of this project, stewardship contracting could involve the exchange of wood products from public lands (e.g., post and poles, timber, or sawlogs) for a local contractor's service (e.g., fuels reduction). Wildlife habitat improvement treatments would encourage the natural regeneration of aspen with a targeted density of 1,000 suckers per acre, maintenance of adequate thermal cover, and an increase in understory herbaceous vegetation. Additionally, increasing aspen densities within the treatment areas may further help to reduce fire intensity due to the species' fire resistant properties.

Aspen Health Treatments:

Aspen health treatments would focus on reducing encroaching conifers from within existing aspen stands. Treatments would encourage the natural regeneration of aspen through the removal of encroaching conifers with the target of increasing aspen sucker density to 1,000 suckers per acre. Treatment slash would be piled and burned, broadcast burned, chipped, or removed off site (if accessible and/or feasible). While attempts would be made to promote the utilization of biomass, the use of prescribed fire in the form of broadcast burns would be the preferred method of slash disposal in selected areas due to fire's ability to further promote aspen regeneration.

Design Features

- To avoid the spread of noxious weeds, no cross country vehicular travel would occur through areas with known noxious weed infestations. Additionally, prior to ground-disturbing activities, all mechanical equipment and vehicles would be power-washed and cleaned of all vegetation (stems, leaves, seeds, and all other vegetative parts) and inspected in order to minimize the transport and spread of invasive plants seeds.

- The use of certified weed-free seed mixes would be required to prevent the introduction of invasive plants.
- Treatment areas would be monitored for the presence of noxious weed species. Any weeds that are identified would be treated in accordance with the *Upper Snake-Pocatello Integrated Weeds Control Programmatic Environmental Assessment* (DOI-BLM, 2009a).
- All prescribed burning would require the development of a site specific Burn Plan and require coordination with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group Smoke Management Program for the purpose of managing smoke emissions from prescribed fire.
- Protect wildland areas from wildfire originating on private lands, infrastructure corridors, and recreational areas.
- Perennial streams would be buffered by 100' either side while intermittent/ephemeral streams would be buffered by 50' either side to reduce impacts to the riparian/wetland vegetation (treatment units were constructed to exclude buffered streams) as stipulated by Idaho Forestry BMPs.
- Should a stream crossing be needed to implement the treatment, a temporary stream crossing would be constructed so as to minimize sediment input and reduce impacts to riparian vegetation and aquatic species. Information and guidance provided by the Idaho Forestry BMPs, Field Office Forester, Field Office hydrologist, riparian/wetland specialist, and fish biologist would be used to determine the location and type of stream crossing needed. Following treatment, the temporary crossing would be obliterated and reclaimed back to its previous state.
- No new permanent roads would be constructed. Skid trails and/or temporary roads would likely be present as a result of the commercial harvesting operation. Maintenance of existing roads may be necessary, but will follow BLM policy and BMPs. All ground disturbances as a result of the skidding and transporting of material would be reclaimed to prevent the creation of new roads or trails. All skid trails produced by the treatments will be obliterated, rehabbed and blocked off to prevent unauthorized access by off-highway vehicle (OHVs). Rehabilitation on skids trails will be done according to Idaho Forestry BMPs and will be done in a manner to deter access past existing routes.
- Landings will be built off of existing and temporary roads. However, due to the nature of the various types of equipment used, landing locations will not be designated until the contract process. Size will depend on whether the treatments are primarily thinning with burning of residual slash or if space for a grinder or log decks will be needed.
- Landing areas, skid trails, and burn piles will be rehabbed to preexisting conditions and seeded with native seed mixes post-project to stabilize disturbed areas to prevent spread of weeds. Rehabilitation on disturbed areas will follow BMPs.
- When possible, existing snags would remain on site at a per acre density of two snags between 15 and 20 inch dbh, four snags between 10 and 15 inch dbh, and eight snags between 5 and 10 inch dbh for wildlife benefit.

