

Description of Fuel Break Treatment Methods

Manual Treatment Methods

Manual treatment involves the use of hand tools and hand-operated power tools to reduce fuel continuity. Potential hand tools that could be used include the handsaw, axe, shovel, rake, machete, grubbing hoe, mattock (combination of cutting edge and grubbing hoe), Pulaski (combination of axe and grubbing hoe), brush hook, and hand clippers. In addition, power tools, such as chainsaws and power brush saws, may be used.

Mechanical Treatment Methods

Mechanical treatments would be used where manual treatments would be impractical or too expensive. Mechanical treatment methods are for vegetation reduction or removal, seedbed preparation, seeding, and special uses. Examples of mechanical equipment includes agricultural mowers, masticators, air curtain burners, disks and plows, chains and cables, drills, broadcast seeders, transplanters, roller choppers, dozers and blades, and trenchers. The selection of a particular mechanical method would be based on the characteristics of the vegetation, seedbed preparation or re-vegetation needs, topography and terrain, soil characteristics, and climatic conditions.

Prescribed Fire Methods

Prescribed fire can be used to reduce or modify existing fuel loads or prepare the ground for seeding. Qualified personnel would implement prescribed fire under specific weather and wind conditions. Implementation would comply with direction from the Departmental Manual 620, the BLM Manual 9214 Fuels Management and Community Assistance Manual, and the 9214 Manual and Handbook direction.

Examples of prescribed fire are broadcast, jackpot, and pile burning. Prior to broadcast burning, a fireline may be constructed via digging, wet line, or other means around the perimeter to assist in containment. The need for a fireline, how it is constructed, width, and length are based on site-specific conditions. The BLM would develop a prescribed fire burn plan in accordance with guidance in the PMS-484 Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (NWCG 2017).

Targeted Grazing Methods

Targeted grazing uses livestock (goats, sheep, and/or cattle), intensively managed by a grazing operator, to consume vegetation within a specific area. Land managers would decide on a site-specific basis when and where to apply targeted grazing. This would be based on a number of factors, including vegetation state, desired vegetation objective, terrain, and current year growing conditions. A targeted grazing plan would be used to achieve objectives, while avoiding damaging nontarget species (See PEIS Appendix D).

For fuel break maintenance scenarios in which targeted grazing may be used, repeated treatment may be necessary. Timing of targeted grazing treatment would depend on the vegetation being targeted and the objectives of the treatment, balanced with other design features.

Temporary fencing may be used to limit the grazing to the fuel break footprint. Where temporary fencing is not used, the grazing operator would follow a graduated-use plan to limit grazing impacts outside the fuel break footprint.

See Section 2.4 in Chapter 2 of the Draft PEIS for more details regarding fuel break treatment methods.