

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-201-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Beefsteak Fire Short Term Impact Mitigation

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T1N R95W Sec. 18, 19
T1N R96W Sec. 24

APPLICANT: BLM

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

- Invasive Species: Due to low soil moisture 70-90% of the established perennial grass and forbs were killed. Without seeding much of the uplands within these watersheds can be expected to re-establish in a monoculture of cheatgrass. The sagebrush bottoms are at greatest risk of cheatgrass invasion. From past experiences within the resource area these bottoms will convert to a monoculture of cheatgrass without seeding.
- The project is located within the Black Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The fire was managed as Wildland Fire Use for resource benefit in accordance with the White River Fire Management Plan and White River Resource Land Use Plan. The fire also converted numerous PJ encroached sagebrush parks back to open meadows. The sagebrush parks that were burned will be enhanced due to the level of PJ encroachment prior to the fire the fire provided a net benefit to these parks by removing the encroached PJ.

Proposed Action: BLM will conduct impact mitigation treatments as described below.

General Description of Treatments

Aerial Seeding: Seed will be broadcast utilizing aircraft at a rate of 11.5 lbs/acre on approximately 270 acres in Beefsteak Gulch (See Beefsteak Fire Map).

Noxious Weed Detection and Control A four person BLM weed crew will treat known infestations of Leafy Spurge, Houndstongue, Mullein, Spotted and Russian Knapweed, and Black Henbane utilizing methods and materials approved by BLM. The crew will also inventory the burn area for new infestations and treat those accordingly.

Purpose of Treatments

Aerial Seeding The purpose of aerial seeding is to establish desirable perennial grasses and forbs on upland sites which will out-compete the invasive, exotic cheatgrass and will help to provide greater soil stabilization and general watershed stabilization. Since there are 270 acres that experienced extreme fire behavior and the most mortality of established grasses and forbs, field office personnel determined that aerial seeding would be the most cost effective and efficient method of applying seed on these acres. This portion of the treatment will be completed by private contract in October/November of 2004, so that the seed would be on the ground prior to prolonged period of winter snow cover. The seed would be ready to germinate when moisture became available and soil temperatures are conducive to germination.

Seed Name	Aerial Seeding	Total Pounds	Cost per lb	Total Costs
Indian Rice Grass (Rimrock)	2lb/acre	540	3.69	1,992.60
Thickspike Wheatgrass (Critana)	3lb/acre	810	2.15	1,741.50
Western Wheatgrass (Rosanaa)	2lb/acre	540	3.39	1,830.60
Beardless Bluebunch Wheat (Witmar)	3lb/acre	810	3.39	2,745.90
Sandberg Poa	1lb/acre	270	3.05	823.50
Blue Flax	0.5lb/acre	135	3.60	486.00
TOTALS	11.5lb/acre	3,105	19.27	9,620.10

Noxious Weed Detection and Control Noxious weed control will be essential to maintain and improve rangeland health, as well as check/eradicate infestations prior to establishment of viable perennial vegetation. Due to the competitive advantage that many noxious weeds have, these species will displace and prevent establishment of desirable vegetation.

No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative is not a viable alternative; it is inconsistent with the general vegetation management objective of the White River ROD/RMP, which is to, “maintain healthy, diverse and sustainable rangeland and woodland plant communities.” It will not be considered further. In addition, the potential for the invasive nonnative cheatgrass plant species to invade the fire area is inconsistent with the Black Mountain WSA direction which is to maintain native ecosystems and avoid impairment of wilderness characteristics such as natural functioning ecosystems.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The Beefsteak fire was managed for resource benefit and those objectives were achieved however, the threat of noxious and invasive weeds remains a priority.

