



United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:
(6300, 6510)
NV020.00

NOTICE OF ACTION
NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION
IN WILDERNESS AREA

STATE: Nevada

COUNTY: Humboldt County

OFFICE: Humboldt Field Office
Winnemucca District
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

WILDERNESS AREA: **Pine Forest Wilderness Area**
(NV-020-600, NV-020-600D)

ACTION: Potential Fire Suppression Activity and Emergency
Stabilization and Rehabilitation – Leonard Creek Fire

Background

The fire was ignited by lightning on July 23, 2017, with no estimated size and containment at this time. This fire was started outside of the Pine Forest Wilderness, with the potential to burn into the wilderness area. The wilderness area includes the headwaters of three federally listed Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) (BLM special status species) recovery streams; Big Creek, Chicken Creek, and Leonard Creek. Approximately 80% of the Pine Forest Range contains Greater Sage-Grouse (BLM special status species) habitat; 24% (6,277 acres) Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA), 11% (2,892 acres) General Habitat Management Area (GHMA), and 44% (11,652 acres) Other Habitat Management Area (OHMA). Approximately 33% (8,553 acres) of occupied California bighorn sheep (BLM special status species) habitat is within the wilderness area (26,202 acres) and the entire area is classified as mule deer year-round habitat and pronghorn summer range and crucial winter habitat as defined by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The area also contains habitat for the Humboldt yellow pine chipmunk, an endemic

species only found in the Pine Forest Range. Long legged Myotis (BLM special status species) also occurs within the area. The area is utilized by grassland birds and migratory birds and is near raptor nesting sites.

The wilderness area contains whitebark pine, a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act. There are only two known populations of whitebark pine within the Winnemucca District, and the population in the Pine Forest is the larger of the two. This area also features other woodlands stands including limber pine, mountain mahogany intermixed with pine species, extending along lower elevation slopes and ridgelines, and aspen stands which occur in pockets along drainage bottoms and other suitable sites.

The affected vegetation, at lower elevations, will include mountain sagebrush, Lahontan sagebrush, Wyoming sagebrush, low sagebrush, basin wild rye, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Thurbers needlegrass. The fire area has known populations of invasive annual plant species including cheatgrass and medusahead and has a high probability of dominance by invasive annuals.

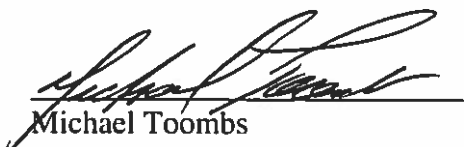
Description of the Action

Because the area affected is classified as a Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) for Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, immediate and full fire suppression may be necessary. Suppression efforts could include the use of dozers and fire suppression aircraft within the wilderness boundary and may result in surface disturbance within the wilderness. The use of a dozer does not meet the non-impairment standard for activities within wilderness areas. Exceptions to the non-impairment standard include responding to emergencies (BLM Manual 6340). Although temporary, these activities would cause surface disturbance.

The BLM Humboldt River Field Office potentially would naturalize any mechanical disturbances that occur during fire suppression efforts. Potential rehabilitation efforts may include the following activities:

- Seeding could include treatment by aerial seeding with a mix containing native perennial grasses, forbs and sagebrush. The area impacted by dozers would be seeded via broadcast seeding of native plant species.
- Planting treatments that accelerate vegetative recovery following wildfire could include manual and mechanical seedling planting and live staking of woody riparian species.
- The potential fire perimeter may affect the Alder Creek and Leonard Creek grazing allotments. As a result, livestock grazing could be impacted until vegetation objectives are met. Management actions implemented may include adjusting the pasture rotation schedule, herd placement management, and riding to ensure livestock are not using burned portions of these allotments.
- Noxious Weed Control: Noxious weeds would be controlled within the burned area and area disturbed by dozer activities for 3 years. Herbicide application, if any, would be conducted via spot treatments with the use of a backpack sprayer.

- **Monitoring:** Treatment success monitoring would occur for up to 3 years to determine if the objectives of the proposed treatments have been met. It is anticipated that the proposed treatments would reestablish perennial cover, mitigate soil loss, minimize establishment of undesirable invasive annual and noxious weeds, and support rehabilitation of vital Greater Sage Grouse habitat.



Michael Toombs
District Manager
Winnemucca District

July 24, 2017

Date

