

Scoping Document

And

Notice of Proposed Action



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Jarbidge Wildland Urban Interface Project

Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Jarbidge District

March 2013

Elko County, Nevada

Comments Welcome

The Jarbidge Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the proposed Jarbidge Wildland Urban Interface Project which is located on National Forest System land within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. This project proposes to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health on approximately 12 acres within the Wildland Urban Interface around the town of Jarbidge in Elko County, Nevada.

For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the "Comment Process" section of this document.

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.

Background

The project is located within Elko County, Nevada. The legal description is T.46.N. R.9.E. section 16 West 1/2, Mount Diablo Meridian (Figure 1). The project units described below were selected to reduce the risk of a high intensity, catastrophic wildfire in the area, specifically to the Community of Jarbidge.

Purpose and Need

The primary purpose for this project is to remove dense brush and timber that is currently acting as a ladder fuel to larger mature trees adjacent to the town of Jarbidge and increasing the threat of wildfire to the community. Treating (removing) the understory brush and timber would reduce the risk of a high intensity fire and subsequent loss to the community and potential loss of more trees in the critical watershed surrounding Jarbidge. There is also a need to thin brush outside of the conifers to interrupt continuous brush and help slow the rate of spread and intensity of a potential wildfire on Forest Service managed lands adjacent to the community of Jarbidge. The treatments would reduce the risk to firefighters, increase defensible space near structures and increase the survivability of conifer stands. In addition to fire suppression related benefits treatments would provide for enhanced habitat and prevent sediment loading caused by catastrophic fire impacts.

Proposed Action

Treatments are planned for three units. The proposed treatment methods for all units will include hand thinning with chainsaw, piling, and chipping. Where viable, piling of limb wood and burning of piles may be applied in fall/winter months to remove treated biomass.

South Unit: Approximately 3.5 acres in size. Unit is located to the southern portion of the community of Jarbidge just west of first bridge. Unit is located in drainage bottom and on steep slope with a primary vegetative cover of dense brush in riparian area trending to think juniper sage toward ridge top.

North Unit: Approximately 3.5 acres in size. Unit is located north of the community of Jarbidge near the Mahoney Guard Station and lies on relatively flat terrain. Vegetation in this unit is primarily juniper and sage with more dense brush closer to the Jarbidge River in riparian area.

Bear Creek Unit: Approximately 5.5 acres in size. Unit lies in drainage bottom with moderately steep slopes. Vegetation consists primarily of dense brush and intermittent aspen and cotton wood pockets.

All proposed actions are designed to complement fuels reduction treatments previously completed and ongoing in the area by Nevada Division of Forestry, private landowners and the U.S. Forest Service. A map of proposed and completed vegetation treatments is attached (Figure 2).

The following mitigation measures would be implemented:

Treatment areas will be left in a mosaic pattern. The areas treated would be designed to minimize any large openings to allow for access to OHV use.

Thinning activities will occur in the spring months between April 1 and May 31. If project is not completed treatments will resume after July 31 to comply with Migratory Bird Act stipulations.

Any known archeological sites will be flagged prior to treatments. Archeological sites will be flagged and avoided during treatment.

Seeding with native vegetation will occur on treated areas to establish native grasses and reduce the risk of invasive weed and grass establishment.

If prescribed fire (Pile Burning) is used, a Forest Service approved burn plan appropriate for the type of burn to take place will be completed and approved. All Federal, State and local air quality laws will be followed. Burning will only take place once prescription measures have been met.

Maintenance will include repeated entries every 3 to 5 years and will incorporate hand thinning, piling, chipping, and additional seeding.

Monitoring

Monitoring during and after implementation will be conducted to ensure treatment methods are being implemented effectively and to ensure project objectives are achieved. Monitoring for invasive weeds, etc. in fuelbreaks will be done with photo points and site visits.

