

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

A. Background

BLM Office: Prineville, OR

NEPA Log #: DOI-BLM-ORWA-P040-2016-0001-DNA

Project/Lease/Serial/Case File #: N/A

Location: 36 miles east of Brothers, OR.

Proposed Action Title: Wyoming Sagebrush Plug Planting, High-Way Pasture - 2015

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Description of the Proposed Action:

The project would include the planting of approximately 13,000 Wyoming sagebrush plugs in the High-Way pasture of the G.I. allotment. The pasture contains 619 (7%) acres of Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and 8,496 (91%) of General Habitat Management Area. The remaining 195 (2%) is not delineated as either PHMA or GHMA. This pasture was selected because 5,514 (59%) acres of the pasture contain less than 5 percent sage-brush cover which is critical for sage-grouse reproductive success and survival. The purpose of the planting is to improve habitat structure and forage for sage-grouse which is lacking in the area due to past wildfire.

The BLM would plant about 400 plugs per acre. Plugs would be planted in spatially distributed clumps, with approximately 100 plugs per clump. Clumps are located in places where Wyoming sagebrush plugs will establish more readily, e.g., in natural depressions, at the base of mounds or hills, in areas protected from the main brunt of the wind and at the base of existing shrub vegetation (alive or dead). Some acres may have less than 4 clumps planted and some clumps may have less than the 100 plug estimate, depending on the number and extent of available planting sites in each acre. The project is expected to cover 30-60 acres. Sagebrush would be planted in clumps with the hope that once the plugs mature they will produce seed that will disperse to unplanted areas and establish. Vehicles will not be driven cross-country during this project. Sagebrush plugs will be carried in planting bags from the trucks (which will be located on the power line access road) to the planting sites (See Map A below). Plugs will be planted using dibbles, specialized shovels with narrow blades sized to match the containers in which seedlings are grown. Disturbance in planting areas will be limited to holes of the appropriate width and depth to effectively plant a sagebrush seedling; no greater than 4 inches in diameter and 10 inches deep.

Implementation of the new proposed action will occur when night time temperatures are reaching freezing but before the ground freezes hard for the winter, ideally following a precipitation event. These events typically occur in late October and early November. The 2011 High Desert Shrub Steppe EA (see section C below) analyzed the new proposed action. The new proposed action would include the same PDFs adopted in the Decision Record for that EA (Appendix B of the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA). The new proposed action would not include any cutting of shrubs or trees, burning, tilling or use of heavy equipment. As such, many of the PDFs listed in the EA will not apply to the new proposed action. Those that could potentially

mitigate effects of the new proposed action are listed below:

Wildlife

- Prior to any treatment, the BLM would complete clearances for locally important or special status species. Clearances involve: a) assessing the potential for the action to have an undesirable effect, b) ensuring the action includes design features specified in the Decision Record and other relevant decisions, and c) recommending changes to the action that would reduce effects below those analyzed in the EA.
- Pretreatment and treatment activities within mule deer, elk or pronghorn winter range would be completed within a two week window if conducted between November 1 and May 1. The Upper Deschutes RMP includes a discussion of the rationale for the closure windows for various species. It is available at the BLM office or on the internet at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/prinevillermph>

Vegetation

- Prior to any treatment, the BLM would complete clearances for locally important or special status plants. Clearances involve: a) assessing the potential for the action to have an undesirable effect, b) ensuring the action includes design features specified in the Decision Record and other relevant decisions, and c) recommending changes to the action that would reduce effects below those analyzed in the EA.
- Treatments would be monitored for spread of weeds or new populations. If weeds are detected, appropriate corrective action would be applied as described in existing BLM guidance, and as described in the Prineville District Integrated Weed Management Plan (online at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/activityplans.php>) or subsequent weed management plan.

Grazing

- After treatments, livestock grazing would not be permitted the remainder of the calendar year, and through the growing season of the next year.
- Livestock grazing may continue in pastures if the disturbance event did not result in undesirable soil or vegetative conditions, or if grazing would not impede site recovery.
- Livestock exclusion after disturbance events would not be required if livestock are not trailed through the affected area, and attractants (e.g., water, supplemental feed, salt) are not provided within one mile. Attractants may be closer if physical barriers (e.g., rimrock, fences) prevent livestock access to the affected area.

