



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Winnemucca District Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445-2921  
Email: [wfoweb@nv.blm.gov](mailto:wfoweb@nv.blm.gov)  
Phone: (775) 623-1500; Fax: (775) 623-1503



AUG 24 2010

In Reply Refer To:  
1792/9214 (NV024.10)

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Winnemucca District (WD) in conjunction with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and other interested parties are proposing a number of actions that would create fuelbreaks and improve or rehabilitate rangeland and wildlife habitat within the Montana Mountains area. A Cooperative Fuels Management and Habitat Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to analyze the expected environmental impacts associated with implementation of this proposed project.

The Montana Mountains contains some of the most important Threatened and Endangered and sensitive species habitat within the state of Nevada. Threatened species present include Lahontan cutthroat trout. Sensitive species present include Sage-grouse, Pygmy rabbits, Burrowing owl and others. Vegetation and habitat within the range are at substantial risk of wildfire due to drought, establishment of annual species, and sagebrush stand decadence.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove hazardous fuels in order to limit the potential spread of wildfire and to improve or rehabilitate vegetation and wildlife habitat. The need for this project is to protect critical sagebrush obligate species habitat for Sage-grouse and Pygmy rabbit and protect threatened species habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout. The Proposed Action would also protect other important wildlife habitat, provide for public safety, and protect property, infrastructure, and grazing allotments while creating anchors to support fire suppression operations. There is also a need to improve the vegetation communities and habitat within this area which have become; decadent in areas, have been affected by previous fire events, drought and disease or have been altered by establishment of annual species and human actions.

Proposed Actions to be analyzed in the EA include the following types of actions:

#### ***Road Maintenance***

Proposed road maintenance would include using heavy equipment to blade or grade existing roadways to remove vegetation. Grading of road surfaces would be limited to existing road width footprints and would allow for construction of ditches and shoulders. Maintenance of roads would also include installation of culverts, construction of rolling dip gravel stream crossings, installing cattleguards, sediment barriers and surfacing areas with gravel. The Crowley-Jordan Road (entire length) and the Pole Creek Road (from Thacker Pass to the Oregon Border) would be improved and maintained.

#### ***Linear Fuelbreaks***

Proposed fuelbreaks would be constructed using a combination of treatments including; 1) mechanical (plowing, disking, harrowing, grading), 2) application of BLM approved herbicides, including (Imazapic) Plateau, Tebuthiuron (Spike) or other herbicides, and 3) hand thinning. Fuelbreaks would range from 100-1600 feet wide, depending on fuel types and location.

**Mechanical Treatments:** Where possible fuelbreaks would be constructed in a mosaic pattern or strips to blend with existing vegetation and topography and would be constructed adjacent to existing roads.

- Kings River Fuelbreak: 400 feet wide, approximately 344 acres
- Ikes Canyon Fuelbreak: 300 feet wide, approximately 33 acres
- Gold Hill Fuelbreak: 300 feet wide, approximately 47 acres
- South Fork Fuelbreak: 300 feet wide, approximately 104 acres
- South End Fuelbreak: 1600 feet wide, approximately 932 acres

Herbicide treatments would include applying herbicide on the ground using rubber tired vehicles (trucks or 4-wheelers) with mounted sprayers. Aerial application of herbicide is also proposed. All herbicides would be applied following product labels and recommended application rates and following standard operating procedures.

**Hand Thinning –** Hand thinning would involve crews removing vegetation utilizing saws or other hand tools. Herbicide may be applied with crews utilizing backpack pumps to spray noxious weeds or annual invasive species.

### ***Greenstrips***

Greenstrips are a type of fuelbreak that is seeded with fire resistive vegetation (such as kochia, Crested Wheatgrass, Sandberg's Bluegrass) to slow or prevent the spread of wildfire. Proposed greenstrips would be established in previously burned areas on the west side or Kings River side of the project area. Greenstrips would be constructed by seeding along existing roads with fire resistive vegetation. Mechanical treatments such as mowing or harrowing may be needed to remove existing vegetation biomass. Greenstrip Along Roads: 258 acres – laterals 126 acres

### ***Rangeland and Habitat Improvement and Restoration***

Habitat restoration and improvement projects would include rerouting the existing road located north of Fourth of July meadows which travels through sensitive habitat areas. The proposal would include approximately 3,000 feet of new road construction, slope stabilization, erosion control, applying gravel to the road surface and re-seeding.

