

## **Environmental Consequences:**

### **No Action:**

#### Range Resources:

### **Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

With no treatment of the area there is increased risk of stand replacing wildfire. By BLM and USFS policy, burned areas are closed to grazing to allow for regeneration of desirable species for a minimum of two years. These closures would cause severe financial impacts to grazing permittees due to lost Federal grazing capacity.

Federal and state agencies would also lose revenue from the grazing of livestock on these ranges for at least two grazing seasons.

### **Cumulative Impacts:**

As a result of EA#ID-075-2002-0005, the Inkom Allotment currently is implementing a 50% reduction in AUMs on the allotment. Should a stand replacing wildfire occur, additional reductions of AUMs would likely be necessary for at least 2 years and the allotment would also continue to not meet the Rangeland Health Standards and Guides.

The Smith Gulch Allotment (BLM), the Forest Service Pocatello Cattle Allotment, and State Lands School Section, are not under the same standards and guides decision as the Inkom Allotment. However, a stand replacing fire may cause the Smith Gulch allotment to not meet the required Rangeland Health Standards and Guides. The allotments on the USFS and State Lands could also be impacted by a fire so that cuts in livestock grazing would be necessary there as well.

#### Noxious and Invasive Weeds:

### **Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

A stand replacing fire would likely cause an increase of both noxious and invasive plants on any area burned, increasing weed control costs.

Any wildfire would likely increase the frequency of cheatgrass on the area burned. This would, in turn, lead to increased potential for increased fire frequencies in the future.

### **Cumulative Impacts:**

The currently known noxious and invasive plants within the project area are manageable with the proper monitoring and treatment. However, with each wildfire, these species spread, increasing their impacts and the costs of control.

## **Environmental Consequences:**

Proposed Action:

Range Resources:

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

Impacts of the proposed action on range resources would be minimal. Through prioritization of the treatment areas on the allotments, livestock can continue. About 80% of the prescribed burn units are on slopes with little if any livestock use. The proposed treatment units for prescribed fire, all meet the Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines and the Standards and Guides Evaluation Assessment.

On treatment areas where mechanical treatment is being proposed, livestock have the potential to impact treated aspen stands, but fencing these stands would minimize impacts. Fencing along the riparian area in Papoose Creek would be maintained for at least two years following treatment to protect the aspen there. Following the project, the fencing would be left in place for protection of the riparian areas. This would allow the Papoose Creek drainage to work towards meeting the Rangeland Health Standards, which it did not meet when the allotment was evaluated in 2000.

**Cumulative Impacts:**

Design criteria and placement of treatment units would reduce cumulative impacts. By limiting treatment to no more than 50% of unit area, and no more than 30% on many units, the range resource impact would be reduced to manageable levels. Should the approved design criteria and mitigation measures not be met, livestock grazing may be reduced or areas fenced and protected. But, based on known livestock use patterns, it is likely that all criteria can be met without impacting the grazing permittees.

Noxious and Invasive Weeds:

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

Proper implementation of treatments would allow for monitoring, inventory and project adjustment in a controlled manner. Should a large portion of the area be consumed in a stand replacement fire, these controls would probably not be possible with severe impacts to resources being likely and stringent fire reclamation actions being required.

Project design criteria require that all projects vehicles be washed prior to entering the project area to minimize weed spread. During wildfire, vehicle washing does not always occur and weed spread is more likely.

Cheatgrass spread would be minimized, under this alternative, with proper project layout and design. Most large cheatgrass sites would be avoided, whereas with a wildfire, most all of the cheatgrass sites would be consumed.

**Cumulative Impacts:**

In the evaluation of the Inkom Allotment and subsequent EA it was shown that noxious and invasive weeds were impacting the area. As a result of the project design criteria and mitigation measures as identified in this environmental assessment, it is anticipated that on the Inkom Allotment, no other cumulative impacts would remain on site affecting noxious and invasive weeds.

It is assumed that on the other parcels of the project area, the Smith Gulch, Pocatello Cattle Allotments and the State of Idaho Department of Lands school section, the cumulative impacts would be the same as the Inkom Allotment.

On the isolated tracts of BLM and scattered treatment areas on the Forest Service lands, off-road-vehicles and higher human uses may create other cumulative impacts, but, once the project design criteria are applied, there should be few if any left over cumulative impacts.