



Scoping Document and Notice of Proposed Action

Mountain City Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

December, 2012

Mountain City Ranger District
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Elko County, Nevada

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COMMENTS WELCOME

The Mountain City Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the Mountain City Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project. Written, facsimile, hand delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the 36 CFR 215 Notice of Proposed Action in the Elko Daily Free Press. For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the “Comment Process” section of this document on page 5.

This document initiates both the scoping process pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1501.7 and provides notice of the 30-day comment period pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. The purpose of the scoping process is to solicit public comment early in the analysis. The purpose of the 30-day comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide meaningful input on the proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. For this project the Forest Service has decided to run the two periods simultaneously.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this action is to restore wildlife habitat for greater sage-grouse and mule deer following several large fires in the area in 2012.

The need for this action is for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to aerially reseed critical wildlife habitat areas that were impacted by Mutang and Brown’s Gulch fires occurring in 2012 on the Mountain City Ranger District; with a focus on enhancing the natural recovery of key native species important for productive mule deer and sage grouse habitat. Seeding is important in those areas where fire burn severity has affected soils and has contributed to the lack of seed sources available for natural regeneration, as well as in areas where the potential for weed infestation or expansion exists and could inhibit the restoration of critical habitat.

FOREST PLAN COMPLIANCE

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS 1986). Specifically

Goal #14 – Improve the current productive level of wildlife habitat with emphasis on maintaining or improving limiting factors such as big game winter ranges (measured in acres), in cooperation with Nevada Department of wildlife. (page IV-4)

Goal #32 – Design and implement practices on-the-ground that will re-establish acceptable soil, hydrologic and vegetative conditions which are sufficient to secure and maintain favorable water flow. (page IV-9)

In addition the project will comply with the following management direction:

Livestock grazing will not be allowed for 2 years following prescribed fire, plantings, and seedings. (page IV-37)

DECISION FRAMEWORK

Based on the environmental analysis and disclosure, the District Ranger would decide 1) whether to select the proposed action as proposed or modified; 2) what mitigation measures are needed; and 3) what monitoring is required.

It is expected that this project can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. The project fits within the following category – Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road (36 CFR 220.6)(e)(6). Documentation is proposed to be done with a Decision Memo.

THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Forest Service in cooperation with Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) is proposing to aerially seed portions of the Brown's Gulch and Mustang fires, which were part of the Bull Run Complex. The seed mix uses native species which are desirable for greater sage-grouse as well as mule deer. Please see attached map for the specific project location. Approximately 7,165 acres would be aerially seeded in February 2013.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Based on the initial analysis of Forest Service specialists, the Forest Service has identified no issues as the project would not involve any surface disturbance and would restore uplands and watershed health.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION IMPACTS

This preliminary look at environmental impacts is focused on the seven resource conditions that are required to be addressed in categorical exclusions:

- a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species:
 - Listed and Proposed species - There are no federally threatened or endangered species or critical habitat within the project area. No proposed critical habitat is within the project area, and no species proposed for listing were identified within the project area. Consultation with the USFWS was not warranted for this project.
 - Forest Service Sensitive Species – Greater sage-grouse are known to occur in the area and this project would help restore priority habitat. Implementation would not occur during the breeding season and would not impact the species directly.
- b. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:

No ground disturbing activities are proposed in flood plains or wetlands. Seeding in these areas would aid in restoring healthy watershed conditions. No municipal watersheds lie within or adjacent to the project.
- c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas:

The project area is not located in or near any congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

d. Inventoried roadless areas:

Aerial seeding would occur within the Deadhorse Point, Hicks and Robinson Inventoried Roadless Areas. There would be minimal short-term impacts to the character of the IRA due to the use of the helicopter. In the long-term this seeding would be beneficial in maintaining roadless characteristics.

e. Research natural areas:

There are no research natural areas within or adjacent to the project area.

f. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites:

The activity would have no impact on this resource since seeding will be done aurally and will not cause any surface disturbance.

g. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas:

The activity would have no impact on this resource since seeding will be done aurally and will not cause any surface disturbance.

Comment Process

The Forest Service encourages your comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision.

Your comments will help us prepare an environmental analysis on the proposed action, and will also be used to determine the level of analysis needed.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the legal notice for this project in the Reno Gazette-Journal.

Comments must be submitted to the following:

Kathryn Fuell
District Ranger
Mountain City Ranger District
2035 Last chance road
Elko, NV 89801

By phone to (775) 738-5171 or via fax at (775) 778-6167

The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, portable document format (.pdf), plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to:

comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-mtn-city@fs.fed.us.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the

regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual. Comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