Seeding will allow perennial species to compete with cheatgrass and result in a more rapid stabilization of the effected watershed. Soil stabilization measures will help to mitigate potential erosion events that could threaten human developments and rangeland health. Noxious weed eradication will help prevent the establishment of new and expansion of existing weeds species until desirable vegetation can adequately compete and repel noxious weed infestation. Cumulatively, these treatments will more rapidly help to set the area affected by this fire on a trajectory towards becoming a healthy, resilient rangeland capable of supporting multiple resources. Without treatment, impairment to the wilderness resource may occur.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-55. The objective of re-vegetation and restoration as proposed here is integrally related to two vegetation management goals identified in the ROD/RMP:

Decision Language:

1. Manage noxious and problem weeds so that they cause no further negative environmental, aesthetic, or economic impact. In relation to this goal, failure to revegetate the Greasewood fire may unnecessarily predispose this area to a future of cheatgrass dominance and the environmental degradation that are a consequence of it.

2. Native plant species will be encouraged for reseeding disturbed areas that are not threatened by establishment of exotic plant species. Naturalized plant species will be allowed for reseeding “at risk” and unhealthy rangelands. The Greasewood fire rehabilitation seed mixture will utilize native and non-native species in the seed mixture. The Greasewood burned area lands are considered “at risk” due to the presence of cheatgrass and other noxious weed species

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health

and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: There is currently no inventory data for the proposed treatment area though sites are not considered to have a high probability of presence due to the steep terrain and the distance from potable water.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Since the proposed action does not involve any direct ground disturbance there is little likelihood of impacts to cultural resources. Stabilization of the soils against erosion by reseeding would actually help to protect fragile cultural resources from loss due to erosion.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: If there were cultural resources present, not seeding and attempting to enhance soil stability could result in adverse impact to cultural resources as a result of loss to erosion.

Mitigation: none

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: As described in the proposed action cheatgrass invasion of the burn site is a major concern. Within Beefsteak and several of the minor drainages the noxious weed leafy spurge has been found. The weed crew from Meeker has been treating this area over the past two years. Leafy spurge is particularly difficult to control because of the perennial spreading character and prolific seed production. There is a good possibility that leafy spurge could be transported to, and establish on the burn site.

The proposed seed mix contains “native” species and as such does not fall under the non-native species need for analysis.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is very important that the burn area be inventoried over the next three years to assure that leafy spurge does not establish. The inventory is needed because if leafy spurge is found early, it is controllable. If allowed to persist for a few years the plants entrench themselves making chemical control difficult and prolonged. With seeding and noxious plant monitoring this burn area should be productive and more resistant to invasive species. The environmental analysis for controlling leafy spurge and the Pesticide Use Proposal have been completed and no additional up-front work is needed.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Without seeding and monitoring for outbreaks of noxious weeds (leafy spurge) this site is expected to be dominated by cheatgrass. Additionally this area would be a prime candidate for invasion and dominance by leafy spurge.

Mitigation: Inventory in June during 2005, 2006, and 2007 for the presence of noxious weeds and in particular leafy spurge.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: In the first post-burn season, nesting substrate for migratory birds will be very limited and confined to standing and downed snags (e.g., hairy woodpecker, mountain bluebird) and relatively sparse herbaceous ground cover (e.g., lark and vesper sparrow, western meadowlark). Over the course of project work, there is likely to be no birds inhabiting the burn identified as having higher conservation interest by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program. A number of high interest migratory birds that once inhabited these pinyon-juniper communities (e.g., black-throated gray warbler, gray flycatcher) will not begin to colonize these sites for many decades. Shrubland species with high conservation interest (i.e., Brewer's sparrow and green-tailed towhee) will begin to recolonize these burned lands within 10-15 years as deciduous shrubs and sagebrush redevelop sufficient canopies.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: All seeding operations would take place in October and November of 2004—a timeframe that is outside the migratory bird breeding season. The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on migratory bird breeding efforts.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no actions authorized that could potentially disrupt migratory bird breeding activities.