- When possible, two to four small litter piles and one to two large diameter downed trees per acre would remain on site for the purpose of promoting small mammal habitat.
- Trees displaying old characteristics (as defined by Hamilton 1993) would be left when feasible to meet project objectives.
- Treatments would only occur between August 1 and March 31 so as to minimize impacts to migratory birds and other wildlife species unless previously cleared by a wildlife biologist. Additional seasonal restrictions specific to raptors may be applicable.
- Recommended grizzly bear guidelines and conservation strategies will be followed. Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will occur when applicable.
- No treatments will occur in sagebrush vegetation types to minimize the potential for impacts to greater sage-grouse.
- Wildlife and plant surveys will be conducted to determine the presence/absence of any threatened, endangered or sensitive species within the project area. Should any be encountered, setback buffers, timing stipulations or other mitigation measures will be employed to ensure that the treatments do not impact those species. For example, if any sensitive plants are identified within the project area during or prior to implementation, sites would be flagged prior to any ground-disturbing activities to avoid adverse effects. Sites that are located in areas proposed for treatment would be avoided.
- Thinning prescriptions will maintain known wildlife corridors when possible.
- Raptor nest surveys would be conducted prior to treatment to determine occupancy. If a nest is determined to be occupied, it would be avoided by species-specific buffers, or until the fledglings have vacated the nest (see Recommended Seasonal Restrictions for Raptors in the Wildlife section). Unoccupied nest trees would be retained unless they pose a public health and safety concern.
- Permittees would be prohibited from placing new water troughs or supplement blocks within 1 mile of newly seeded areas, e.g., landings, skid trails, temporary roads, etc., until those areas have reached 60 percent of the herbaceous cover in adjacent, untreated areas.
- A Class III cultural resources inventory was completed in October 2014. All eligible or potentially eligible archaeological sites would be flagged prior to any ground-disturbing activities to avoid adverse effects. Sites that are located in areas proposed for treatment would be avoided.
- Fire and non-fire vegetation treatment restrictions and BMPs identified within the FMDA FEIS Record of Decision (DOI-BLM 2008) will be applied to the Shotgun Valley Project as appropriate and consistent with National Fire Plan policy and RMP direction.

Rationale

The purpose of the Shotgun Valley project is to protect the home developments, ranches, and businesses adjacent to the project area that make up the Island Park community from large, uncharacteristic, high-intensity wildland fire. Additionally, this project aims to protect important wildlife habitat, improve forest health, and promote aspen regeneration and expansion. Heavy

fuel loads within the project area have created conditions that would support the development of high-intensity wildland fires and the potential for unacceptable resource and human health and safety impacts. The proposed fuels reduction treatments would be designed to reduce forest vegetation fuel loadings, decrease fire intensity and erratic fire behavior, aid in wildland fire suppression activities, provide for firefighter and public safety, and improve ecosystem health in the forested vegetation types present in the project area. Under the Proposed Action the following objectives, which have been identified for the project, would be met:

- Protect and enhance healthy conifer stands by reducing the density of young suppressed trees that may propagate surface fires into the forest crowns or increase the stands' susceptibility to insects and disease.
- Reduce hazardous fuel loading (vertical and horizontal continuity of ladder fuels) to prevent uncharacteristic wildfires and resultant resource damage, while providing conditions so wildfire can safely take its role in the ecosystem.
- Improve the health, vigor, and acreage of aspen stands and promote natural regeneration of aspens.
- Maintain or improve wildlife habitat by providing multiple successional stages of more diverse vegetative communities.

Land Use Plan Conformance

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the following landscape-level objectives and management actions set forth in the Record of Decision for the *Medicine Lodge RMP and FEIS 1985* (DOI-BLM 1985) as amended by the *Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment* (*FMDA) FEIS* (DOI-BLM 2008) and *ROD and ARMPA for the Great Basin Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana* (DOI-BLM 2015b). A Greater Sage-Grouse Implementation Plan Conformance Review was conducted by the Idaho State Office review team for this project.

Portions of the BLM land within the Shotgun Valley project area were amended by the ARMPA and classified as either important or general habitat. Treatments being proposed and analyzed under this EA would be occurring within only the forested areas of the valley and not within those areas classified as mountain sagebrush or areas occupied or used by Greater Sage-grouse. As a result, the proposed project would not affect greater sage-grouse or its habitat.

The FMDA FEIS (DOI-BLM 2008:14, 17, 18), Medicine Lodge RMP and FEIS Record of Decision (DOI-BLM 1985) and Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment and FEIS (DOI-BLM 2015b): set the following objectives and management actions:

Medicine Lodge RMP Objectives and Management Decisions:

Management Area 5 – Sands:

Objective 4 –Intensively manage 4,253 acres for timber production (pg. 8).

Management Decisions:

- Timber sales can be conducted on 3,623 acres, predominately in areas adjacent to the Yale-Kilgore road and in the Pine Creek –July Creek areas…..About 3,203 acres of woodland will be

managed will be managed for production of forest products on demand with stipulations to maintain wildlife habitat and watershed conditions (pg. 8).

