



Upper Snake River District
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**Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation
Management Direction Plan Amendment
Bureau of Land Management
Upper Snake River District
April 2002**

**PRELIMINARY PLANNING ISSUES
and
PLANNING CRITERIA**

Our primary goal is to involve the public in developing new fire and fuels management direction for the Upper Snake River District. New direction would require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which would involve preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), to amend the USRD's 12-existing land use plans (LUPs). Updated LUPs would facilitate fire, fuels and vegetation management programs to more effectively promote resource health on public lands.

Planning Issues help guide the planning process. Land use issues and conflicts that need to be resolved are identified during the scoping process. These issues may stem from such things as new information or changed circumstances, the need to address environmental protection concerns, or a need to reassess the appropriate mix of allowable uses based on new information obtained through the assessment process.

Planning Criteria are prepared to ensure decision-making is tailored to the issues pertinent to the planning effort and to ensure BLM avoids unnecessary data collection and analyses. BLM gives public notice and an opportunity for review of, and comment on, the planning criteria before they are approved.

Preliminary Resource Issues and Planning Criteria

Air Quality

Air quality on public lands is often impacted by smoke and particulates from wildland fires, prescribed burns, and resource restoration activities. With an increased emphasis on the use of prescribed fire, management activities will have an increased risk of impacting air quality. While most BLM programs in the planning area have little affect on air quality, both wildland and prescribed fires can result in significant effects on a short-term basis. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to best protect air quality?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Comply with Clean Air Act (1963)**
- **Comply with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality regulations and the Montana/Idaho Smoke Management Program**

Water Quality

Several Idaho Section 303(d) listed streams that occur within the planning area may be affected by fire, fuels and vegetation management activities. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to protect or improve water quality?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Comply with Clean Water Act (1965)**
- **Comply with Idaho DEQ Total Maximum Daily Load Program**
- **Comply with Idaho Non-Point Source Management Program Plan**
- **Apply Best Management Practices**

Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing may be affected by fire and fuels management.

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Conformance with existing laws, regulations and BLM policy pertaining to livestock grazing on public lands**
- **Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**

Watersheds and Soils

Wildland fires and various activities associated with fire and fuels management may contribute to soil erosion. Maintaining the long-term integrity of watersheds and productivity of soils, as well as aquatic and riparian habitats, is at the core of sound land management practices. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to minimize soil disturbance and maintain soil productivity?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Maintain the long term productivity of soils**
- **Minimize soil erosion**
- **Utilize NRCS Soil Survey data: texture, permeability, erodibility, etc.**
- **Apply Best Management Practices**
- **Implement Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**
- **Utilize guidance from the Scientific Assessment of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project**

Vegetation – Invasive and Noxious Weeds

The significant resources required to fight cheatgrass and noxious weed invasions in the USRD require the cooperation of all landowners in affected areas. Currently, funding for invasive and noxious weed treatment and monitoring is provided under the ESR and Noxious Weed programs. Because of the large costs associated with controlling weed infestations, e.g., treating, monitoring, and retreating as necessary, management direction is needed to provide for a coordinated response to address invasive weeds through rehabilitation and restoration efforts. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to promote the eradication or control invasive and noxious weeds?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Implement USDI-BLM (1991) Final Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States.**
- **Coordinate with county weed cooperatives**

Vegetation – Uplands

Upland plant communities are comprised of sagebrush steppe, grasslands, shrublands, forest and woodlands. Fire, fuels and vegetation management activities impact the natural function and condition of upland plant communities. Structurally diverse and healthy upland plant communities provide habitat for wildlife, forage for livestock, soil stabilization, increased infiltration of precipitation, and for moving clean water to adjacent streams. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to maintain or obtain healthy upland plant communities?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Maintain, rehabilitate, or restore native and non-native plant communities**
- **Maintain multiple-use and sustained yield of livestock forage allocations**
- **Implement Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**
- **Identify wildlife habitat needs in consultation Idaho Department of Fish and Game**

Wildlife Habitat

The USRD contains a diversity of habitats crucial to the management of a variety of wildlife species. Overall, habitat quality is in decline as a result of wildfire, poorly managed livestock grazing and the growing rural/urban development adjacent to public lands. The keys to maintaining wildlife populations are to maintain diverse, healthy plant communities; maintain or improve connectivity within habitat; reduce conflicting uses; avoid damage during prescribed fires; stabilize habitats following wildland fires; and restore other degraded habitats. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to enhance wildlife habitat(s)?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Utilize data and management direction from the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project**
- **Coordinate with the Idaho Department of Fish & Game**
- **Maintain & improve critical deer winter range and big game habitat**

