

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0069-DNA
March 3, 2016**

Yarger Prescribed Fire

Location: **Bobcat Unit:** SE corner of T6S, R50E sec 18, SW corner of sec 17, NE corner of sec 19 W ½ of sec 20.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Miles City Field Office
111 Garryowen Road
Miles City, MT 59301
Phone: 406-233-2800
FAX: 406-233-2921



Worksheet
Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

BLM Office: Miles City

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0069-DNA

Case File/Project No:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Prescribed Fire

Location/Legal Description: Bobcat Unit: SE corner of T6S, R50E sec 18, SW corner of sec 17, NE corner of sec 19 W ½ of sec 20.

Background: The proposed project is to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildland fire to people, communities, and natural resources while restoring forest and rangeland ecosystems to more closely match their historical structure, function, diversity and dynamics. This action will lead to improved ecosystem health while continuing to meet Standards of Rangeland Health Habitat Objectives. The grazing allotments containing the project area were assessed for Standards of Rangeland Health in 1999 and were found to be meeting all Standards. The need for action results from subsequent field visits by BLM resource specialists with raised concerns of conifer expansion and encroachment leading to a risk of the project area failing to meet Land Health Standards and threat of wildfire to adjacent sage-grouse habitat. Those standards most at risk include the following: Standard 1 (uplands are in proper functioning condition), Standard 2 (riparian areas and wetlands are in proper functioning condition), and Standard 5 (habitats are provided for healthy, productive and diverse native plant and animal populations and communities). Stands of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) within the proposed project area have shifted from a Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) 1 to FRCC 2 and 3. This shift has led to a risk of higher intensity, more severe wildfire. This shift has also led to decreased ecosystem health and degraded wildlife habitats. Implementation of the proposed action will help to shift vegetative conditions including structure and composition in portions of the project area toward the expected historical fire return intervals and it will reduce risk of wildfire to adjacent sage-grouse habitat.

A: Description of the Proposed Action: The BLM would implement a prescribed fire to create openings in the vast overstocked ponderosa pine/Rocky Mountain juniper woodlands. Prescribed fire would reduce hazardous fuels loading on project. The burn would be completed during the spring months (February through June).

The total acreage for this project is 616 acres which includes 46 acres of private land. A flanking or backing fire would be used as the initial main ignition until adequate black line is established on the downwind side of the project. In addition, strip head fire would be used for the unit that is being burned after black line is established. All ignitions will be hand lighting with drip torches.

Although this project is in General Sage Grouse Habitat, as indicated in the original environmental assessment the topography and the composition of tree species limit the adaptability of the landscape for sage grouse habitat. Suitable sage grouse habitat does not exist within the proposed area. The project will also meet the goals and objectives for GHMA's which include conserving adjacent GRSG habitat and maintaining or increasing habitat needed for GRSG, including the loss and distribution of sagebrush habitat. All activities will be in accordance with an agency administered approved burn plan which includes a risk assessment to address potential threats to GRSG habitat and how they will be minimized.

Applicant: BLM

County: Powder River

DNA Originator: Matt Harding

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name: Miles City Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved September 21, 2015

Other document** DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2012- 0187 EA

Date Approved March 23, 2015

**List applicable LUPs (for example, resource management plans; activity, project, management, or program plans; or applicable amendments thereto)*

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUPs because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions) The MCFO ARMP, September 2015, Vegetation MD2 "by removing conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats" will be accomplished using prescribed fire. The proposed project will also meet the goals and objectives for GHMA's which include conserving adjacent GRSG habitat and maintaining or increasing habitat needed for GRSG, including the loss and distribution of sagebrush habitat. Objective FOR 3 states: "Manage forest vegetation structure, species composition, patch size, pattern, and distribution in a manner that reduces the occurrence of severe wildfires and forest insect and disease outbreaks."

