

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EAGLE LAKE FIELD OFFICE

DECISION RECORD

**Little Cleghorn Stewardship Project
Forest Health Improvement and Hazardous Fuels Reduction
DOI-BLM-CA-N050-2016-05-EA**

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Eagle Lake Field Office (ELFO) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-CA-N050-2016-05-EA) which analyzes the potential environmental impacts of mechanical treatments and prescribed fire fuels reduction treatments to reduce high densities of Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) and high fuel loadings within the ELFO. The purpose of this project is to implement direction from the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the National Fire Plan. These laws direct federal agencies to implement fuel reduction projects in areas of high fuel concentrations to minimize the threat of catastrophic wildfires and to reduce wildfire threats to forest and rangeland ecosystems. Additionally the project would fulfill the vision contained in the Eagle Lake Field Office (ELFO) Resource Management Plan, 2008 (RMP) which specifies that hazardous fuels be reduced on both commercial and non-commercial woodlands and to target areas with excessive fuels accumulation due to long-term fire exclusion.

This action is necessary to improve vegetation communities and minimize the threat of catastrophic wildfires in the ELFO Area.

The primary objectives of the project are to:

- Decrease the risk of catastrophic wildfire.
- Enhance native vegetation using prescribed fire.
- Improve firefighter and community safety

COMPLIANCE

The actions proposed and analyzed in this EA were developed to be consistent with the management objectives for public lands identified in the following documents:

- Eagle Lake Field Office, Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (2007)
- Record of Decision and Eagle Lake Field Office Resource Management Plan (2008).
- Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed Land Use Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement (2015).

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as described in EA # DOI-BLM-CA-N050-2016-05-EA. This project would reduce high densities of Jeffrey pine and reduce surface, ladder, and canopy fuel loadings within a 558 acre project area. Treatment areas consist of 5 units and would reduce fuel loadings by 30 to 50 percent. Landings, rehab and prescribed burning would occur as outlined in the proposed action.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED

The no action alternative was considered but not selected. Under this alternative treatments would not be removed and the objectives outlined in the EA would not be met.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

1. Based on the environmental analysis, it is determined that the proposed action will not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation to the public lands and is consistent with federal, state and local laws, regulations and plans.
2. The proposed action will not adversely impact any threatened or endangered species, migratory birds, or significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
3. The proposed action will contribute to healthy and resilient landscapes.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An initial scoping letter was sent out on January 10, 2014 in anticipation of this EA. Scoping letters were sent to all identified interested parties that could be affected by the proposed action. Another scoping letter was sent out March 28, 2016 requesting public comment on the draft EA.

Consultation regarding the Little Cleghorn Stewardship Project has been ongoing with seven Native American Tribes since January 2012. The Susanville Indian Rancheria was last consulted on January 8, 2016 and the Pit River Tribe was last consulted on February 4, 2016. No comments or concerns were raised.

History of the Planning and Scoping Process

- February 4, 2014: Lassen Fire Safe Council was informed of the proposed project.
- March – May 2014: Internal Scoping with BLM ELFO Interdisciplinary Team.
- January 10, 2014: Scoping letters of the Proposed Action (with maps) were sent to all interested and affected parties, including 7 Tribes and 43 groups and individuals.
- March 28, 2016- Request for public comment on the Draft EA was sent out to interested parties.

Four comment letters were received from groups and individuals. The following main issues were made:

- Concerns about cultural resources, special designated areas, wildlife, special status plants, invasive species, and cumulative effects,
- Concern that the reduction of western dwarf mistletoe might have negative impacts on some wildlife species,
- Concerns about impacts to special status species, including greater sage-grouse habitat,
- Concern about impacts to soils, native vegetation, and water resources from heavy equipment and other project activities,
- Concern about the risk of wildfire from prescribed fire use,
- Recommendation to decommission temporary roads after project use.
- Concerns that the EA didn't address seasonal timing restrictions for bat maternity season.

The BLM has discussed all of the issues mentioned above, and has either incorporated and analyzed them within this EA, or provided an explanation of why they were not analyzed in detail. When initially scoped, BLM proposed that one of the purposes of the document was to reduce western dwarf mistletoe infestation. In response to comments concerning the reduction of western dwarf

mistletoe, BLM has developed another alternative that does not include sanitation of western dwarf mistletoe infected trees.

No known maternity colonies were found during biological surveys and clearances, therefore seasonal timing restriction would not be imposed for bat maternity season. However if found during the lifecycle of the project, restrictions would implemented as outlined in Table 2.25-1 in the Eagle Lake RMP.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 4.

If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Eagle Lake Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2550 Riverside Drive, Susanville, CA 96130, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart B, § 4.21 the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards to Obtaining a Stay:

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal 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 immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

CONTACT PERSON

For further information regarding this project please contact, Clifton Motheral, at (530) 252-5308.

/s/ Emily Ryan

4/15/2016

Emily Ryan
Acting Eagle Lake Field Manager

Date