

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
**IDAHO FALLS DISTRICT**  
**SALMON FIELD OFFICE**

**Decision Record**

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**Proposed Action:** Six (6) vegetation manipulation projects as described in the Canyon-Big Timber Land Health Environmental Assessment (CBT-EA)

**EA No.:** DOI-BLM-ID-I040-2011-0001-EA

**Contact Persons:** Bill Baer, Forester

Vince Guyer, Natural Resource Specialist

**Location of Action:** Legal descriptions for the ‘proposed action’ projects are as follows:

- *Jakes Canyon Vegetation Treatment*- T. 16 N., R. 26 E., section 22;
- *Silver Moon Gulch Hazardous Fuel Reduction*- T. 13 N., R. 27 E., section 28;
- *Gilmore Hazardous Fuel Reduction*- T. 13 N., R. 27 E., sections 17, 20;
- *Gilmore Summit Rangeland Restoration*- T. 13 N., R. 27 E., sections 17, 20, 21, 28;
- *Swan Basin Rangeland Restoration*- T. 15 N., R. 26 E., sections 29, 30; and
- *Swan Basin Aspen Restoration*- T. 15 N., R. 26 E., sections 19, 20, 29, 30;

All projects are located in Lemhi County, Idaho, Boise Meridian.

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**DECISION RECORD (DR)**

**Decision:** It is my decision to implement the vegetation manipulation portion of Alternative 3 (proposed action) as described in the CBT-EA (DOI-BLM-ID-I040-2011-0001-EA). The vegetation manipulation portion of Alternative 3 consists of six (6) separate projects that will treat approximately 1,708 acres over a five-year period beginning the summer of 2012.

This decision includes the following project-specific activities and/or design features:

*Jakes Canyon Vegetation Treatment*

With the implementation of the Jakes Canyon Vegetation Treatment, the entire allotment, approximately 548 acres, will be rested (removed from livestock grazing) until the seeding is established. Mechanical vegetation treatment will be applied on up to 225 acres. The treatment will involve a single-drum pasture aerator. The aerator consists of a large, heavy drum mounted with tines that are designed to break up the soil surface and improve the infiltration of water.

The aerator will be pulled across the ground surface by a rubber-tired tractor or track-mounted dozer. The heavy drum is designed to break down and crush the older shrub overstory as the unit is pulled along, yet leave some young sagebrush plants and seedlings to re-colonize the treated area. Actual treatment with the aerator will be in a mosaic pattern designed to provide a variety of habitats for wildlife as well as sources for sagebrush and forb colonization. A mix of native forb species will be seeded along with bluebunch wheatgrass on the aerated acres. The remaining untreated portions (323 acres) of the allotment will also be rested from livestock grazing use for two years.

#### *Silver Moon Gulch Hazardous Fuel Reduction*

On approximately 314 acres of dry Douglas-fir forest, trees less than 12 inches in diameter will be cut by mechanical and/or manual (by hand) methods and merchantable material harvested (when feasible) using existing roads. Where existing roads, topography, and commercial product value permit, thinning and harvesting will be implemented by falling, bucking and limbing, skidding, decking, and loading and hauling. Where limited access or adverse topography makes harvesting uneconomical, thinning will be implemented using machinery to masticate material, or by hand crews (chainsaw) to cut and pile (or cut and scatter) material for subsequent disposal through pile burning or natural rates of decay.

Following mechanical treatment and prescribed burning, all pile-burn sites, skid trails and other high-use areas that do not revegetate naturally within 5 years will be seeded with a native plant seed mix appropriate for these sites.

#### *Gilmore Hazardous Fuel Reduction*

On approximately 238 acres of dry Douglas-fir forest, trees less than 12 inches in diameter will be cut by mechanical and/or manual (by hand) methods and merchantable material harvested (when feasible) using existing roads. Where existing roads, topography, and commercial product value permit, thinning and harvesting will be implemented by falling, bucking and limbing, skidding, decking, and loading and hauling. Where limited access or adverse topography makes harvesting uneconomical, thinning will be implemented using machinery to masticate material, or by hand crews (chainsaw) to cut and pile (or cut and scatter) material for subsequent disposal through pile burning or decay.

Following mechanical treatment and prescribed burning, all pile-burn sites, skid trails and other high-use areas that do not revegetate naturally within 5 years will be seeded with a native plant seed mix appropriate for these sites.

#### *Gilmore Summit Rangeland Restoration*

On approximately 210 acres of rangeland that has advanced Douglas-fir regeneration (encroachment), trees less than 10 inches in diameter will be cut by hand or masticated by

machinery. Where adverse slope (>40%) dictates thinning by hand, field crews will identify legacy trees and recruitment trees (minimum of three per acre) to be protected; and all remaining conifer trees cut with resultant slash material either piled, or lopped and scattered for subsequent disposal through burning or decay. Where thinning can physically be accomplished mechanically (slopes < 40%) and it is not cost prohibitive to do so, activities will be carried out in one operation by mastication with machinery.

Following mechanical treatment and prescribed burning, all pile-burn sites and other disturbed areas that do not revegetate naturally within 5 years will be seeded with a native plant seed mix appropriate for these sites.

#### *Swan Basin Rangeland Restoration*

On approximately 579 acres of rangeland that has advanced Douglas-fir regeneration (encroachment), trees less than 10 inches in diameter will be cut by hand or masticated by machinery. Where adverse slope (>40%) dictates thinning by hand, field crews will identify legacy trees and recruitment trees (minimum of three per acre) to be protected; and all remaining conifer trees cut with resultant slash material either piled, or lopped and scattered for subsequent disposal through burning or decay. Where thinning can physically be accomplished mechanically (slopes < 40%) and it is not cost prohibitive to do so, activities will be carried out in one operation by mastication with machinery.