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document(s) and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Yarger Butte Fuels Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2012-0187-EA
BLM 2015 Miles City Field Office (ARMP) September 2015
Cultural Project Numbers: MT-020-15-54, MT-020-14-99 & MT-020-11-322

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial? The Yarger Butte Fuels EA DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2012-0187-EA considered prescribed fire as part of the proposed action. This project location is included in the analysis area of the EA.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values? Yes, the proposed action and no action alternatives were analyzed in the Yarger Butte Fuels Environmental Assessment. No new environmental concerns, interest, resource values or circumstances that would affect the original analysis have been identified since the EA was completed in 2012 that would indicate a need for additional alternatives.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstance would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action? There is no new information or circumstances; the existing analysis is valid for this proposed project area. This project is located within the Sage Grouse General Habitat Management Area (GHMA). As indicated in the EA, the topography and the composition of tree species limit the adaptability of the landscape for sage grouse habitat. As stated in the Miles City Field Office ARMP, Vegetation MD2 “by removing conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats” will be accomplished using prescribed fire. The proposed project will also meet the goals and objectives for GHMA’s which include conserving adjacent GRSG habitat and maintaining or increasing habitat needed for GRSG, including the loss and distribution of sagebrush habitat. Objective FOR 3 states: “Manage forest vegetation structure, species composition, patch size, pattern, and distribution in a manner that reduces the occurrence of severe wildfires and forest insect and disease outbreaks.” Prescribed fire was chosen as the best technique to accomplish our goals. This has to do to the terrain features of the project area and the amount of timber in the area. Prescribed fire was also the most cost efficient technique and can treat the largest amount of acres in the shortest period of time. Risks are assessed in the Yarger Butte burn plan. By using fire behavior calculations and line production rates, the risk of the fire escaping and affecting suitable sage grouse habitat is minimized. Proper staffing will be utilized in implementing this project in accordance to the Yarger Butte burn plan, to ensure that we have enough equipment and personnel to minimize the risk of the fire escaping.

4. Are the direct, indirect and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document? Yes, the impacts from the current proposed action will be the same as those analyzed in the original EA documentation. Site specific impacts and disturbance to wildlife and soils/vegetation impacts are analyzed in the existing EA. The EA analysis included typical effects that would be expected at the site-specific level, and identified BMPs that would be implemented as needed depending on site specific conditions. There is no indication that implementing this project would result in different environmental effects than those

anticipated in the EA, including direct, indirect or cumulative effects to sage-grouse habitat.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action? Yes, the interagency review and public involvement is adequate. The original EA was coordinated with the permittee, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks and MT Department of Natural Resources. The Yarger Butte EA was posted on the Miles City Field Office (MCFO) NEPA log which was available in the public room of the MCFO and also online via the MCFO webpage. The permittee's have been contacted and the implementation of this project has been coordinated with them.

E. Interdisciplinary Analysis: Identify those team members conducting or participating in the preparation of this worksheet.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource Represented</u>	<u>Initials & Date</u>
Matt Harding	Engine Captain	Fire/Fuels	MH 3/2/16
Kent Undlin	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife	KU 3/2/16
CJ Truesdale	Archeologist	Cultural Resources	<i>CJ 03/02/2016</i>
Paul Pauley	Acting Supv Land Use Spec	Review	PP 03/03/2016

Environmental Coordinator

Date

F. Mitigation Measures: List any applicable mitigation measures that were identified, analyzed, and approved in relevant LUPs and existing NEPA document(s). List the specific mitigation measures or identify an attachment that includes those specific mitigation measures. Document that these applicable mitigation measures must be incorporated and implemented.
Archeologist onsite during prescribed fire activities, cultural resource monitoring.

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.

