



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Egan Field Office
HC33 Box 33500 (702 N. Industrial Way)
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html



In Reply Refer to:
9214 (NVL00440)
4100 (NVL01000)

5/24/2010

Dear Interested Party:

The Egan Field Office is beginning the planning stages and public scoping period to conduct a habitat improvement and fuels reduction treatment on approximately 1,800 to 3,500 acres of public land in the Egan Range, located near Butte Valley, located entirely within White Pine County, Nevada. The project occurs entirely in the Butte Watershed (#9). From 1,800 to 3,500 acres would be treated within an overall mapping area of 9,300 acres. The project would occur in a mosaic pattern with a goal to create wildlife “edge” (see attached map). The project would occur within the Thirty Mile Spring (0503) and South Butte (0504) Allotments. Both public and private lands occur within the project area. Our records indicate that you are currently an interested party for projects in the proposed action area, or you are a private landowner near the project area.

The main goals of the treatment are to restore or improve mountain sagebrush, black sagebrush, Wyoming sagebrush, and mountain brush ecological sites, improve habitat and forage availability for wildlife including sage grouse, deer, and elk, improve habitat and forage availability for livestock and wild horses, reduce fuel loading, and improve watershed functionality and health. The habitat improvement and fuels reduction project is needed to:

1. Make progress towards achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health as published by the Northeastern Great Basin Area Resource Advisory Council (RAC).
2. Implement the Management Actions for Vegetation Resources and Management Actions for Fire as presented in the Ely District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP – August, 2008).

The following are long-term goals identified for the habitat improvement treatment:

1. Reduce tree cover on sagebrush ecological sites and mountain brush ecological sites to allow for appropriate and vigorous shrub and herbaceous (grass & forb) plant communities.
2. Improve available habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife species including deer and elk.
3. Reduce fuel loading and continuity.
4. Restore the historic disturbance regime within the project area.

A complete description of the proposed project is as follows:

The Egan Field Office and Ely District Fuels Program proposes to conduct a habitat improvement and fuels reduction project on 1,800 to 3,500 acres of public land in the Egan Range, primarily located near Butte Valley, White Pine County, Nevada. The project occurs

entirely in the Butte Watershed (#9). Approximately 1,800 to 3,500 acres would be treated within an overall mapping area of 9,300 acres. The project would occur in a mosaic pattern with a goal to create wildlife “edge”. Islands or small polygons of vegetation within the overall mapping area have already been identified based on potential sage grouse brooding habitat, tree encroachment, key deer browse, and proximity to springs or private lands. Additional islands are expected to be selected during the early summer of 2010. Singleleaf pinyon and Utah juniper trees have become well established on mountain sagebrush and mountain shrub ecological sites and also around natural spring sources causing spring function and flow to decrease. In a portion of the targeted treatment areas, all trees would be removed except islands and stringers of trees to be retained for habitat cover. In other portions of the targeted treatment areas, tree density would be reduced to an average of approximately 15 to 20 trees per acre. Manual (chainsaw) and/or mechanical methods (bull hog, feller buncher, or similar piece of equipment that masticates trees) could be used to reduce the tree density, and to improve understory vegetation, sage grouse habitat, and deer habitat. If chainsaws are used felled trees would either be consolidated into piles and removed later through prescribed burning, left on site and scattered, or left on site to be removed by wood gatherers. Removal of slash/biomass created if mechanical methods are used would depend on the type of equipment used. If a masticating type of equipment is used, the residue created would be left on site to degrade naturally. If equipment is used that cuts the trees whole, all or a portion of the trees could be piled and disposed of through prescribed burning or usable tree portions could be hauled off site for biomass utilization while unusable portions would be left to degrade naturally or later burned. Areas identified as having limited seed banks as a result of low understory species density, or areas with high amounts of cheatgrass would be seeded using certified weed-free seed. Seed would be broadcasted aerially or with an all terrain vehicle (ATV).