Forest Plan Compliance

Forest Plan Goals

The following goals and objectives from the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan(1986, as amended) are applicable to the project:

#9 (page IV-3) Provide for a pleasing visual landscape in the Humboldt National Forest.

#29 (page IV-8) Provide water and soil resource input to other resource activities to protect and or improve water quality and soil productivity.

#10 (page IV-3) Identify, protect, interpret, and manage significant cultural resources.

#32 (Page IV-9) 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.

#52 (pages IV-14 and IV-15) Establish and maintain fuel mosaics which result in an acceptable hazard and spread potential of wildfire, allow an appropriate wildfire suppression and contribute to other resource programs and aesthetics.

Objective e. Vegetative modification projects should be designed to break up continuous fuel types.

Inland Native Fish Strategy

This project falls within the area covered by the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA Forest Service, 1995). This project has been designed to meet the riparian management goals and riparian management objectives as established in the interim direction. (See pages A-1 through A-4 of the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA Forest Service, 1995) The following standard and guideline applies to this project:

FM-1 Design fuel treatment and fire suppression strategies, practices, and actions so as not to prevent attainment of riparian Management Objectives, and to minimize disturbance of riparian ground cover and vegetation. Strategies should recognize the role of fire in ecosystem function and identify those instances where fire suppression or fuel management actions could perpetuate or be damaging to long-term function or inland native fish.

Expected Analysis

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the proposed action is with a category listed in 36 CFR section 220.6. The preliminary assessment is that this proposal fits within the following category – *Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.* (36 CFR 220.6(e) 6)

If during the analysis it is apparent that an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is required, then the forest Service would reassess the project and adjust the analysis as necessary.

The following preliminary impacts have been identified as potentially occurring. This information is provided to give the public an initial understanding of the project effects and is subject to change as the Forest Service completes its analysis:

Resource Condition	Potential impacts
Fisheries	No impacts are expected because work in riparian zones would be limited.
Wildlife	Minimal impacts are expected because of the limited nature of the work. Some individual animals may be displaced into adjacent areas while the work is being performed.
Botany and vegetation	The hand thinning would open up the vegetative communities within the three units and reduce the fuel loading. Overall species composition and diversity would be maintained and units would maintain a natural appearance.
Municipal Watersheds	The work proposed within the Bear Creek Municipal Watershed is not expected to cause any changes in water quality, or stream flows due to the limited nature of the project.
Water quality	The work proposed within the Bear Creek and Jarbidge watersheds is not expected to cause any changes in water quality, due to the limited nature of the project.
Public Health and safety	No impact. Project ensures community safety in the long-term.
Air Quality	Minimal impact due to the limited nature of the project. Pile burning, if done, would add smoke and particulates into the air. This project is adjacent to the Jarbidge Class 1 airshed and impacts may be noticeable for a short period of time.
Cultural resources	A review of existing survey information indicates that there would be no effect to cultural resources
Wilderness, and other special designated areas	No impact, as project lies 3 miles from wilderness boundary. There are no other special designated areas close to the project.
Recreation	No impact as project work is not expected to interfere with any recreational activities

Analysis Time Frames

This project was initially posted on the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in March of 2013 and a decision is expected in April 2013.

Implementation Time Frames

Implementation for the project is expected to begin in May – October of 2013 and continue through fall of 2013 if needed.

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. 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, will be available for public inspection, and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Any written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be most helpful if submitted within 30 calendar days following the publication of legal notice in the Elko Daily Free Press. Comments must be submitted to: Matt Boisseau, Deputy District Ranger, Jarbidge Ranger District, 140 Pacific Avenue, P.O. Box 246, Wells, NV 89835 or fax 775-752-1799. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-rubymtns-jarbidge@fs.fed.us. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

For further information please visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/htnf/projects or contact Troy Phelps, Project Coordinator at 775-778-612 1; or tphelps@fs.fed.us.