Note: If one or more of the criteria are not met, a conclusion of conformance and/or NEPA adequacy cannot be made and this box cannot be checked

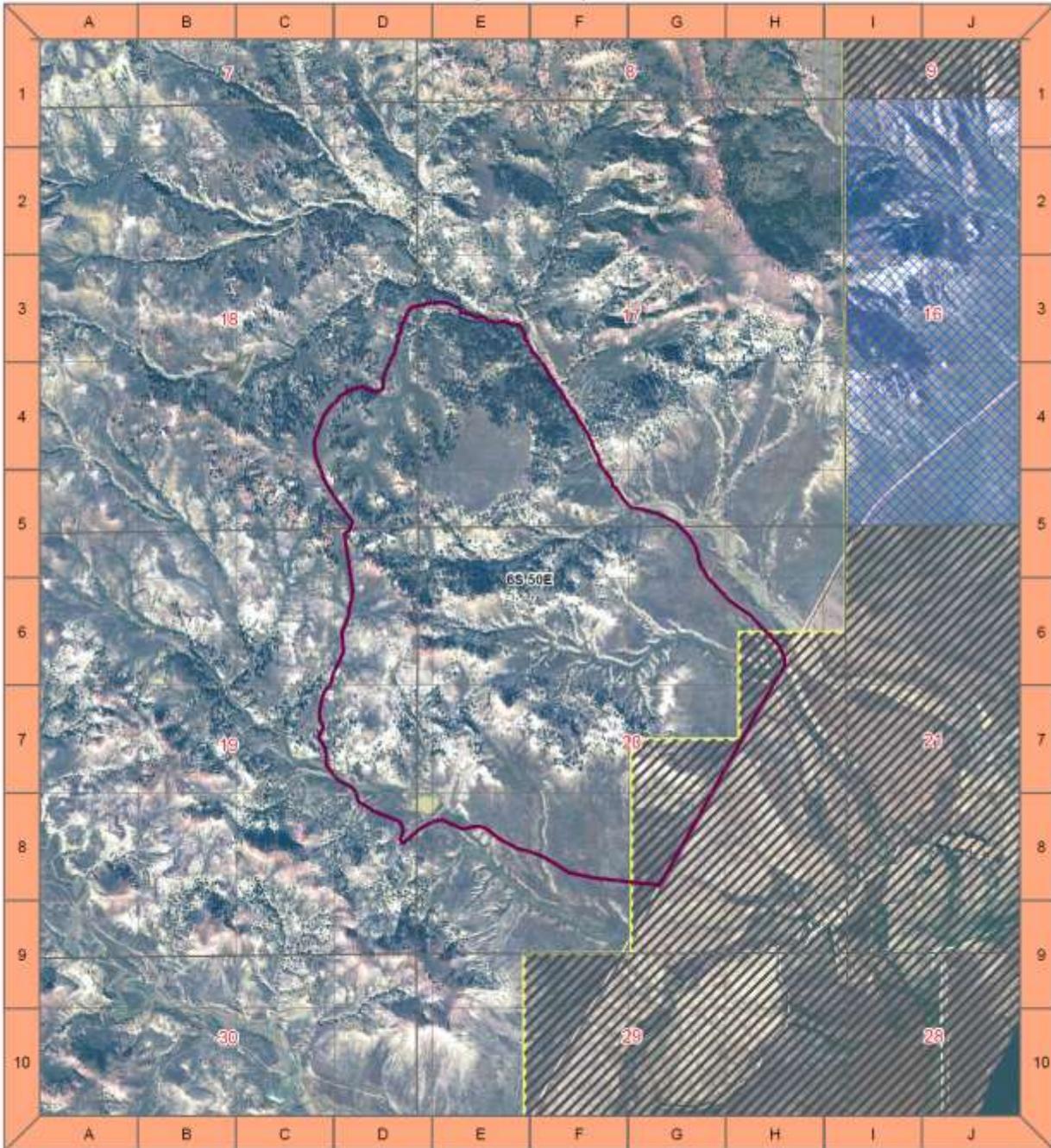
Wendy Warren
Acting Field Manager
Miles City Field Office

Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet 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 the DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.



