Environmental Consequences

Vegetation-Woodland and Mountain Shrub Communities

Vegetative community productivity, composition, and/or structure would be affected by the alternatives presented. Expected treatment would result in a temporary reduction of tree and shrub coverage. Increased productivity of herbaceous vegetation and browse, reduced stand densities in conifer species, fuel loads and fire and safety hazards would also result.

In Alternative 1, thinning of encroaching conifers and the subsequent prescribed burning of the treatment area will improve the local hardwood and shrub component. Aspen stands would vigorously re-sprout after treatment. It is expected that the aspen stands would increase in size and distribution especially where encroaching conifers have been removed. All of the other mountain shrub species found in the treatment area, with the exception of mountain big sagebrush, will re-sprout and recover favorably due to reduced competition and prescribed fire treatments.

The no action alternative will allow juniper and Douglas-fir to continue encroaching into the aspen, mountain shrub, native grassland, and riparian communities. The result would be increasingly decadent and dying stands of aspen. The mountain shrub community would continue to suffer due to the ongoing competition. This will consequently increase the fire and safety hazards of the project area. If fire were to occur it would likely be on a widespread, destructive level burning a large portion of the 27,206 acres within the project area in one incident. In comparison, the 7,273 acre maximum treatment area for the proposed action would take place over a 10 year period.

The result of the no action alternative would be no control over when or how the area is treated. The result could be an even aged seral landscape. The proposed action would result in a landscape mosaic less likely to burn with the intensity of the no action alternative.