Special Status Plants/Animals

Special status plant and animal species are listed under the Endangered Species Act as candidate threatened or endangered, and/or BLM's Sensitive Species list. The USRD contains habitat for a number of Federally listed and BLM Sensitive Species. Fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities may affect habitat(s) for special status species. How will these activities be conducted to promote recovery of listed species and prevent listing of additional species?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Follow guidance from Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project, Science Assessment**
- **Integrate Biological Opinions, Conservation Agreements, and Strategy Plans (i.e., Ute Ladies Tresses, Cutthroat and Bull Trout, Canada Lynx, Columbia Sharp-Tailed Grouse and Sage Grouse)**
- **Protect Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species, including protection of critical habitat**
- **Protect BLM Sensitive Species**
- **Consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

Cultural Resources

The USRD contains many significant prehistoric, historic, and traditional cultural properties. Less than 20% of the District's area has been inventoried for historic and prehistoric resources. Traditional cultural resources are only beginning to be understood and identified. Fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities such as fire suppression, prescribed fires, rehabilitation, and restoration can be sources of cultural resource degradation and can impact the values of traditional cultural practices. How will these activities be conducted to ensure the protection of cultural resources?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Consult with Tribal Governments**
- **Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office**
- **Identify and protect historical & cultural properties**
- **Protect, Preserve, and Enhance sites listed or eligible for inclusion on the Register of National Historic Places**

American Indian Concerns

Because of the proximity of the Shoshone-Bannock and Duck-Valley reservations to the planning area, there is a probability of sacred, ceremonial and religious sites and landscapes, traditional cultural use areas, and other significant areas within the planning area. While some of these are known, there are doubtless others that have not been identified for protection. This may require inventory, protection, and interpretation to meet Section 110 responsibilities. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to ensure the protection of sacred sites, landscapes, traditional cultural use areas, and significant tribal historical areas?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Consult with federally recognized tribal governments**
- **Preserve values that are significant to tribal members**
- **Identify and protect cultural use areas in cooperation with the tribal governments**

Treaty Rights

The Shoshone-Bannock, Shoshone-Paiute, and the Northwestern Band of the Shoshoni Nation are federally recognized tribes that retain special legal rights to use public lands within the USRD. These rights may preclude or limit other recognized land uses. The original 1868 Fort Hall reservation boundary encompassed about 935,576 acres. The existing Fort Hall Reservation boundary (518,947 acres) was established in 1900 by ceded adjustment. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribe retains certain rights of use on 70,131 acres in the ceded area, which the BLM manages. Cooperative management is the key to achieving management goals for all tribal people and BLM. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to ensure that treaty rights and Federal trust responsibilities are met?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Recognize the Fort Bridger Treaty (1868)**

Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) Interests

The INEEL, which is administered by the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE), occupies about 568,000 acres of public lands within the Idaho Falls field office. Numerous nuclear energy related facilities are situated within the INEEL reservation. The FFVMD amendment must consider the presence of these sensitive facilities within the USRD. The INEEL was designated as a National Environmental Research Park in 1975 and contains some of the best-preserved remnants of sagebrush steppe habitat within the USRD, including the recently dedicated 73,000-acre Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem Reserve. How will fire, hazardous fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted near the INEEL and on adjacent lands to ensure public safety while protecting sensitive facilities and conserving its unique ecological values?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Coordinate with DOE and the principle INEEL contractor in developing plans**
- **Consider sensitive facilities and unique ecological values**

Urban-Wildland Interface Fire Management

Wildland fires are a growing public issue with particular concerns at the urban-wildland interface, privately owned residences adjacent to public lands, and protection of remote rural communities. Good coordination among city fire departments, rural fire districts, and BLM fire personnel is essential to managing wildland fires and prescribed burns on public lands. How will fire, fuels and related vegetation management activities be conducted to minimize the risks associated with wildland fires?

Preliminary Planning Criteria

- **Enforce safety of the public and firefighters while protecting natural resources, historic properties, and private property**
- **Implement current and future Fire Management Activity Plans**
- **Coordinate with cooperators in developing plans**
- **Implement the National Fire Plan – DOI/USDA Cohesive Strategy**