Standard Operating Procedures:

Wildlife and Fisheries:

- Seasonal restrictions will continue to be applied where they are needed to mitigate the impacts of human activities on important seasonal wildlife habitat. Applicable restricted time periods include (pg. 26):
    - Raptor Nest Sites: Dates vary.
- The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be consulted prior to implementing projects that may affect habitat for threatened and endangered species (pg. 27).
- Sufficient forage and cover will be provided for wildlife on seasonal habitat (pg. 27).
- Vegetation manipulation projects will be designed to minimize impacts on wildlife habitat and to improve it whenever possible. These projects will comply with sage-grouse, antelope and mule deer management guidelines (pg. 28).
- Elk Management Guidelines: Maintaining adequate thermal and security cover on deer and elk habitat, particularly within timber stands adjacent to primary winter foraging areas (pg. 28).

Forestry:

- Public lands within intensive Forest management Area will be available for a full range of forest management activities. Areas classified as woodland will also be available for limited forest management activates (pg. 22).
- Silvicultural prescriptions will be consistent with accepted methods related to site, species, habitat types, and the individual requirements of the forest stand. Tractor logging will be limited to slopes with gradients of less than 40%, and the season of logging will be limited to avoid soil compaction and rutting (pg. 22).
- Road locations will be determined on the basis of topography, drainages, soils, and other natural features to minimize erosion. All roads and skid trails to be closed will be seeded to grass, legumes and shrubs. Species will be selected for the forest community and elevation to be seeded (pg. 23).
- Slash disposal will be done in a manner conducive to revegetation and advantageous to the passage of big game. Slash will be lopped and scattered where possible with some accumulation in or near openings for escape cover. Slash will be burned when necessary. Such burning will be in conformance with state air pollution regulations (pg. 23).
- Logging units will be laid out in a manner that will mitigate the risk of windthrow, and the selection of trees in shelterwoods will be made in a manner that will improve the genetic composition of the regenerated stand (pg. 23).

FMDA Management Goals for Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer:

Increase acres of early-seral and mid-seral Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer cover types (pure aspen and Aspen/Conifer mix). Spatial arrangement of varying age-classes should occur in a mosaic across the landscape (pg. 14).

Improve composition and structure of Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer types to better represent historical Aspen/Conifer and Dry Conifer cover types (pg. 14).

Objective 2: Maintain, protect, and expand sage-grouse source habitats (pg. 17).

Management Actions:

- Conduct vegetation treatments in areas that pose a wildland fire risk to source habitats (pg. 17).

***Objective 4*:** Make Progress toward Desired Future Condition in historically frequent fire regimes (Aspen/Conifer, Dry Conifer, Mid-elevation Shrub encroached by juniper, Mountain Scrub) by increasing Wildland Fire Use (WFU) and prescribed fire to create a fire regime within the historical range of variability (pg. 18).

Management Actions:

- Use mechanical and chemical treatments to prepare areas in FRCC 2 and FRCC 3 for prescribed fire and WFU (pg. 18).
- Where prescriptive parameters, resource conditions, and vegetation conditions allow, use WFU or prescribed fire to increase the annual average number of wildland fire acres to an average similar to historical conditions (pg. 18).

Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment Objectives and Management Decisions:

Objective SSS 3: Maintain a resilient population of GRSG in Idaho and southwestern Montana (pg. 2-7).

MD SSS 5: Prioritize activities and mitigation to conserve, enhance and restore GRSG habitats (i.e., fire suppression activities, fuels management activities, vegetation treatments, invasive species treatments etc.) first by Conservation Area, if appropriate (Conservation Area under adaptive management or at risk of meeting an adaptive management soft or hard trigger), followed by PHMA, then IHMA then GHMA within the Conservation Areas. Local priority areas within these areas will be further refined as a result of completing the GRSG Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessments as described in **Appendix H of the ARMPA**. This can include projects outside GRSG habitat when those projects will provide a benefit to GRSG habitat (pg. 2-8).

> Portions of the Shotgun Valley project are within mapped GRSG habitat; however, in reality the treatment areas are all dominated by stands of lodgepole pine, Douglas fir, and aspen, which are not indicative of GRSG habitat. The treatment areas, due to their vegetative cover, are not sage-grouse habitat and the proposed treatments will have no effect on GRSG or its habitat. The impacts to GRSG and its habitat in relation to the action alternatives are described on pg. 62-74 of the EA.