Mitigation: None.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animals that inhabit or derive important benefit from this area. In the experience of BLM staff, mature pinyon-juniper woodlands at these elevations north of the White River have very limited potential to support nesting northern goshawk, a BLM sensitive species. Based on the small area burned and the rarity of this species in these woodlands, there is no reasonable likelihood that a goshawk nesting territory would have been affected.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Rehabilitation activities would have no affect on any threatened, endangered, or BLM-sensitive animals or associated habitats.

Rehabilitation activity would occur during the late fall months and would have no conceivable influence on breeding activity or habitat potentially occupied by goshawk in the near term. Rehabilitation measures would, by helping to hold soils in place and deterring the establishment of weedy exotics and gullying events, maintain site productivity and the successional processes that are necessary for the redevelopment of well-structured woodland habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Failure to take remedial actions that promote soil stability and reduce the risk of weedy annual establishment may not only degrade short term redevelopment of perennial grasses and forbs as ground cover, but prolong or disrupt long-term successional processes--ultimately reducing the availability of suitable woodland cover for such species as northern goshawk.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: There are no threatened and endangered animals or associated habitats potentially influenced by the proposed action, and the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on the status of land health standards in off-site habitats. The area involved in this wildfire previously met the standards for woodland-associated species (e.g., northern goshawk) and the proposed action is consistent with continued achievement of the standard. As described in the no-action alternative, there is some risk in failing to meet the standard in the long term by failing to apply remedial rehabilitation measures.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: Hazardous or solid wastes are not expected to be a part of the affected environment. However, these materials may accidentally be introduced in the environment through the implementation of the proposed action. Fuel, oil, grease, and antifreeze are all associated with vehicles and fire suppression equipment associated with implementing the proposed action and would only be introduced into the environment because of equipment failure. Minute loss of these materials through normal operation of equipment, maintenance and fueling procedures are not considered spills. Spills are generally defined as the loss of large

quantities of these materials into the environment and are determined to be a spill on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: For any given accident or incident involving hazardous materials, consequences will be dependent on the volume and nature of the incident and material released. Short term impacts such as contaminations of soils, vegetation, and surface water could occur.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous wastes would be introduced into the environment under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in Beefsteak Gulch which is tributary to the White River. Water quality standards and guidance for drainages within the Lower Colorado River Basin are included in CDPHE-WQCC Regulation No. 37 (2004a). This segment of river is in segment 9, all tributaries to the White River, including all wetlands, lakes and reservoirs, from the confluence of North and South Forks to a point immediately above the confluence with Piceance Creek.

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The State has classified this segment as a "Use Protected" reach. Its designated beneficial uses are: Aquatic Life 1, Recreation 2, Water supply and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. The state has defined these water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: With the state set water quality criteria, any improvement to watershed conditions (i.e., reseeded to improve vegetation cover) would be beneficial to the watershed by helping to maintain the necessary water quality the state has established.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The watershed would experience degradation from increased sediment loads to the White River if action were not taken to stabilize the watershed.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Beefsteak Gulch currently meets the state standards and would continue to do so with the implementation of the proposed action.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There are no riparian areas that were significantly affected within the burn area. Beefsteak Gulch is a tributary of the White River. Any action which stabilizes/benefits the watershed would have a positive impact on the White River riparian area and ultimately reduce sediment yields deposited into the white river.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Due to the increased potential for accelerated erosion and noxious weed establishment, this alternative could result in degradation of the riparian resources that occur in the White River riparian area.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Implementing the proposed action will result in the long term achievement of land health standards for riparian systems that were or have the potential to be affected by the Beefsteak Fire.

WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the Black Mountain Wilderness Study Area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The aerial seeding action will not disturb any soils and is temporary in nature. A temporary decrease (approximately 1 hour) in solitude and primitive recreation will occur while seeding operation is occurring due to low flying fixed wing aircraft is expected but a decrease in the potential for a decrease in naturalness due to the infestation of non-native and noxious plant species. An increasing trend in naturalness is expected.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: If seeding is not accomplished, the likely infestation of leafy spurge and/or cheatgrass will detract from the naturalness of the area because both species are non-native and will eventually displace native flora.