Habitat restoration would also address Cheatgrass die-off areas on the East side of the Project. The cheatgrass in this area has died off and presents an opportunity to re-establish native vegetation with little to no pre-treatment (to remove cheatgrass biomass). Re-seeding would establish native shrubs and grasses in these areas. Seeds and seedlings may be planted by drill Seeding, hand planting, or broadcast seeding. Blocks may be fenced depending on grazing system to allow for establishment of seeded species. Potential other treatments include site preparation and chemical treatments. Prior to seeding the BLM would determine if the "die off" areas are the result of a pathogen spillover where transmissions of pathogens in the seed bank attack other seeds.

- Block 1: 739 acres
- Block 2: 848 acres
- Block 3: 1,019 acres

- Block 4: 1,681 acres

### ***Meadow Restoration and Fencing***

In the upper elevations of the Montana Mountains, there are multiple stringer meadows fed by springs. These stringer meadows provide natural fuelbreak barriers. Fencing (Permanent Fence) sections of the stringer meadows, about 3-4 meadows would allow the meadows to become properly functioning wet meadows allowing for more effective fuelbreak barriers. Acreage and fencing locations are still to be determined.

### ***Road Improvement***

The Long Canyon and a two track road (Upper road) located above the stringer meadows would be improved which includes: grading the road surface, creation of bar ditches and shoulders, and hauling road materials and hauling gravel to surface the road.

### ***Meadow Road crossings and Trough Relocation***

Construct meadow crossings on roads crossing. Construction of crossings would include excavations to install a combination of culverts, graveled water dips, and/or bridges.

Provide alternate water sources by moving all existing troughs located within meadows to outside locations for livestock and wildlife use.

### ***Seeding and Planting***

Portions of treated areas would be seeded or planted in the fall after mechanical treatments and herbicide treatments are completed, depending on degree of surface disturbance and type of understory vegetation. Seeding would occur only in areas where there is no spring grazing or where rest rotation grazing occurs to allow for seeds to establish. Seed would be planted using a rangeland drill seeder or broadcasted utilizing (ATV or tractor) or by aircraft. Planting would involve hand planting seedlings in order to encourage establishment of shrubs. Both native and fire resistant species would be used.

### ***Maintenance***

All proposed and existing fuelbreaks would be maintained to ensure effectiveness. Maintenance would include a combination of treatments where necessary. Herbicide would be applied in areas where invasive annual species have established within fuelbreaks. Maintenance would also include previous fuelbreaks treated with Tebuthiuron and the existing greenstrip located adjacent to Thacker Pass Road. Habitat rehabilitation or restoration projects would also be maintained to ensure and promote project success.

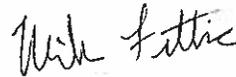
Maps of the proposed treatment areas are enclosed; Portable Document Format (pdf) maps of the proposed treatment areas can also be viewed online at: [http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm\\_information/nepa0.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/nepa0.html).

The BLM WD would like to receive your input and/or comments to this proposal by the close of business September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Comments can be sent to the BLM-Winnemucca District Office (Attn: Jeff Johnson) at this address: 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd. Winnemucca, NV 89445. Comments may also be submitted by email to: [wfoweb@nv.blm.gov](mailto:wfoweb@nv.blm.gov). Email comments should reference "Montana Mountains Plan" (J.Johnson) in the subject line.

Public comments submitted for this project, including names and addresses of commenters will be available for public review at the Winnemucca District Office during regular business hours 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Should you have questions, please contact Jeff Johnson, Fire Management Specialist and Project Lead, at (775) 623-1538.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Fetic". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Mike Fetic  
Fire Management Officer  
Winnemucca District

Enclosures

# Montana Mtns Fuels Management Area

Proposed Fuelbreaks	Road Work	Miscellaneous
Gold Hill Fuelbreak	Crowley-Jordan Maintenance	Bridge
Ikes Canyon Fuelbreak	Jordan Min Rd Maintenance	Hand Brush Removal
N. Kings River Fuelbreak	Long Canyon Maintenance	Trough Removal & Relocation
South End Fuelbreak	Pole Creek Road Maintenance	Potential Meadow Fencing
South Fork Fuelbreak	Pole Creek- Border Maint.	Seeding_Areas
Proposed Greenstrips	Road Re-Route	Potential Dbde Harrow Areas
	Upper Road Re-Route	Planning Area Boundary

Area of Map Interest

**Winnemucca District Office**  
 Office of Fire Management  
 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd.  
 Winnemucca, NV 89445  
 0 0.250.5 1 Miles

Map Date: June 8, 2010

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