MD SSS 7: GRSG habitat within the project area will be assessed during project-level NEPA analysis within the management area designations (PHMA, IHMA, GHMA). Project proposals and their effects will be evaluated based on the habitat and values affected (pg. 2-9).

> GRSG habitat was assessed during the NEPA analysis. The impacts to GRSG habitat in relation to the action alternatives are described on pg. 62-74 of the EA.

MD SSS 33: Conduct implementation and project activities, including construction and short-term anthropogenic disturbances consistent with seasonal habitat restrictions described in **Appendix C of the RMPA** (pg. 2-15).

Project is outside of seasonal grouse habitats.

MD SSS 38: Monitor the effectiveness of projects (e.g., fuel breaks. fuels treatments) until objectives have been met or until it is determined that objectives cannot be met, according to the monitoring schedule identified for project implementation (pg. 2-15).

Monitoring is proposed as described on page 24 of the EA.

MD SSS 39: Monitor invasive vegetation post vegetation management treatment (pg. 2-15).

Monitoring is proposed as described on page 24 of the EA.

Objective VEG 1: Reconnect and expand areas of higher native plant community integrity/rangeland health to increase the extent of high quality habitat and, where possible, to accommodate the future effects of climate change (pg. 2-16).

MD VEG 1: Implement habitat rehabilitation or restoration projects in areas that have potential to improve GRSG habitat using a full array of treatment activities as appropriate, including chemical, mechanical and seeding treatments (pg. 2-16).

Treatments will only be occurring within the forested areas of the Shotgun Valley project. Treatments would aim to improve the forest vegetation structure and health thereby reducing the potential for high intensity wildfire impacting adjacent mountain sagebrush communities.

MD VEG 2: Implement vegetation rehabilitation or manipulation projects to enhance sagebrush cover or to promote diverse and healthy grass and forb understory to achieve the greatest improvement in GRSG habitat based on FIAT Assessments, HAF assessments, other vegetative assessment data and local, site specific factors that indicate sagebrush canopy cover or herbaceous conditions do not meet habitat management objectives (i.e. is minimal or exceeds optimal characteristics). This may necessitate the use of prescribed fire as a site preparation technique to remove annual grass residual growth prior to the use of herbicides in the restoration of certain lower elevation sites (e.g., Wyoming big sagebrush) but such efforts will be carefully planned and coordinated to minimize impacts on GRSG seasonal habitats (pg. 2-17).

Portions of the Shotgun Valley project are within mapped GRSG habitat; however, in reality the treatment areas are all dominated by stands of lodgepole pine, Douglas fir, and aspen, which are not indicative of GRSG habitat. The treatment areas, due to their vegetative cover, are not sage-grouse habitat and the proposed treatments will have no detrimental effect on GRSG or its habitat. Areas within the project area that contain GRSG habitat are excluded from treatments under this EA. These areas of excluded GRSG habitat contain healthy stands of mountain sagebrush that show no need for either rehabilitation or manipulation treatments.

MD VEG 4: Implement management changes in restoration and rehabilitation areas, as necessary, to maintain suitable GRSG habitat, improve unsuitable GRSG habitat and to ensure long-term persistence of improved GRSG habitat (Eiswerth and Shonkwiler 2006). Management changes can be considered during livestock grazing permit renewals, travel management planning, and renewal or reauthorization of ROWs (pg. 2-17).

Portions of the Shotgun Valley project are within mapped GRSG habitat; however, in reality the treatment areas are all dominated by stands of lodgepole pine, Douglas fir, and aspen, which are not indicative of GRSG habitat. The treatment areas, due to their vegetative cover, are not sage-

grouse habitat and the proposed treatments will have no detrimental effect on GRSG or its habitat. Areas within the project area that contain GRSG habitat are excluded from treatments under this EA. These areas of excluded GRSG habitat contain healthy stands of mountain sagebrush that show no need for either rehabilitation or manipulation treatments.

Objective FIRE 1: Design fuel treatments to restore, enhance, or maintain greater sage-grouse habitat (pg. 2-19).

MD FIRE 17: Design and implement fuels treatments that would reduce the potential start and spread of unwanted wildfires and provide anchor points or control lines for the containment of wildfires during suppression activities with an emphasis on maintaining, protecting, and expanding sagebrush ecosystems and successfully rehabilitated areas and strategically and effectively reduce wildfire threats in the greatest area (pg. 2-20).

