



## United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Ely District Office  
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Ely, Nevada 89301-9408

[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely\\_field\\_office.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html)

In Reply Refer To:  
9214 (NVL-0044)

MAY 23 2011

Dear Interested Public,

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing a change to the Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project. The selected alternative within the decision, signed 7/19/2010, allowed mechanical pinyon and juniper removal on 16,660 to 19,000 acres of lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within North Spring Valley. The proposed action is to add up to 2,500 acres of mowing and drill seeding treatments, up to 3 wildlife guzzlers and to change the implementation timing to July 15<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>. All current proposals would be conducted within the previously analyzed project boundary. The project area is located in Townships 21 North, Range 66 East; Township 22 North, Range 65 East; Township 22 North, Range 66 East; Township 23 North, Range 65 East; Township 23 North, Range 66 East and Township 24 North, Range 65 East; Mount Diablo Meridian (MDM); White Pine County, Nevada (see enclosed map). The proposed project occurs on public lands managed by the BLM Ely District's Schell Field Office.

The objectives for the proposed action are to:

- Reduce late seral and decadent sagebrush stands within the treatment area, to recruit younger more vigorous sagebrush and increase the herbaceous understory.
- Provide additional water sources as deemed necessary through consultation with the Nevada Division of Wildlife to support and improve populations of big game and small game within North Spring Valley.
- Increase the amount of time available for project implementation to accommodate the availability of resources and environmental factors such as weather and soils conditions.

Presently within the project boundary there are 13,142 acres that are sparsely wooded sagebrush sites. These sites under the selected alternative would be selectively thinned to remove pinyon and juniper from the sites. Within these 13,142 acres it is proposed to mow and drill seed up to 2,500 acres or 20% of the area. Most of the mowing would occur in the northwest portion of the project area. Mowing and drill seeding would be conducted in a mosaic fashion creating a diverse arrangement of sagebrush seral states within the landscape. Mowing would be conducted using a brush mower pulled by a rubber-wheeled tractor and seeding would be conducted using a rangeland drill pulled by a rubber wheeled tractor.

Mowing areas would avoid areas where there is downy brome established. Pre-monitoring data within the project boundaries indicates an absence of downy brome. Landfire national seral class data indicates the presence of Uncharacteristic Exotic (UE) class vegetation on the lower elevation and southern ends of the project area. These areas would be monitored prior to implementation of the proposed action to determine the reason for the classification. Areas that have downy brome or any other exotic invasive species established would be avoided as much as possible to avoid propagating the exotic invasive. Any noxious or invasive weeds detected within the project boundary would be treated as described within the original Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project Environmental Assessment.

Livestock grazing would not be scheduled within the treatment areas during implementation of the selected alternative. Livestock grazing would not be allowed to occur within the areas that have been mowed and drill seeded for two complete growing seasons or until the vegetation objectives have been achieved.

The treatment areas would be monitored following project implementation to determine success towards meeting resource management objectives. All monitoring techniques would follow BLM approved methods. Vegetative establishment would be monitored to determine if the project is promoting soil protection, providing forage and protective cover and improving the overall ecological and watershed conditions. All vegetative trend monitoring site locations would be marked and recorded.

It is proposed that there may be up to three guzzlers located within or adjacent to the boundaries of the Stonehouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project. These guzzlers may be for the purpose of either big game or small game. Exact site locations would be determined through consultation with the Nevada Division of Wildlife and would be dictated by access, existing water facilities, habitat and avoiding potentially sensitive resources.

Guzzler sites would be accessed using existing two-track roads and cross country travel to deliver supplies necessary for construction. Cross country travel would be limited to the minimum number of trips and the minimum size of available equipment necessary to transport the necessary materials. No permanent new roads or trails would be created. Each guzzler would include an apron, tank, drinker and fence. A rubber-tired backhoe would be used to level the areas where the storage tanks and apron would be located. Volunteers would walk from the existing roads to the sites. Approximately one day would be needed to prepare each site using a backhoe and an estimated two days per site would be needed to install the wildlife water development. The installation of each wildlife water development would result in less than 1 acre of total disturbance. Access to the site for subsequent annual inspections and routine maintenance would be on foot. Wildlife water developments and associated fencing will avoid existing obvious horse trails.

The selected alternative allows for implementation to occur from September through February. Due to the availability of crews and the impacts of environmental factors it is proposed to change the implementation dates to July 15<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>. This would allow more flexibility with scheduling to accommodate the availability of resources and potential delays due to environmental factors (i.e. weather, soils conditions, etc.). All other design features and

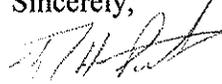
mitigation identified within the previous decision and associated Environmental Assessment would apply to this proposal.