Project Location (see map), legals: In the Egan Mountain Range, primarily in Butte Valley but also between Butte and Smith Valleys, and near private land that occurs around Piscevich Summit. In the Combs Creek Drainage and north of the drainage, in Sage Hen Canyon, upper Bothwick Creek, and Rock Springs Canyon. The legal description of the project is as follows:
T. 18N., R. 61E., portions of sections 1, 2, 3.
T. 19N., R. 61E., portions of sections 25, 34, 35, 36.
T. 18N., R. 62E., portions of sections 5, 6, 7.
T. 19N., R. 62E., several sections.
T. 20N., R. 62E., portions of sections 33, 34.

The Combs Creek Habitat Improvement and Fuels Reduction Project would be a cooperative proposal whereby the BLM, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and private landowners in the area would be partners in funding and implementation. An agreement to rest the treated area from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons or until vegetative objectives are met would be implemented between the grazing permittee and BLM.

A project summary of the Combs Creek Habitat Improvement and Fuels Reduction Project is expected to be posted on the Ely Field Office Website in the near future. Once complete, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document for this project will also be posted on the website for a 30 day comment period. Please respond if you would like to receive a hard copy mailing of the appropriate NEPA document for public review and comment.

To access the Ely District Office Project Scoping and NEPA list:

Go to <http://www.blm.gov/nv>
Click on Ely District

Thanks in advance for participation in the scoping for this project. Please contact Mark Lowrie, Rangeland Management Specialist of my staff at (775) 289-1888, or Cody Coombs, Fuels Program Manager at (775) 289-1854 if (1) you would like to submit comments on the goals of this project, suggest treatment options, or identify issues for consideration; or (2) you would like to remain on the mailing list to continue participating in the planning process. Written comments can be submitted to the address listed above on the letterhead. Please submit comments by Wednesday, June 30, 2010.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeffrey A. Weeks

Jeffrey A. Weeks
Field Manager
Egan Field Office

Enclosure: Map of Combs Creek Habitat Improvement & Fuels Reduction Project

cc:

Interested Publics Mailing List (Name Only) Rangeland Actions Mailing List & Fuels Mailing List

Rangeland Actions List

Steve Foree
Eureka County Dept. of Natural Resources
Western Watersheds Project
Steven Carter
Sustainable Grazing Coalition
Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition
Craig C. Downer
Robert Dickenson
Karen Rajala
Carl Slatowski
Frank Reid
Charlie Brown
Gracian Uhalde
Blue Diamond Oil Corporation
White Pine Conservation District
Nevada Land and Resource Co.
Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest – Ely Ranger District
Nevada State Clearinghouse (electronic copy only)

Fuels Actions List

Gordon Foppiano
Nevada Division of Forestry
Nevada Land and Resource Co.
Nevada Department of Wildlife
Steve Carter
Betty Baker
White Pine Conservation District
White River Ranch
Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation
Eureka County Dept. of Natural Resources
Southern Nevada Water Authority c/o Brandon Humphries
Southern Nevada Water Authority c/o Maria Ryan
Sustainable Grazing Coalition
Western Watersheds Project
White Pine County EDC
Curt Leet
Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition
Resource Concepts, Inc.
Michael K. McBeath
White Pine County Commission
Frank Reid
Great Basin National Park
John Uhalde & Co.
Sam Henriod
Robert Decker
Daniel & Maria Foy
Stephen Poole
Morris & Virginia Carpenter
Swallow Ranches, Inc.
Michael Brago
Talbot Starlings
Steve G. Gay
John M. Kirinchich
David L. & Diane C. Edwards
George Allen
Gary Sprouse

