



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104
www.ca.blm.gov/surprise

In Reply Refer To:
6700, 9200 (LLCAN0700) P

March 6, 2013

Dear Interested Party,

The Surprise Field Office (SFO) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing habitat restoration and hazardous fuels reduction treatments within the Vya Sage-grouse Population Management Unit (PMU) in the northern portion of the SFO area. These projects would treat sage-steppe and forest plant communities within the sage-steppe ecosystem which are encroached by juniper or declining in vigor and sustainability. The project area is located within the 501,274 acre Vya PMU excluding areas without juniper encroachment, private lands, and Wilderness Study Areas. The Vya PMU Habitat Restoration and Fuels Reduction Project Area encompasses approximately 195,578 acres within the Vya PMU. The Project Area represents portions of the Vya PMU that have varying phases of juniper encroachment ranging from very low densities of juniper to high densities of juniper. Of the 195,578 acre Project Area, treatments will be limited to a maximum of 10,000 acres per year for a total of 100,000 acres over a 10-year period. If implemented it is expected that treatments would be dispersed across the Vya PMU, and no more than 2% of lands within the PMU would be treated under this EA in any one year. These projects could be implemented as early as 2013.

Juniper treatment areas would be prioritized based on proximity to active sage-grouse lek sites and juniper woodland succession phases with Phase 1 and Phase 2 juniper encroached areas receiving first priority. Juniper phases are as follows:

- Phase 1 (early) open actively expanding canopy <10% closure with an intact shrub layer
- Phase 2 (middle) actively expanding canopy from 10-30% closure with a nearly intact to significantly thinning shrub layer.
- Phase 3 (late) Canopy expansion nearly stabilized >30% closure with a >75% loss in the shrub layer.

This proposed action conforms to the 2008 Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement which states that:

- Fuel treatments would prioritize wildland/urban interface areas of communities situated in the midst of juniper-invaded sagebrush-steppe. Projects would also be designed to enhance important wildlife habitats and protect cultural resources.
- Long-range fuels treatment projects would be developed and implemented to protect high-risk communities; restore, maintain, and improve forest and rangeland ecosystems; enhance wildlife habitats; increase livestock forage; improve recreational opportunities; and enhance traditional gathering areas by broadly reducing hazardous fuels. (Surprise RMP 2.6.3 Objectives).

The proposed action also tiers off the 2008 Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision.

The following are the primary needs for action identified by the SFO:

- Maintain existing shrub steppe habitats that are currently providing suitable habitat conditions for sage-grouse and sage-steppe obligate species and improve sage-steppe habitats that are degrading through juniper and/or shrub removal, or shrub, grass or forb seedings.
- Improved vigor of native sagebrush-bunchgrass communities, and improved habitat for other species associated with open sagebrush habitat.
- Reduce fuel loading and risks of catastrophic fire.

The project will be programmatic and use an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) approach, using a systematic approach to accomplish the objectives which could include hand clearing, mechanical thinning and cutting, prescribed burning, commercial, non-commercial thinning or a combination of these treatments. Work would be completed by either Federal or contract personnel. The byproducts of these treatments would be made available for firewood collection or biomass harvest, piled and burned on site or scattered and left to decompose naturally.

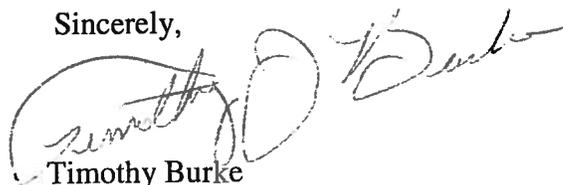
The Surprise Field Office is initiating scoping for planning efforts which will review data and information and complete environmental documentation necessary for these projects. As a first step in this process we are determining public interest and hereby requesting any related data and information you may have which is relevant to the proposed projects. Your information and data will be combined with BLM information and will be used to identify resource concerns and to develop purpose and need statements and alternatives for analysis.