Bobcat Prescribed Fire Project Map



1:19,000



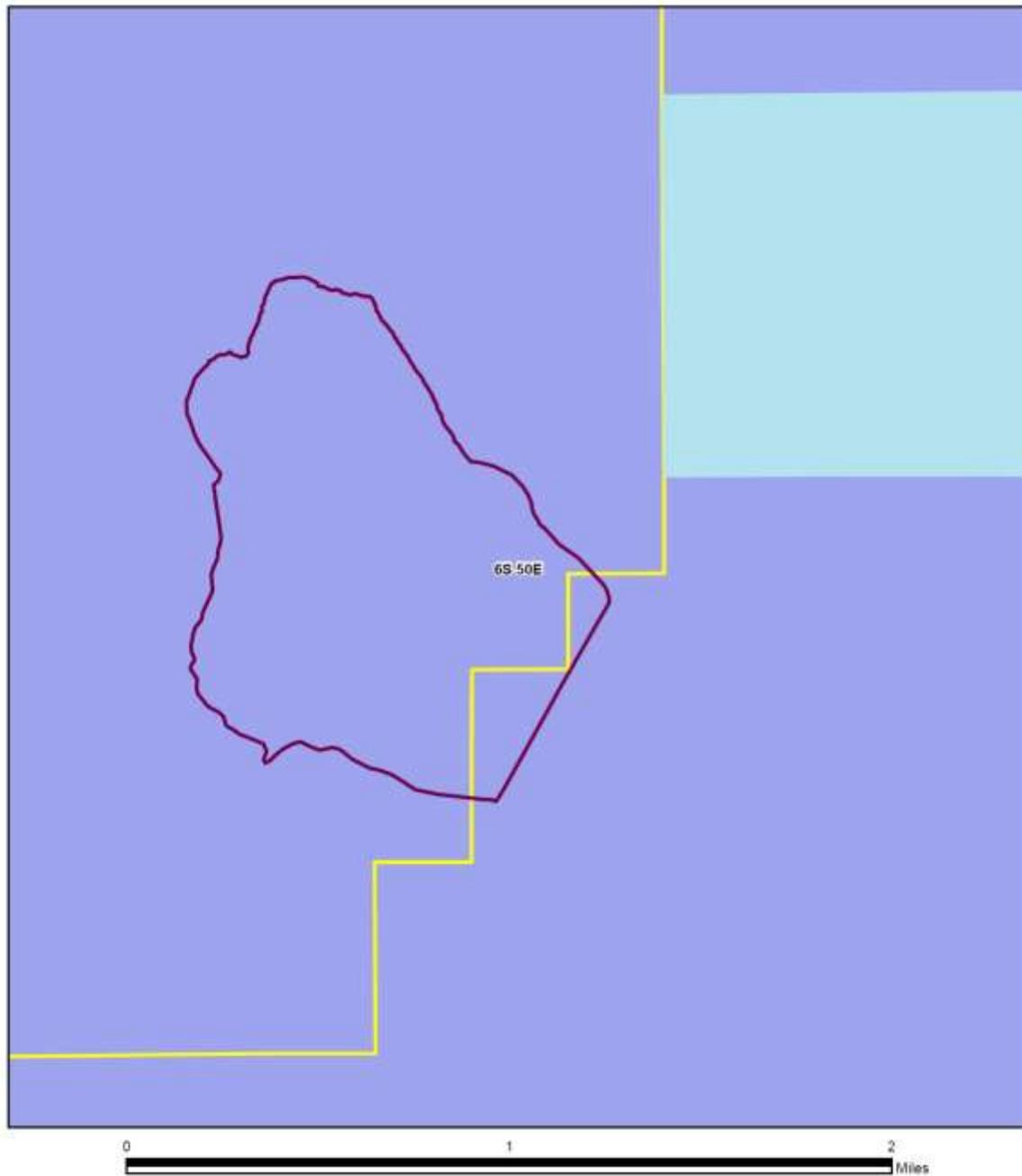
Legend

	Prescribed Fire Boundary		State		Private		BLM
--	--------------------------	--	-------	--	---------	--	-----