The Ely District Office, Bureau of Land Management is proposing to prepare a determination of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) adequacy for the proposal tiering to previous NEPA documents. We are providing the public an opportunity to comment on the current proposed action. Please provide comments by June 7, 2011 to the attention of Matt Rajala at the address above.

If you have any questions, please contact Matt Rajala, Fire Planner at (775) 289-1821. If you would like to remain on the mailing list for this project, please notify Matt Rajala by the above date.

Thank you for participating in the planning process for this project.

Sincerely,

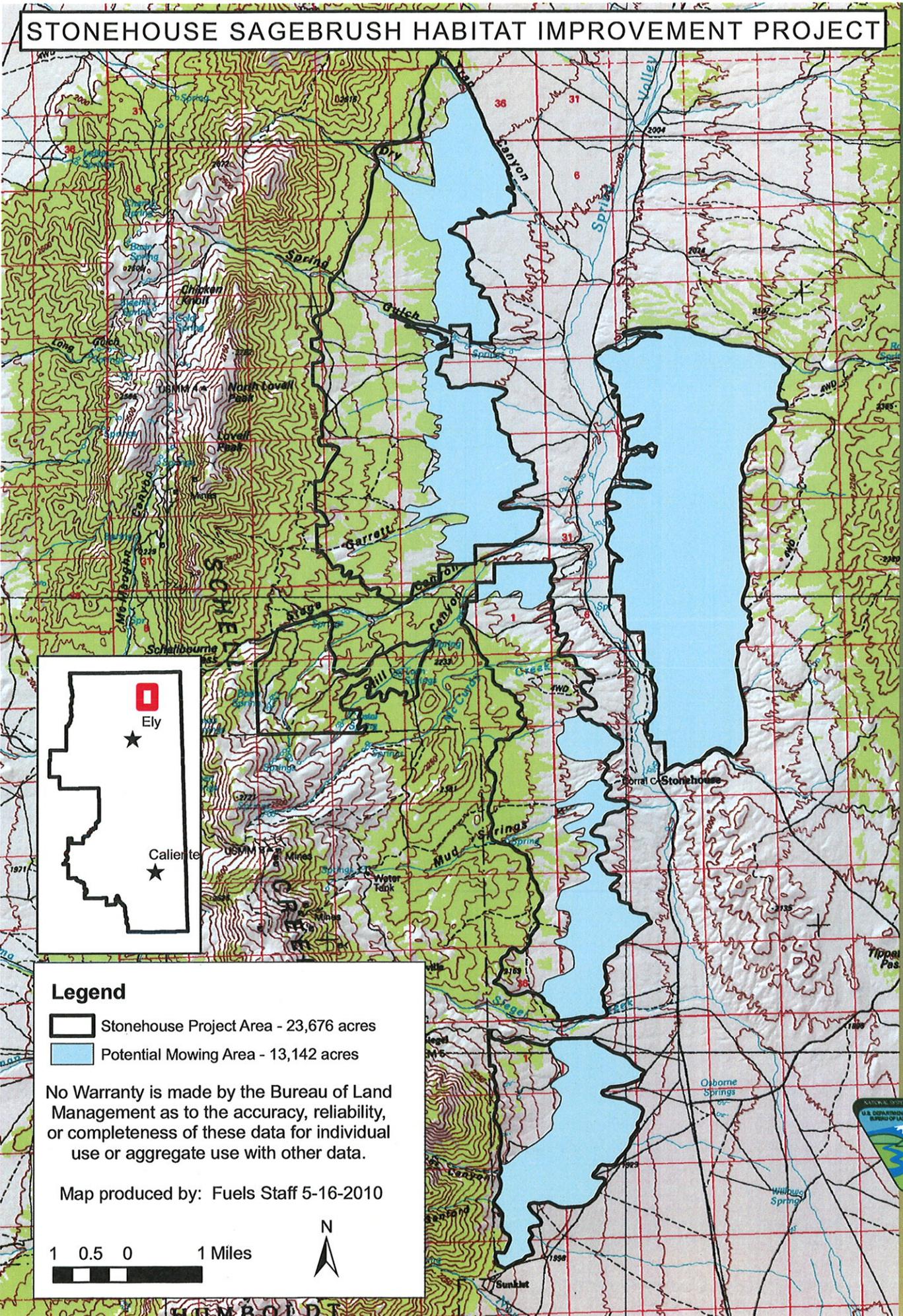


Tye Petersen  
Fire Management Officer  
Ely District Office

Enclosure:  
Stonehouse Sagebrush Habitat Improvement Map

# STONEHOUSE SAGEBRUSH HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

BLM



Ely District Office