Through the project planning and scoping (internal & external) process every effort was made to ensure that the fuels and forestry treatments occurring within the conifer forests were designed in a way that would maintain and enhance the targeted vegetation but also protect those habitats adjacent to the treatment areas (i.e. mountain sagebrush and mountain shrub cover types).

MD FIRE 19: Apply appropriate seasonal restrictions for implementing vegetation and fuels management treatments according to the type of seasonal habitats present. Allow no treatments in known winter range unless the treatments are designed to strategically reduce wildfire risk around and/or in the winter range and will protect, maintain, increase, or enhance winter range habitat quality.
Ensure chemical applications are utilized where they will assist in success of fuels treatments.
Strategically place treatments on a landscape scale to prevent fire from spreading into PHMA or WUI (pg. 2-21).

Treatments would be occurring within the conifer cover type identified within the project area. While sagebrush cover types do exist within the project area, they have been excluded from treatment. Additionally, the project area has been identified as being outside of seasonal grouse habitats.

MD FIRE 22: Fuel treatments will be designed through an interdisciplinary process to expand, enhance, maintain, and protect GRSG habitat which considers a full range of cost effective fuel reduction techniques, including: chemical, biological (including grazing and targeted grazing), mechanical and prescribed fire treatments (pg. 2-21).

The internal and external scoping process is described on pages 11-13 of the EA. While the treatment areas are primarily dominated by conifer forests, and would not be categorized as GRSG habitat, every effort has been made to ensure that the fuels and forestry treatments were designed in a way that would maintain and enhance the targeted vegetation but also protect those habitats adjacent to the treatment areas (i.e. mountain sagebrush and mountain shrub cover types).

MD FIRE 26: Protect vegetation restoration and rehabilitation efforts/projects from subsequent fire events (pg. 2-21).

The purpose of this project is to reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire within the conifer forest cover types.

Applicable Required Design Features:

RDF 1: Solicit and consider expertise and ideas from local landowners, working groups, and other federal, state, county, and private organizations during development of projects (pg. C-2).

This has occurred as described on pages 11-13 of the EA.

RDF 2: No repeated or sustained behavioral disturbance (e.g., visual, noise over 10 dbA at lek, etc.) to lekking birds from 6:00 pm to 9:00 am within 2 miles (3.2 km) of leks during the lekking season (pg. C-2).

Nearest Occupied lek is over 10 miles away therefore this RFD does not apply.

RDF 3: Avoid mechanized anthropogenic disturbance, in nesting habitat during the nesting season when implementing: 1) fuels/vegetation/habitat restoration management projects, 2) infrastructure construction or maintenance, 3) geophysical exploration activities; 4) organized motorized recreational events (pg. C-2).

The project area is outside of nesting habitat as modeled by IDFG therefore this RDF does not apply.

RDF 4: Avoid mechanized anthropogenic disturbance during the winter, in wintering areas when implementing: 1) fuels/vegetation/habitat restoration management projects, 2) infrastructure construction or maintenance, 3) geophysical exploration activities; 4) organized motorized recreational events (pg. C-2).

The project area is outside of wintering habitat as modeled by IDFG therefore this RDF does not apply.

RDF 20: Where applicable, design fuels treatment objectives to protect existing sagebrush ecosystems, modify fire behavior, restore native plants, and create landscape patterns which most benefit sage-grouse habitat (pg. C-3).

This project will reduce the potential for high intensity wildfires in timber adjacent to shrub steppe habitat within the project area.

RDF 26: Power-wash all vehicles and equipment involved in fuels management activities, prior to entering the area, to minimize the introduction of undesirable and/or invasive plant species (pg. C-4).

This RDF is part of the design features and mitigation measures for all alternatives described in the EA (pg 22-24).

RDF 30: Remove standing and encroaching trees within at least 110 yards of occupied sage-grouse leks and other habitats (e.g., nesting, wintering and brood rearing) to reduce the availability of perch sites for avian predators, as resources permit (pg. C-4).

No Leks are within 10 miles of the project area therefore this RDF does not apply.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and other Applicable Plans

The Proposed Action is consistent with the *Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho* objective to:

> "Maintain, enhance or restore sage grouse habitat, and continuity of habitats, at multiple spatial scales (Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee 2006: 1-13)".

The Proposed Action is also consistent with the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group's recommended actions to:

> "Manage the density, structure, and composition of shrubs, forbs, and grasses at a standard that will maintain the long-term health and sustainability of the plant community, enhance the long-term health of sage-grouse habitats, and meet the needs of other species and human uses" and "reduce the size, intensity, and frequency of wildfires and to develop a fire suppression policy that would place a high priority on protecting sage-grouse habitat" (Upper Snake Sage-Grouse Local Working Group 2010:8 & 11).