Following mechanical treatment and prescribed burning, all pile-burn sites and other disturbed areas that do not revegetate naturally within 5 years will be seeded with a native plant seed mix appropriate for these sites.

#### *Swan Basin Aspen Restoration*

On approximately 142 acres of aspen forest that has advanced juniper and Douglas-fir regeneration (encroachment), conifer trees less than 10 inches in diameter will be cut by hand combined with girdling of conifer trees greater than 10 inches up to a maximum of 18 inches in diameter. Prior to cutting or girdling, field crews will identify legacy trees to be protected; and all remaining conifer trees cut or girdled with resultant slash material either piled, or lopped and scattered for subsequent disposal through burning or decay.

Following mechanical treatment and prescribed burning, all pile-burn sites and other disturbed areas that do not revegetate naturally within 5 years will be seeded with a native plant seed mix appropriate for these sites.

All six (6) projects included in this decision will adhere to design criteria/resource protection measures related to air quality, cultural resources, noxious weeds, wildlife, threatened and

endangered species, riparian habitat conservation areas, water quality, fisheries, soils, off-road travel, and vegetation as described in Appendix B of the CBT-EA.

## **RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION**

### *Jakes Canyon Vegetation Treatment*

This project will modify vegetation composition to better reflect what would be expected for the treatment site based on the ecological site description for the area. This project will result in rangeland vegetation conditions that are closer to the natural vegetation community expected for the site. The restoration of a diverse and productive grass, forb, and sagebrush community will improve upland conditions. This project, in conjunction with prescribed rest from livestock grazing, will help the Jakes Canyon Allotment meet Standard 4- Native Plant Communities.

### *Silver Moon Gulch Hazardous Fuel Reduction; Gilmore Hazardous Fuel Reduction; Gilmore Summit Rangeland Restoration; Swan Basin Rangeland Restoration; Swan Basin Aspen Restoration*

Forest stands and rangeland sites identified for thinning and/or prescribed burning as described in these projects are currently in a state of reduced vigor from overstocking, and at elevated risk from wildfire, disease and insects. Overstocking is primarily the result of fire exclusion since the early 1900's. These forest stands have not experienced the thinning, sanitation, and fuel-reducing benefits of fire since before European settlement of the area.

Implementing the proposed thinning and burning will improve overall forest vigor and reduce stand risk within project areas by effectively shifting growth potential to fewer trees, and by modifying existing stand structure and composition. With fewer trees competing for water, nutrients, and light, these scarce resources will be redistributed in residual stands improving drought, disease, and insect tolerance. By modifying stand densities, tree canopy layering, and species composition, the risk of stand replacement, crown-type fire behavior and susceptibility to disease and insect agents will be substantially reduced. For the same reasons, reduced fire intensities following project implementation will enhance firefighting (suppression) options and increase firefighter and public safety in the event a wildfire does occur. Finally, implementing thinning on encroached rangeland sites within project areas will help restore ecological function by redistributing growth potential (site productivity) and improving species richness of native grass, forb, and shrub species adapted to these sites.

This decision is in conformance with the BLM's Lemhi Resource Management Plan, April 1987, as amended; and the authority granted in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended.



Salmon Field Manager



Date

## **PROVISION FOR PROTEST AND APPEAL**

### **Protests**

The process for filing a protest related to forest management decisions is described under 43 CFR Subtitle B, Chapter II, Subchapter E, Subpart 5003: Administrative Remedies.

- (a) Protests of a forest management decision, including advertised timber sales, may be made within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision or notice of sale in a newspaper of general circulation.
- (b) Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.
- (c) Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision or the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered.
- (d) Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him/her.
- (e) The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of his/her review, serve his/her decision in writing on the protesting party.
- (f) Upon denial of a protest filed under paragraph (a) of this section the authorized officer may proceed with implementation of the decision.

Protests should be received in writing to:

Linda R. Price  
Field Manager  
1206 South Challis Street  
Salmon, ID 83467

### **Appeals**

Any person or organization who is party to and adversely affected by the decision may file an appeal to the Board of Land Appeals. The process for appeal, summarized below, is fully described in 43 CFR Subtitle A, Part 4, Subpart E.

1. A notice of appeal must be filed in the Salmon Field Office within 30-days of the legal notice at:

Salmon Field Office  
1206 South Challis Street  
Salmon, ID 83467

2. The notice of appeal must include the serial number or other identification of the case and may include a statement of reasons for the appeal, a statement of standing, and any arguments the appellant wishes to make.
3. If the notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons the appellant must file this statement with the Board of Land Appeals within 30-days after the notice of appeal was filed at:

Board of Land Appeals  
Office of Hearing and Appeals  
801 North Quincy Street, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22203

4. The appellant shall also serve a copy of the notice of appeal and of any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs, within 15-days after filing the notice of appeal, on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, the authorized officer issuing the decision at the Salmon Field Office, and on the Office of the Solicitor at:

Field Solicitor  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
University Plaza, 960 Broadway Avenue, Suite 400  
Boise, ID 83706

5. A petition for stay may also be submitted pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4, Subpart B.
  - a. The petition for stay should accompany the notice of appeal and show sufficient justification based on the following standards:
    - i. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
    - ii. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
    - iii. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and,
    - iv. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.
  - b. A copy of the petition for stay must also be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the Board of Land Appeals at the same time the notice of appeal is filed with the Salmon Field Office.