If you would like to be involved in this planning process or have information concerning this proposal please send it to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Casey Boespflug
Surprise Field Office
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

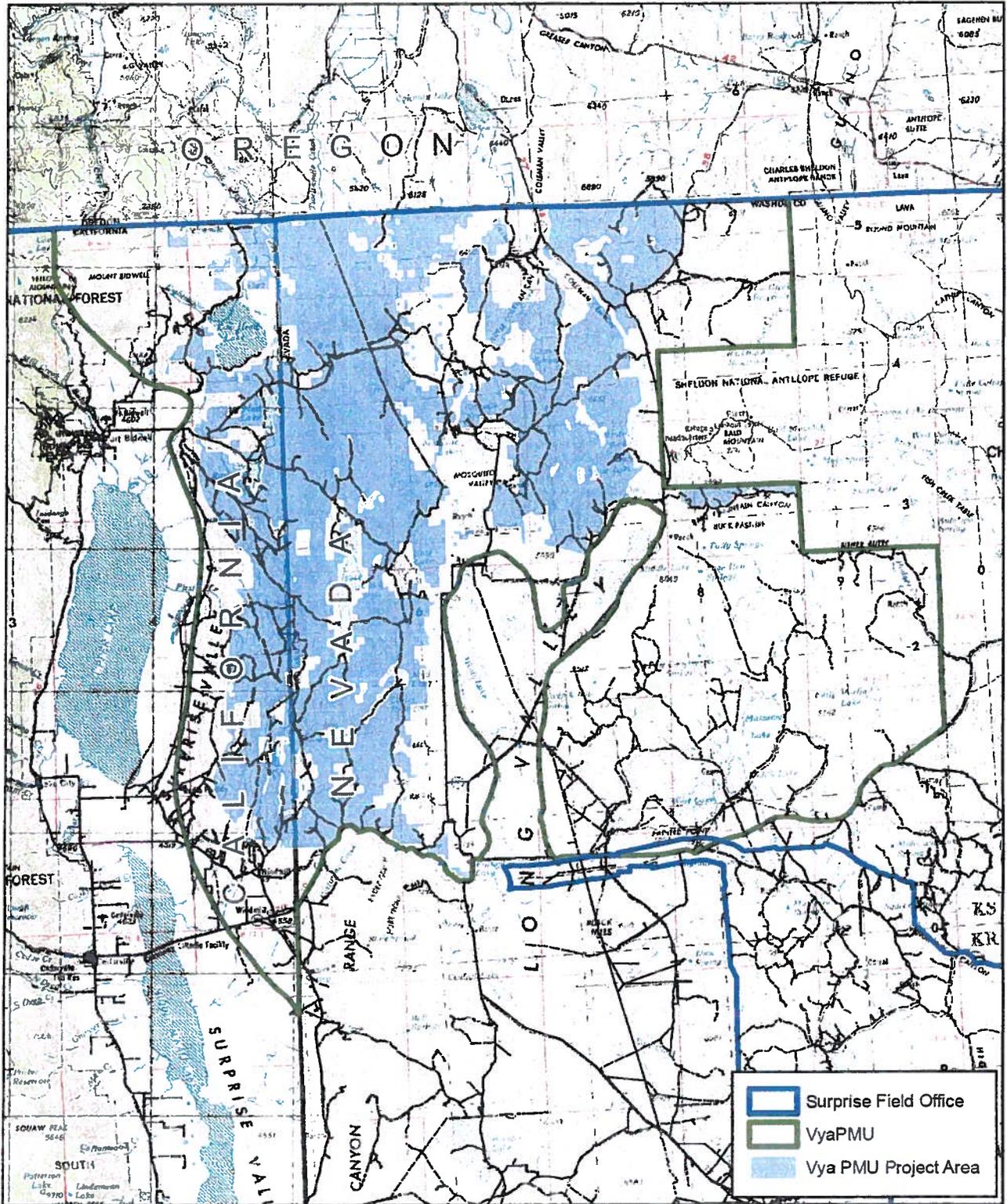
Your comments should be submitted by **Wednesday April 5th, 2013** to insure consideration. If you do not respond to this letter, we will not include you in follow-up correspondence relating to these projects. You will however remain on our coordination list for future projects. If you are not interested in receiving information relating to BLM actions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact us at the above address or you may call Casey Boespflug at (530) 279-6101.