Mitigation: Install signage to be placed at Smith and Windy Gulches to make users, in this case hunters, to increase awareness. If possible, avoid the following hunting seasons: October 9-13, 16-24, October 30 – November 5 and November 6-10.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Air Quality, Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: Soil types within the revegetation area of the Beefsteak fire consists of; Blazon moist-Rentsac Complex and Rabbitex flaggy loam. The table below identifies soil characteristics that are common to these soil types.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Range site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
10	Blazon, moist-Rentsac Complex	6-65%	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	2-4	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
67	Rabbitex flaggy loam	10-65%	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	<2	Medium	Moderate to very high	40-60

Two thirds of the fire unit has been delineated as CSU-1. This delineation indicates the soils are highly erosive and are on slopes greater than 35 percent.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Rehabilitation, as proposed with adapted perennial species, will reduce erosion potential, preempt site dominance by cheatgrass that provides little watershed protection, and help enable the BLM to meet the Soil Standard 1 for Rangeland Health on this site over the long term. The proposed watershed measures will limit the potential for accelerated erosion, which could occur prior to the establishment of a suitable vegetation community consisting of perennial species.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Due to the inherently droughty nature of the soils on this site and steepness of slopes, the burn site would be slow and difficult to revegetate with perennial species when allowing natural succession to progress. Annual species provide little watershed protection value because of its limited root mass and growth habits. Therefore, a no action situation would cause a greater potential for accelerated erosion and degradation of watershed values.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: In the current post fire condition, Beefsteak would not meet the Public Land Health Standards for upland soils if left to revegetate on it on. Implementation of the proposed action would ensure compliance with the Land Health Standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The burned area encompasses a Pinyon-Juniper Woodland ecological site within a rough terrain of ridgelines. This ecological site is typically dominated by Pinyon and Juniper trees with a limited understory consisting mainly of big sagebrush, serviceberry, Indian ricegrass, beardless wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will provide for establishment of desirable plant species that will help meet vegetative cover requirements. Therefore, increasing the vegetative species dynamics within the burn site will provide a means of plant cover, soil stability, and provide a competitive interaction with undesirable invasive species such as cheatgrass. With the proposed mix of native grass types, these rangelands would sufficiently have an initial competitive advantage for establishment and growth over undesirable plant species. This establishment of native species would enable other offsite native plant species to establish, thus allowing natural succession to unfold and provide a favorable vegetation community for the long term.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Without a revegetation effort, there is a greater potential for cheatgrass dominance within the burn site that provides little forage or soil stabilization values. Failure to revegetate these slopes may lead to a dominance of cheatgrass, which would create a site that is predisposition to future burning and possible accelerate soil erosion. Therefore, without revegetation, a portion of the ecological site may have a decrease in plant cover of native species.

Mitigation: At least one permanent Daubenmire canopy coverage transect will be established to monitor post burn vegetation response.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Currently the site and adjoining slopes are meeting health standards for plant communities. Under the proposed action, it would increase the vegetative native species dynamics within the burn site and help to meet this standard, which is related to healthy, productive plant communities of native and other desirable species which are maintained at a viable population level.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The burn is separated from middle reaches of the White River by about 1 mile of ephemeral channel. Although trout become increasingly scarce below Powell

Park, these transitional waters support a full complement of nongame fish, including native suckers and chubs. Several of these species are categorized as sensitive by the BLM (i.e., flannelmouth and mountain sucker, roundtail chub)