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Figure 1: Location Map

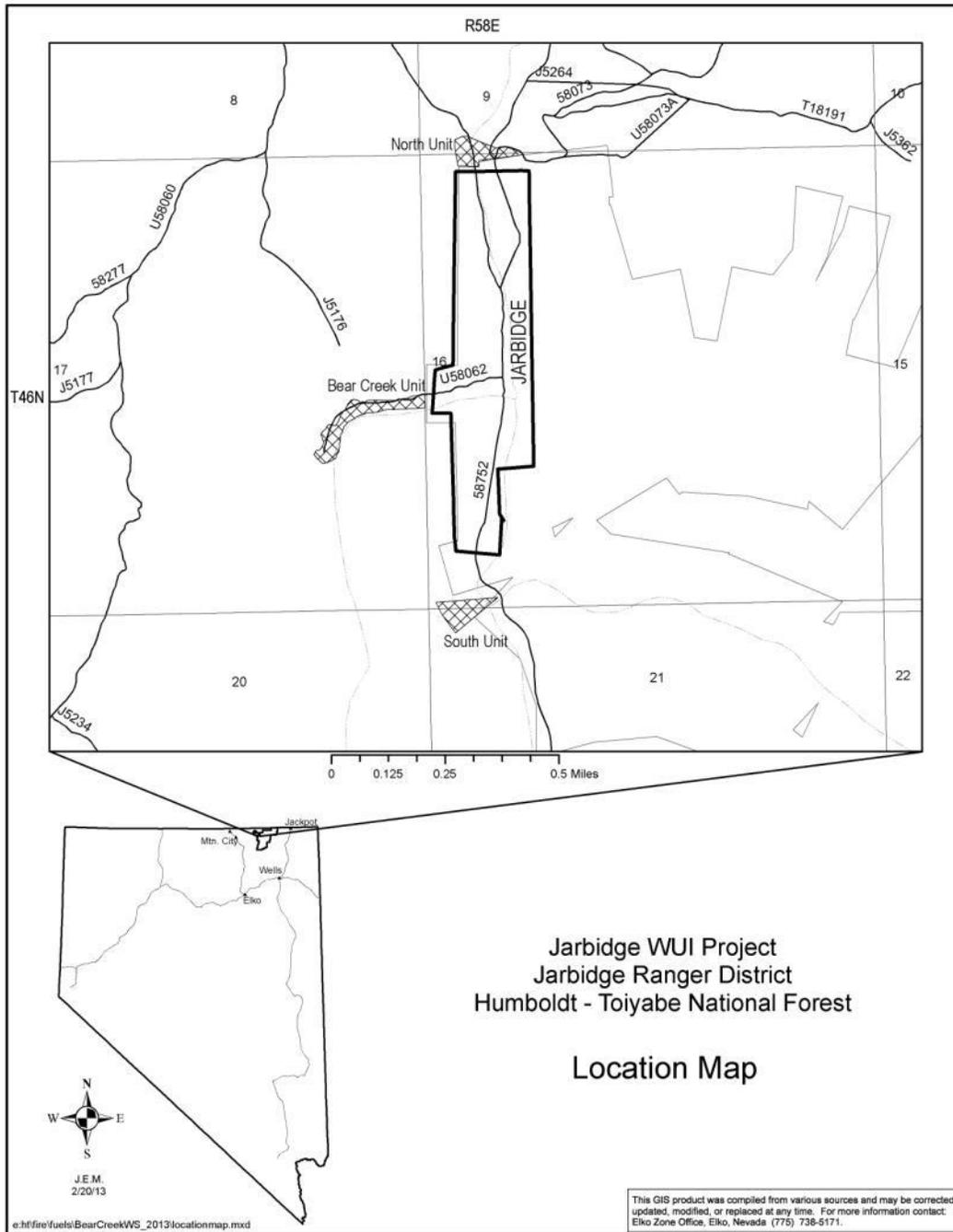


Figure 2: Treatment Map