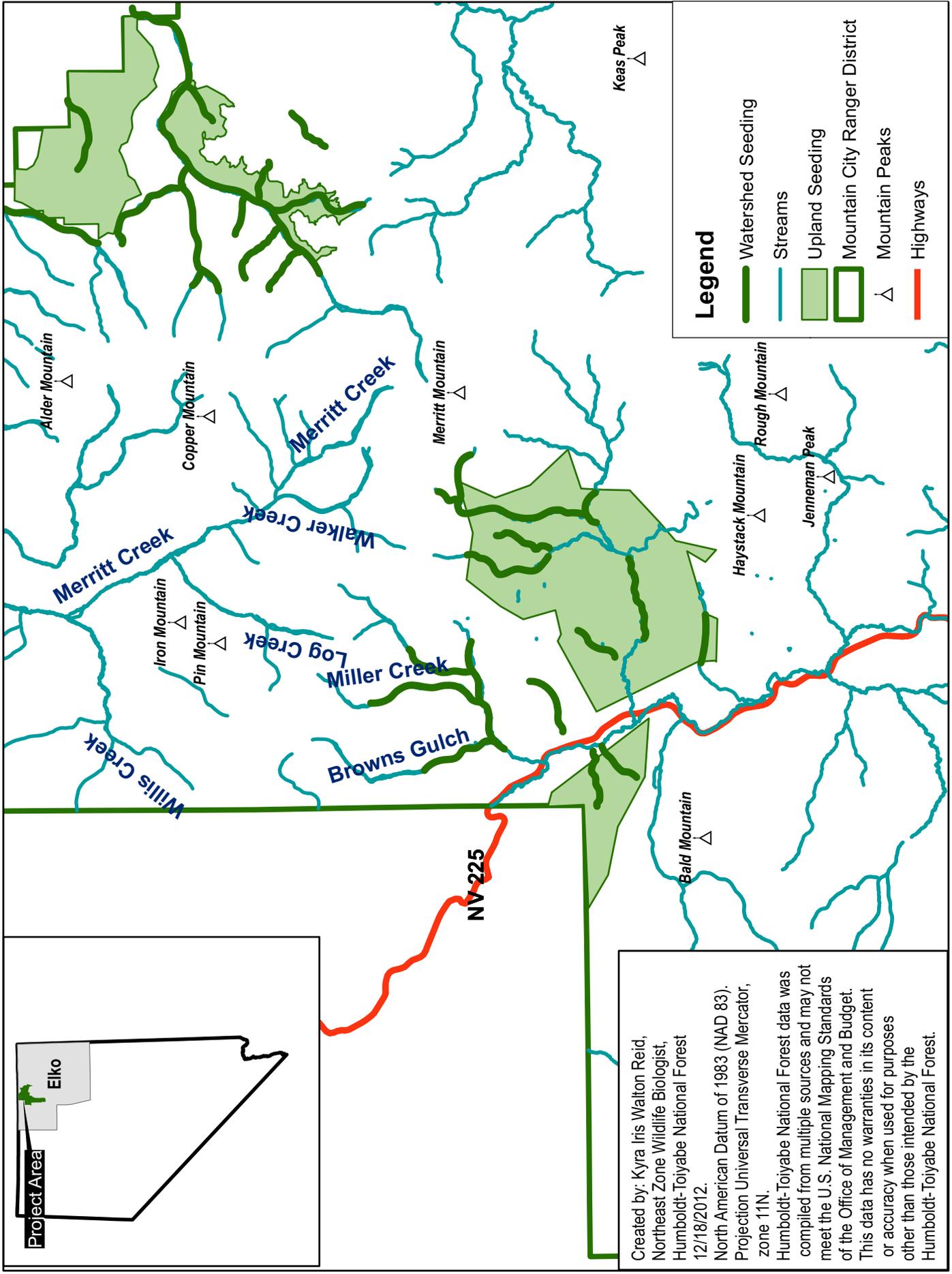
:Project Contact

For further information contact Doug Clarke, Project Manager at (775) 778-6127 or via e-mail at dclarke@fs.fed.us.

Attachments:

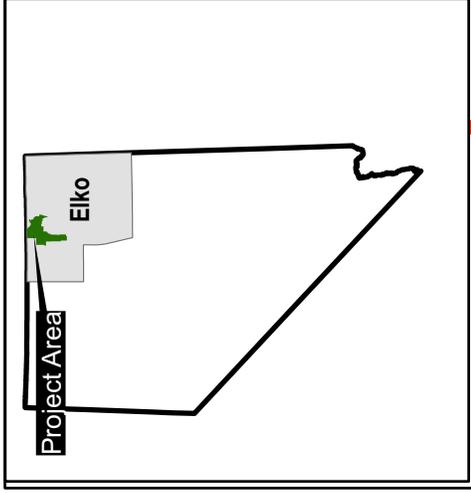
Project Map

Mountain City Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project Vicinity Map



Legend

- Watershed Seeding
- Streams
- Upland Seeding
- Mountain City Ranger District
- Mountain Peaks
- Highways



Created by: Kyra Iris Walton Reid,
 Northeast Zone Wildlife Biologist,
 Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
 12/18/2012.
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83).
 Projection Universal Transverse Mercator,
 zone 11N.
 Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest data was
 compiled from multiple sources and may not
 meet the U.S. National Mapping Standards
 of the Office of Management and Budget.
 This data has no warranties in its content
 or accuracy when used for purposes
 other than those intended by the
 Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