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Supplemental seeding is intended to promote a strong perennial ground cover response that, by more effectively holding or capturing ash and soils exposed by the burn, would contribute to the reduction of sediment contributed to downstream aquatic systems. Enhancing herbaceous plant density and cover through seeding would have a high likelihood of preventing short term destabilizing influences pulses of ash or soil may have on aquatic habitats in nearby portions of the White River (e.g., adverse alteration of bottom substrate for invertebrate prey). Although these beneficial effects would be minor in the context of the watershed, incremental stabilization of contributing uplands would reduce the potential for channel instability or short term habitat degradation caused by heavy short term and/or chronic long-term sediment releases in downstream river reaches. See also “Invasive and non-native species” section for a discussion of noxious weed control realized through supplemental seeding.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Potential for heavy short term and/or chronic long-term sediment releases and the proliferation of noxious weeds on downstream river reaches would be aggravated.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The White River is almost wholly encompassed by private lands for at least 40 downstream miles. These reaches would generally be regarded as being in properly functioning condition. The proposed action would contribute to meeting the overall land health standards by reducing the risk of excessive short-term or chronic long-term sediment discharge into the White River, and in doing so, help to prevent unnecessary episodes of excessive deposition, channel widening, and subsequent deterioration of aquatic habitat conditions that may attend inaction.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This fire involved variable-aged pinyon-juniper woodlands with characteristically sparse shrub and herbaceous understories. These woodlands along the White River support important concentrations of big game (especially deer) and are used principally from September through May. Drastic reduction of cover and forage supplies will sharply limit the utility of the burned acreage for wintering deer and elk during the earliest stages of vegetation succession. Big game will use topographic relief as a means of effectively exploiting developing herbaceous growth during the first spring months.

Woodlands in this area tend to be mature and typically support a strong contingent of resident and breeding non-game species (e.g., Cooper’s hawk, black-throated gray warbler, plumbeous vireo). Wildfire is considered an integral, but long-interval perturbation in these plant

communities that is necessary to maintain long-term site productivity and successional balance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The pertinent values influenced by emergency rehabilitation of this rangeland as big game winter range and non-game habitats involve the maintenance of long term site productivity rather than accelerating or favoring the redevelopment of any particular herbaceous or woody cover and forage properties through supplemental seeding. Application of selected seed would not only complement the abundance and form of native herbaceous ground cover, but would help reduce the risk of weed proliferation. Strong post-fire response of herbaceous ground cover would reduce off-site transport of soil and gully formation and consequently help maintain productivity of the site in providing forage and cover resources for resident wildlife in the future. The limited extent and duration of seeding activities would have no potential to disrupt seasonal use functions of resident wildlife (e.g., wintering big game, breeding birds and mammals).

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Proliferation of annual or noxious weeds across the burn would add incrementally to progressive and long-term deterioration of these woodland and shrubland habitats. Off-site transport of soil and gully formation on burned acreage would suppress site productivity and the capacity of these sites to redevelop and provide forage and cover resources for resident wildlife in the long term.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The area involved in this wildfire previously met the standards for terrestrial animal communities and the proposed action is consistent with continued achievement of the standard (i.e., recognizing the natural role of fire in ecological function). As described in the no-action alternative, there is some risk in failing to meet the standard in the long term by failing to apply remedial rehabilitation measures.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management			X
Forest Management		X	
Geology and Minerals		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources		X	
Wild Horses	X		

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The fire was managed as Wildland Fire Use for resource benefit in accordance with the White River Fire Management Plan and White River Resource Land Use Plan. The fire burned in heavy Ips Beetle infestation and consumed heavy dead and downed pinyon-juniper fuel loading estimated at approximately 10 tons/acre. The fire also converted numerous PJ encroached sagebrush parks back to open meadows. The sagebrush parks that were burned will be enhanced due to the level of PJ encroachment prior to the fire, the fire provided a net benefit to these parks by removing the encroached PJ. On a landscape level fire was reintroduced to an area where at least one fire return interval was missed and converted 270 acres from a fire regime and condition class III to condition class I and achieved a more mosaic mix of seral age classes within the occurring vegetation strata present within and around the fire on a landscape level.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The Beefsteak burn area experienced extreme fire behavior with relatively low fuel and soil moisture which caused approximately 70-90 percent mortality on the perennial grasses and forbs. Due to the presence of cheatgrass within and adjacent to the burn area the proposed action will help to preempt cheatgrass dominance of the uplands and drainage bottoms of the burn.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Failure to aggressively re-vegetate the Greasewood burn area as proposed could lead to cheatgrass dominance of the uplands and drainage bottoms of the burn, predisposition to more frequent, uncharacteristic fire return intervals in the future and resultant environmental degradation.