Justin Hanley
December 9, 2015



Bobcat Prescribed Fire Project Map



Legend

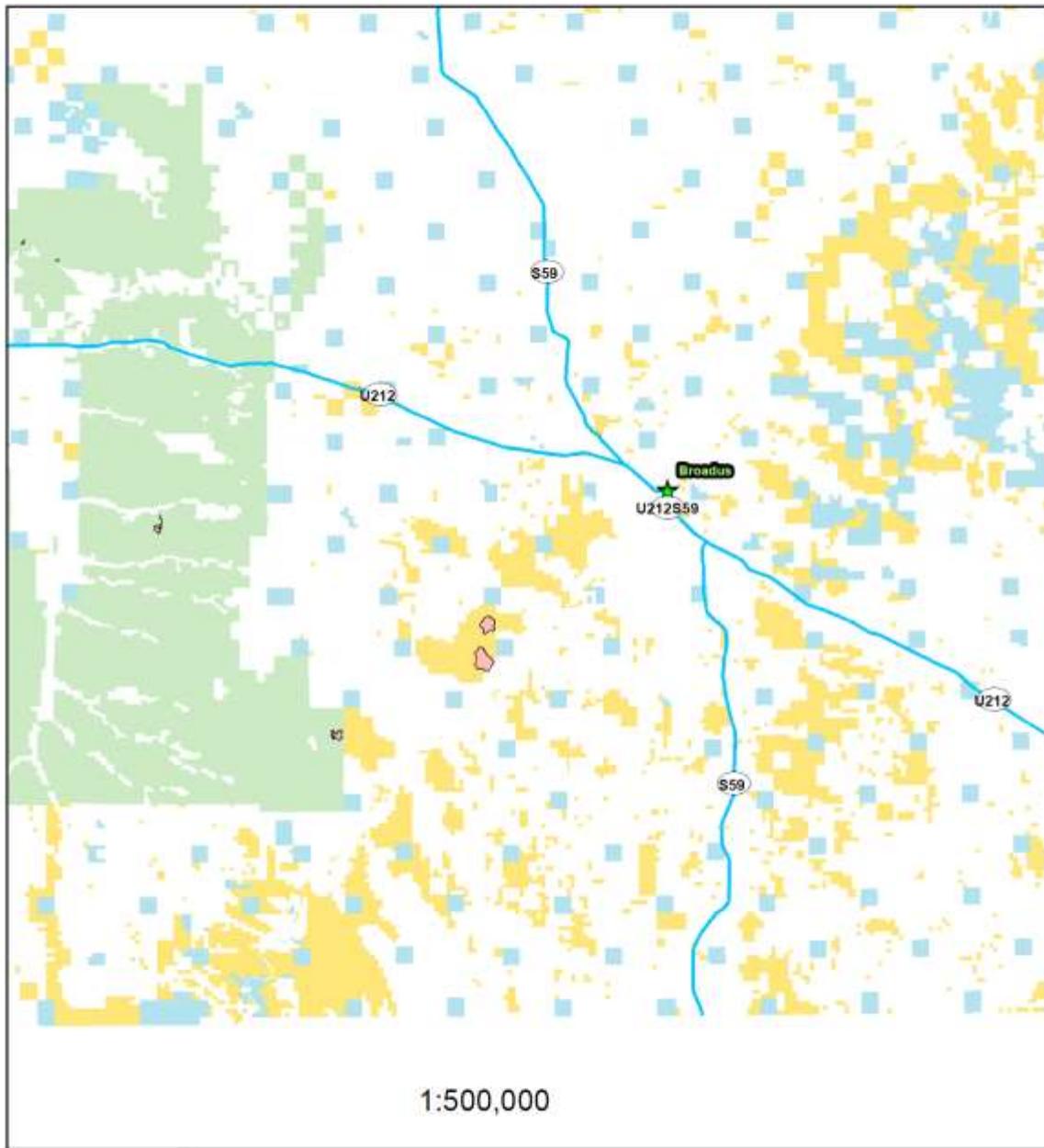
	Prescribed Fire Boundary		BLM		Private		State
	GRSG General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)						

1:22,000





Yarger Prescribed Fire Vicinity Map



Legend

- Prescribed Fire Boundary
- BLM
- Private
- State
- USFS



Justin Hanley
January 22, 2016
S/RR/FUELS/FUELS PROJECTS/YARGER