The management of noxious weeds in relation to the Proposed Action is governed by the *Upper Snake-Pocatello Integrated Weeds Control Programmatic Environmental Assessment* (DOI-BLM 2009a). The control program, which utilizes a full complement of methodologies available to treat weeds (i.e., herbicide use, fire, mechanical, manual, and biological control) tiers to the *Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 2007* (DOI-BLM 2007a).

This document tiers to the analysis presented in the *FMDA FEIS* (DOI-BLM 2008). The plan amendment assesses the environmental effects of mechanical, prescribed fire, and chemical fuel treatments. The analysis in the FMDA FEIS contains broad regional descriptions of resources, provides a broad environmental impact analysis, including cumulative impacts, focuses on general policies and provides Bureau-wide decisions for vegetation management.

Authority

Authority under which this decision is being issued is found in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subpart 4.410 – Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals.

Appeal Procedures

Any person/party whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4.410, 4.411, 4.412, and 4.413 in person or in writing to Jeremy Casterson, Upper Snake Field Office Manager, at 1405 Hollipark Dr., Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401 within 30 days after receipt of such decision. The notice of appeal, if filed must include a statement of reasons for the appeal, a statement of standing if required by 43 CFR 4.412(b), and any arguments the appellant wishes to make. The person/party must also serve a copy of the appeal on the Office of the Solicitor, Boise Field Solicitors Office, University Plaza, 960 Broadway Ave., Suite 400, Boise Idaho, 83706 and person(s) named [43 CFR 4.421(h)] in the ***Copies sent to:*** section of this decision. The Interior Board of Land Appeals must decide an appeal of this decision within 60 days after all pleadings have been filed, and within 180 days after the appeal was filed as contained in 43 CFR 4.416.

Should you wish to file a petition for a stay, see 43 CFR 4.471 (a) and (b). In accordance with 43 CFR 4.471(c), a petition for a stay 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 immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer and serviced in accordance with 43 CFR 4.471. Any person named in the decision that receives a copy of a petition for a stay and/or an appeal see 43 CFR 4.472(b) for procedures to follow if you wish to respond.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact either Ben Dyer at (208) 524-7500, Channing Swan (208) 478-6389, or myself at (208) 524-7500.

Approved by:

/s/ Jeremy Casterson, Upper Snake Field Office Manager Dated: 3/18/2016

Copies sent to:

Natural Resource Conservation Service	9173 W. Barnes Dr. Ste. C, Boise, ID 83709
Idaho Department of Lands	3563 E. Ririe Hwy, Idaho Falls, ID 83401
USFS Ashton-Island Park Ranger Dist.	P.O. Box 858, Ashton, ID 83420 / 460 S. Hwy 20
Idaho Conservation League	710 N. 6th St., Boise, ID 83702
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	Attn: Steve Schmidt, 4279 Commerce Circle, Idaho Falls, ID 83404
Greater Yellowstone Collation	P.O. Box 1072, Driggs, ID 83422
Western Watersheds Project	126 Main St, Ste. B2, Hailey, ID 83333
Wildlands Defense	P.O. Box 125 Boise, ID 83701
Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture	2270 Old Penitentiary Rd., Boise, ID 83712
Chairman, Tribal Business Council, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	C/o Chairman Edmo, P.O. Box 306., Fort Hall, ID 83203
Clark County Commissioners / Clark Emergency Management	151 W. 1st N., St. Anthony, ID 83445
Fremont County Commissioners / Fremont Emergency Management	P.O. Box 205, Dubois, Idaho 83423
Jim Hagenbarth	Box 1128, Dillon, MT 59725
Natural Guardian	2880 N. 55 W., Idaho Falls, ID 83402
Davis Lake Livestock	C/o Bob French, 2768 E. 700 N., Roberts, ID 83444
Table Butte Cattle Co.	2251 E. 2350 N., Hamer, ID 83425
Cottle Farms	C/o Jay Cottle, 681 N. 3350 E., Menan, ID 83434
Sheridan Valley Grazing Association	P.O. Box 176, Roberts, ID 83444
Thomas Brooks	C/o BCI Framing and Drywall, 2300 N. Batavia, Orange, CA 92865
Trude Ranch, LLC	3166 Old Shotgun Road, Island Park, ID 83429
Mitch Jacobs	2496 N. 2375 E., Hamer, ID 83425