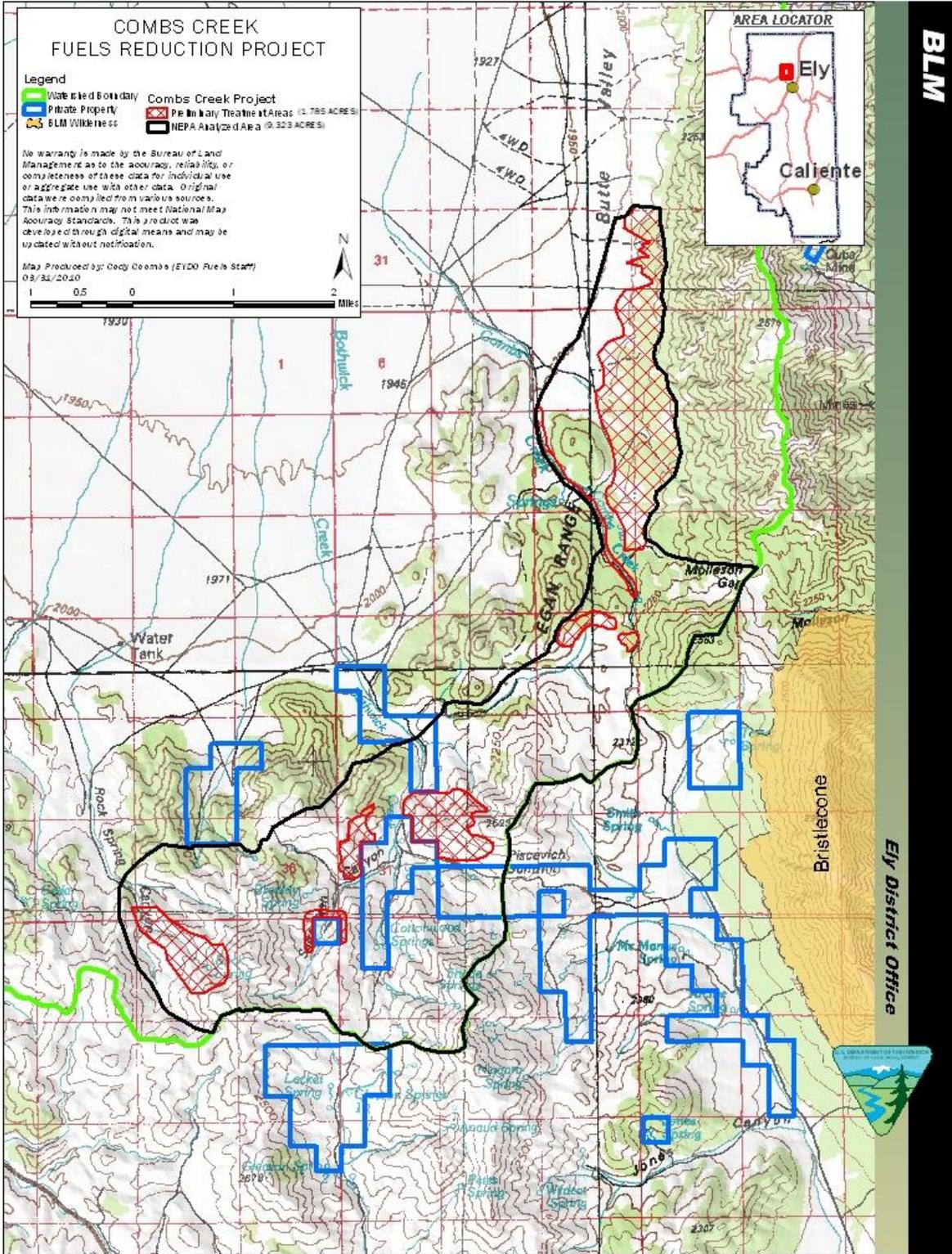
Nevada State Clearinghouse (electronic copy only)

COMBS CREEK FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT

- Legend**
- █ Watershed Boundary
 - █ Private Property
 - █ BLM Winkleres
 - █ Combs Creek Project
 - ▨ Potential Treatment Areas (1,785 ACRES)
 - █ NEPA Analyzed Area (9,323 ACRES)

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Map Produced by: Cody Coombs (EYCO Fire Staff)
09/30/2010



BLM

Ely District Office