Cultural

- Locate, protect and preserve historic and archaeological resources in accordance with legal authorities and policies prior to implementation (Upper Deschutes RMP (USDI BLM 2005) and Brothers/La Pine RMP (USDI BLM 1989)). This includes planning and conducting compliance for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 compliance includes consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and interested tribes. Page 32 of 44.
- All treatments would be designed to avoid disturbance to historic properties and paleontological resources. Project design shall avoid treatment to sensitive areas or modify treatments to avoid impacts.

- Any new discoveries of cultural or paleontological resources during implementation would temporarily stop project activities until a district cultural specialist has completed an assessment and coordinated with SHPO, if required.

Visual resources

- No effects to visual quality would occur from implementing this project, due to project PDF features, such as limiting all vehicle use to existing routes not allowing cross-country vehicle use.
- Positive long term effects to visual quality would result from increased vegetative diversity from adding Sage Brush into the vegetative composition of the landscape within the project area.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Brothers/La_Pine RMP **Date approved (ROD):** 1989
Amended: September 2015 by the Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (ARMPAs) for the Great Basin Region GRSG Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, and Utah.

Copies of the ROD and RMP Amendments can be obtained from the BLM's National Greater Sage-Grouse website at: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html>.

From Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments:

Objective SSS 4: Manage land resource uses in GRSG habitat to meet the desired conditions described in Table 2-2, pg. 2-4 Habitat objectives for Greater sage-grouse “sagebrush cover 10 – 25%”

2.2.2 Vegetation (VEG) pg. 2-10, 11

Goal VEG 1: Increase the resistance of Greater Sage-grouse habitat to invasive annual grasses and the resiliency of Greater Sage-grouse habitat to disturbances such as fire and climate change to reduce habitat loss and fragmentation.

Goal VEG 2: Within Greater Sage-grouse habitat, re-establish sagebrush cover, native grasses, and forbs in areas where they have been reduced below desired levels or lost. Use ecological site descriptions to determine appropriate levels of sagebrush cover and appropriate native grasses and forbs.

Objective VEG 1: Within the boundaries of each Field Office establish a mix of sagebrush classes as identified in Table 2-4, Desired Mix of Sagebrush Classes by Sagebrush Type. Evaluate progress toward the objective every 10 years.

Objective VEG 5: Increase native plant diversity (number of species) to at least 50 percent of the potential diversity listed for the relevant ecological site description and sagebrush cover where it is less than 15 percent in half of crested wheatgrass seedings in PHMA. If existing diversity

equals or exceeds 50 percent of the potential diversity, no forb restoration is needed.

Objective VEG 7: Each Oregon PAC has at least 5 percent sagebrush cover on a minimum of 70 percent of the area within the Oregon PAC that is capable of supporting sagebrush plant communities. Use ecological site descriptions to determine which sites are capable of supporting sagebrush plant communities.

MD VEG 2: Base species composition, function, and structure of sagebrush communities on ecological site descriptions. Use climate change science concerning projected changes in species ranges and changes in site capability to adjust expected and desired native species compositions as that information becomes available. Pg.2-12

MD VEG 6: Use adaptive management principles (for example, monitoring and adjusting seed mixes, planting methods or timing of planting to increase success rates) to provide for persistence of seeded or planted species important to Greater Sage-grouse. Pg. 2-13

MD VEG 8: Use native plant materials for restoration and rehabilitation based on availability, adaptive capacity, and probability of successful establishment (see Appendix I). Where native plant material availability or probability of successful establishment is low, use desirable non-native plant materials that are of a similar functional/structural group as native plant species (e.g. deep-rooted, tall perennial bunchgrass, tap-rooted perennial forb). Pg. 2-13

MD VEG 9: When sufficient native plant materials are available, use native plant materials unless the area is immediately threatened by invasive plant species spread or dominance. Pg. 2-13

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

The following NEPA documents cover the proposed action:

- High Desert Shrub Steppe Restoration Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-POOO-2008-0157-EA), April 2011, available at BLM office or on the internet at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/plans.php>

The following other documentation is relevant to the proposed action:

- Ecological Site Inventory has been conducted in the project area. Out of 12 plots, 6 were in “poor” overall condition, 5 were in “fair” overall condition and 1 was in “good” condition.