Mitigation: None

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The burned area is encompassed within the Windy Gulch grazing allotment (06622), which is authorized for cattle use by Cross Slash Four Ranch (0501413). The allotment can be authorized for the winter period and spring period. Typically the ranch takes non-use during the winter and utilizes the allotment by cattle during the spring. However, characteristically cattle access the proposed rehabilitation area very little, if at all, due to the steep terrain and limited water availability of this locality.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will provide for establishment of desirable plant species that will help meet forage requirements of authorized

livestock and wildlife. Thus, increasing the vegetative species dynamics within the burn site and helping to meet public land health standards for plant communities. This standard is related to healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species which are maintained at a viable population level. With the proposed mix of native grass types, these rangelands would sufficiently have an initial competitive advantage for establishment and growth over undesirable plant species. This establishment of native species would enable other offsite native plant species to establish, thus allowing natural succession to unfold and provide a favorable vegetation community for soil stabilization and grazing purposes.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Without a revegetation effort, there is a greater potential for cheatgrass dominance within the burn site that provides little forage or soil stabilization values. Failure to revegetate these slopes may lead to a dominance of cheatgrass, which would create a site that is predisposition to future burning and possible accelerate soil erosion. Therefore, without revegetation, a portion of the allotment would have decreased available forage.

Mitigation: None

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the Black Mountain WSA. BLM custodially manages the WSA to provide for unstructured, primitive recreation wilderness dependent activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and photography.

The wilderness study area (WSA) portion of the project area is delineated Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) and the non-WSA area surrounding the project area has been delineated a (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPNM and SPM recreation settings are typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPNM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk and the lack of motorized intrusions.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Within the no action alternative, establishment of cheatgrass and noxious weeds was identified as potential long-term impacts. Without treatment,

this burn site would lack the desired vegetation competition to preempt site dominance by the alien invasive species cheatgrass and noxious weeds. Establishment of cheatgrass and noxious weeds on this site would initiate a largely irreversible cycle of environmental degradation that would be difficult to rectify over the long term.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Robert Fowler	Forester	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ken Holsinger	NRS	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Soils
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	NRS	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining engineer	Geology and Minerals
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Recreation Planner	Recreation
Chris Ham	Recreation Planner	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	NRS	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-201-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to implement the Beefsteak Short-term Impact Mitigation Plan because it will result in long term stability and productivity in the burned area, prevent the invasion and proliferation of alien species, and insure maintenance of the Standards for Rangeland Health in the short and long term.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. At least one permanent Daubenmire canopy coverage transects will be established to monitor post burn vegetation response.

2. Inventory in June during 2005, 2006, and 2007 for the presence of noxious weeds and in particular leafy spurge.

3. Install signage to be placed at Smith and Windy Gulches to make users, in this case hunters, to increase awareness. If possible, avoid the following hunting seasons: October 9-13, 16-24, October 30 – November 5 and November 6-10.

4. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: At least one 3x3 and Daubenmire plot would be placed in a key area on the burn site. The plot will provide photos, cover, composition, and frequency information. These plots will be monitored for first and third years and then every five years after that. After the third monitoring cycle an analysis of the monitoring trend would be conducted. Monitoring will be the responsibility of the fuels specialist and range management specialist responsible for the allotments in which the fire burned.