Sincerely,

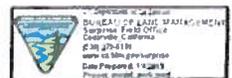


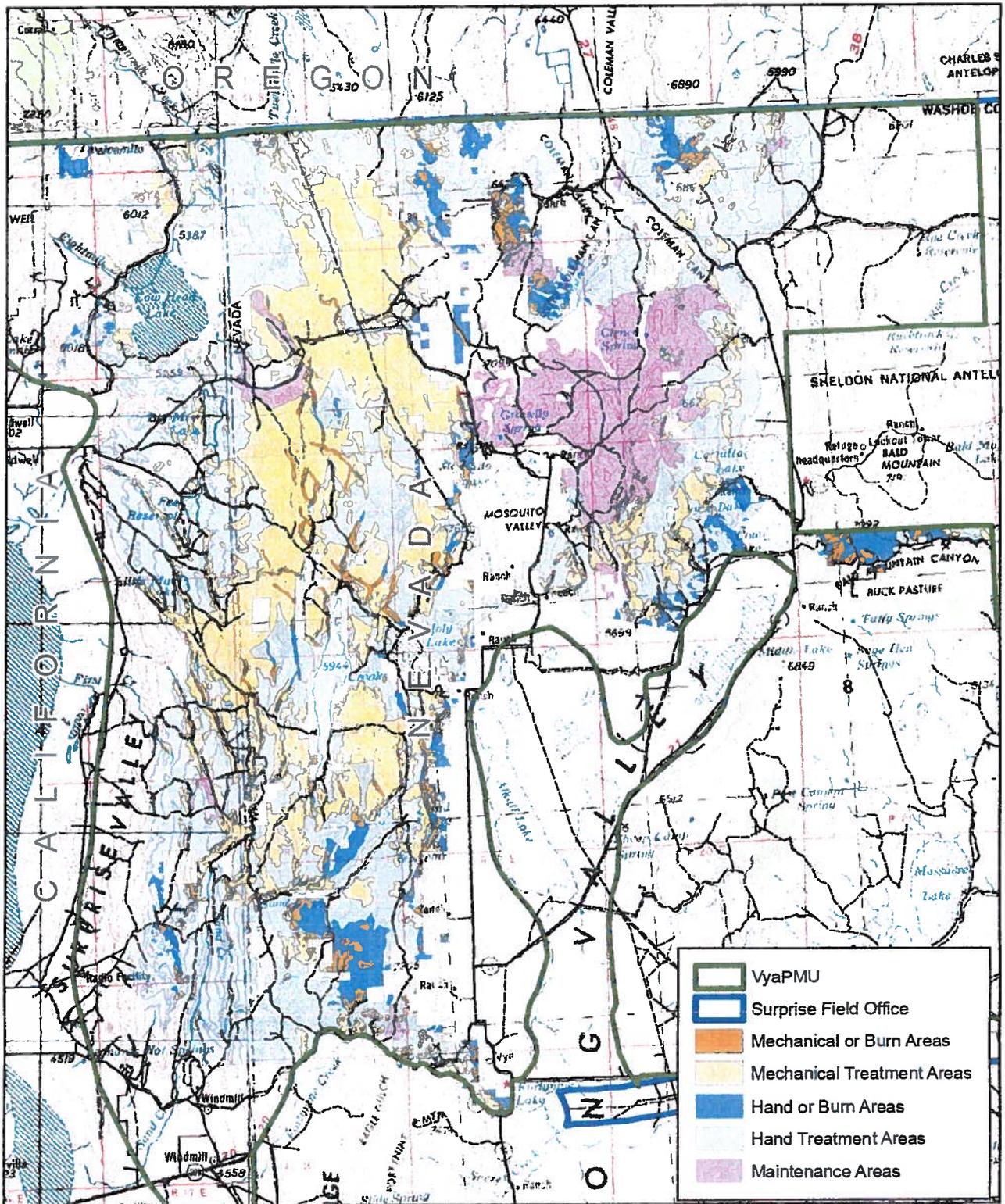
Timothy Burke
Acting Surprise Field Manager

Enclosure: Map of Project Area and Proposed Treatments



Vya PMU Habitat Restoration
And Fuels Reduction
Project Area Site And Vicinity





**Vya PMU Habitat Restoration
And Fuels Reduction
All Treatments**