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?

Yes, the new proposed action is within the same geographic area analyzed in the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA. The new proposed action is also a feature of both action alternatives analyzed in the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA, including the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2). Alternatives 2 and 3 analyzed the “Seed[ing] or root stock transplant[ing of] 500 acres per year of native or non-native forbs, grass, or shrubs (Pg. 9 & 10).”

The action alternatives of the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA were designed to “maintain or improve Sage-grouse habitat suitability through vegetation management on public land around Millican, Brothers, Hampton and Paulina (Pg. 3).”

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, and resource values?

Yes, the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA addressed the appropriate range of alternatives given the current proposed action, and current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values. The High Desert Shrub Steppe EA included a No Action Alternative and a range of a alternatives. Each of the action alternatives included analysis for the seeding or root transplanting of forbs, grass or shrubs on 500 acres per year (pg. 9) and stated that “native species would be emphasized except on more heavily disturbed sites where a combination of native and non-native species is likely to be more successful (pg. 9).” Table 2 below is taken from the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA (Pg. 10).

Table 2. Comparison of acres treated annually under each alternative.

Acres treated annually	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Cut, mow or crush vegetation	0	10,200	3,400
Prescribe burn live vegetation	0	3,400	10,200
Prescribe burn areas already cut, mowed or crushed	0	5,100	1,700
Seed or transplant forbs, grass and shrubs	0	500	500

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 all new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

There is not any new information or circumstances that would invalidate or substantially alter the existing analysis. The Prineville BLM conducted a Wilderness Characteristic Inventory for the Glass Butte area in 2009, including public lands in this project area. That inventory concluded that there are no wilderness characteristics on public lands, in this project area. The findings of that inventory remain valid..

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(s)?

Yes, the same effects that would result from the current proposed action were analyzed in the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA (pg. 13-20). Effects were considered for Sage-grouse habitat, Visual resources and Carbon storage and green house gas emissions. Issues for the remaining resources (Soil, Vegetation, Hydrology, Fish and Wildlife, Historic/Archaeological Resources, Fire and Fuels, Recreation, Visual Quality and Livestock Grazing) were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis due to incorporation of comprehensive PDFs (see Part A, Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures). In order to ensure the PDFs are adhered to and are effective in minimizing undesirable effects, the action alternatives included monitoring of project layout and implementation. Specific monitoring is described in the PDFs (Appendix B of High Desert Shrub Steppe EA). Cumulative effects of the new proposed action would be similar to those listed in the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA (pg. 15, 18, 20).

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes, the list of “interested publics” is updated on a regular basis and many of the individuals and organizations on the current “interested publics” list are the same as those on the mailing list for the planning and NEPA documents listed. A final copy of this DNA will be posted on the Prineville District’s internet page for public review. A printed copy of these documents will be available on request.

E. Preparers (BLM)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
Kristin Williams	Botanist/Noxious Weed Coordinator
Cari Taylor	Range Specialist
Ryan Griffin	Archeologist
Digger Anthony	Wildlife Biologist
Teal Purrington	NEPA Planner
Berry Phelps	Recreation/Wilderness

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the

preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Conclusion

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

Signature

Responsible official:

_____ *H.F. "Chip" Faver, Field Manager*

_____ 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. Since the current proposed action was already considered in an existing NEPA document, and the range of alternatives, effects analysis and public involvement remain valid, and the existing decision fully covers the current proposed action, the BLM is not issuing a new decision at this time. The proposed action will be completed pursuant to the 2009 Decision Record on the High Desert Shrub Steppe EA.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this review, contact: Kristin Williams, Team Leader, Prineville Field Office, 3050 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754, telephone (541) 416-6721, kwilliams@blm.gov.

