



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION LANDS IN WILDERNESS

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

NOV 06 2009
RECEIVED

STATE: Nevada

COUNTY: Lincoln

DISTRICT OFFICE: Ely District Office
HC 33 Box 33500
702 North Industrial Way.
Ely, Nevada 89301

WILDERNESS AREAS: Clover Mountains

PROPOSED ACTION: Sawmill Fire Rehabilitation

Background

The lightning caused Sawmill Fire started on July 18, 2009 and was contained on August 4, 2009 the fire burned a total of 307 acres, 107 of which were in the Clover Mountains Wilderness approximately 35 miles Southeast of Caliente, Nevada. All acres that burned were on BLM administered land. Based on the field visit and the NRCS Ecological Site Descriptions for the area, the dominant vegetation in the burn area pre-fire was Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine. Other species present included Pinyon Pine, Juniper, mountain big sagebrush, Utah Serviceberry, Turbinella and Gambels oak, greenleaf manzanita, yellow silktassle, desert ceanothus, and muttongrass.

Description of the Proposed Action

The first proposed treatment is to aerially seed approximately 196 acres with a mixture of native grass and forb seeds. Grasses will account for a smaller proportion of the mix than forbs, as monitoring data shows that seeded grasses can compete with ponderosa pine seedling establishment. Approximately 102 acres will be seeded within the Clover Mountain Wilderness, and approximately 94 acres will be seeded outside of the wilderness. Based on the field tour, a portion of the burn area had a heavy oak component, and this area will be avoided by the seeding treatment. Aerial seeding would occur ahead of or concurrent with fall or winter moisture. Nevada Department of Wildlife will contribute seed to the seeding effort.

The second proposed treatment is to plant ponderosa pine seedlings on 229 acres within the burn area. The ponderosa pine planting in wilderness will be analyzed in the Clover Mountains and Tunnel Springs Wilderness Management Plan and is described below.

Contract crews will collect cones from surviving ponderosa pine trees in the burn area in year one, from which mature seeds will be derived. It is estimated that 180,000 seeds will be needed for replanting

efforts. At a rate of 5,000 seeds per pound, approximately 36 pounds or 60 bushels (0.6 pounds equals one bushel) of seed will need to be collected. Seed/cone collection will be performed outside of designated Wilderness.

The collected seeds will be germinated in a nursery facility specialized in growing tree species, and a combination of styro-8 containerized seedlings and bare root 2-0 stock will be grown over the next two years.

Seedling planting will take place in year three. Approximately 450 seedlings per acre will be planted at approximately 10 foot intervals in the most severe portions of the burn to achieve full stocking, although randomness and heterogeneity will be strived for in planting. The stocking density will be scaled back in proportion to the mortality level of the over story ponderosa trees. Mortality levels less than 30% will not be planted, as sufficient seed crop is likely present to regenerate naturally. Each seedling will be planted with a paper mulch surrounding the seedling. The mulch will be staked at each corner to keep it in place. Biodegradable stakes will be used in the Wilderness area. The paper mulch will help the ponderosa seedlings from becoming outcompeted, and will also help retain soil moisture. Approximately 90,000 seedlings will be planted across the burned area.

The burned area will be closed to grazing until monitoring data indicate that vegetation recovery objectives have been met. The burn area will not be fenced.

All needed repairs on the Quaking Aspen Spring Enclosure Fence within the Clover Mountains will be conducted with hand tools. Burned H-braces, corners, and gates will be replaced steel materials to prevent re-burning and future repairs.

Expected Decision and Implementation

It is expected that the BLM, Ely District Office will make a decision to allow the aerial seeding on the Sawmill Fire in November, 2009 with the application occurring in December of 2009. Approval of the of ponderosa seedling planting within the Clover Mountains Wilderness may occur in spring of 2010 as part of the Clover Mountains and Tunnel Spring Wilderness Management Plan and EA, with planting occurring in 2012.

Public Comment

The public comment period for this action will begin on November 4, 2009. A DNA is being prepared for the proposed action. For more information contact, Karen Prentice 775-289-1828 or at karen_prentice@blm.gov

All comments are to be sent directly to the District Manager for consideration and use in evaluating and processing the proposed action at the address above within the 30 day comment period ending December 4, 2009.


Rosemary Thomas
District Manager
Ely District Office