NAME OF PREPARER: Ken Holsinger

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Carol Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

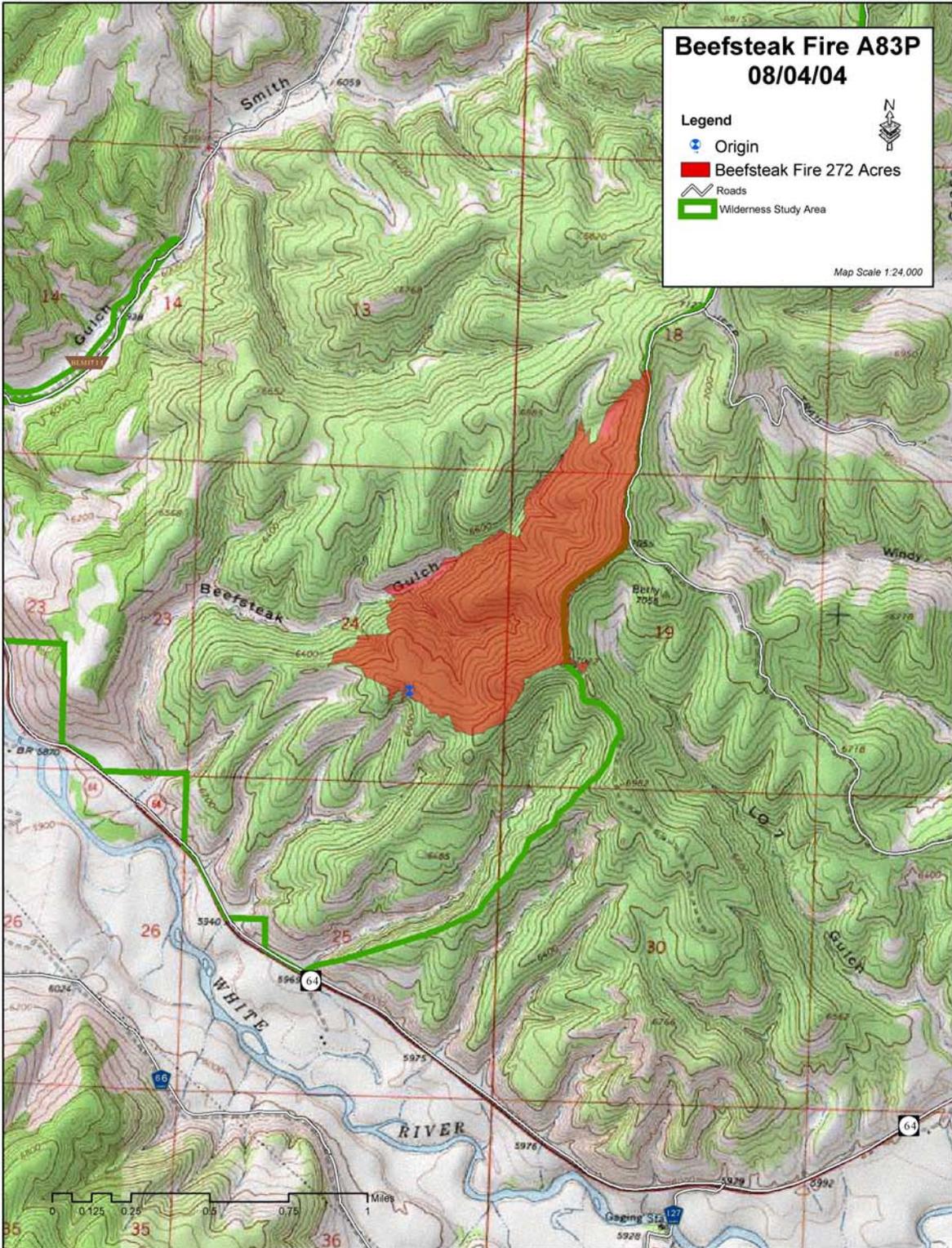
Sraute M Parie
For Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

9/30/2004

ATTACHMENTS:

Detailed Map of the Beefsteak Fire
Location map of the Proposed Action



Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-201-EA

