

Shiner Basin

Project ID: 3515

Status: Current

Fiscal Year: 2016

Submitted By: Dixie Sadlier

Total Acres: 2,031

Project Manager: Dixie Sadlier

PM Agency: Bureau of Land Management

PM Office: Vernal

Lead: Bureau of Land Management

WRI Region: Northeastern

Description:

Removing encroaching pinyon-juniper from Wyoming sagebrush habitat types. Removal will occur by hand with a chainsaw. In the project area, the pinyon-juniper trees have increased in overall density and encroached into the sagebrush habitat type.

Location:

The project area is located below the rim of Diamond Mountain Plateau, approximately 40 miles northeast of Vernal, Utah.

PROJECT NEED

Need For Project:

In the project area, the Pinyon-Juniper trees have encroached into sagebrush habitat, which is slowly decreasing the sagebrush understory, along with overall sagebrush densities. The decline in understory is reducing the overall amount of available winter forage for deer and elk, and the decline in sagebrush densities is reducing the nesting, brooding and winter range habitat quality for sage grouse. Telemetry studies conducted on Diamond Mountain and GPS collar studies from Blue Mountain have shown that that sage grouse are using the project area throughout the year. By removing the encroaching P-J trees, the decline in understory values is expected to cease, and eventually improve over time as the competition for available light, water, and nutrients with the trees is eliminated.

Objectives:

The objective is to improve habitat values across 3696 acres by removing the encroaching Pinyon-Juniper trees, along with decreasing the hazardous fuel loadings.

Specific objectives are:

- 1) Decrease the present stems/acre of P-J trees from 100 stems/acre to <10 stems/acre.
- 2) Reduce the hazardous fuel load

Threats / Risks:

The main risk is the continued expansion of P-J trees across the project area, which is reducing the overall amount of understory productivity and densities along with the decline in Wyoming sagebrush densities and productiveness. A secondary risk is that with the overall expansion of the P-J trees, the overall fuel loadings have increased, which means that any unplanned ignition could result in a more intense and extreme fire event, which could lead to a loss of Wyoming sagebrush habitat and the potential for invasive and noxious weed infestation.

The removal of the P-J trees is planned to be accomplished by the use of hand crews using chain saws. The project will be contracted out, and the contract administered by the Northeastern UDWR region. The project is planned to be completed in the fall of 2015.

Relation To Management Plan:

Vernal BLM Fire Management Plan

- Achieve the desired mix of seral stages for the Pinyon-Juniper and mountain big sage vegetative types.
- Create fuel breaks within the Wyoming sagebrush type to prevent unplanned fires from removing large amounts of sagebrush. Reduce fuel loads.
- Chemical treatments would be utilized in conjunction with prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to achieve desired objectives, and to also control invasive species.

Vernal RMP ROD

Vegetation Management Decisions;

- VEG-4; Manage the vegetation to attain the ecological stage that will benefit wildlife in crucial habitat and livestock grazing. Manage vegetation in remaining areas that results in high vegetation species diversity.
- VEG-5; Allow mechanical, fire, biological, cultural or chemical methods for vegetation manipulation, using the type of manipulation appropriate and consistent with other land use objectives, and incorporating standard operation procedures and BMP's, as applicable, to protect other resources.
- VEG-9; Manage the vegetation to attain the ecological stage that will: ensure sustainability, meet authorized use allocations (wildlife,livestock),ensure species diversity.

•VEG-13; Restore or rehabilitate up to 200,000 acres of sagebrush-steppe habitat over the life of the plan.

Fire / Fuels:

N/A

Water Quality/Quantity:

N/A

Compliance:

2 PM Archaeology, BLM Will Complete Arc Surveys and Reports, Jun 1 2015 / 6 NEPA, NEPA will be completed by VFO, BLM, Jun 1 2015

Methods:

Slashing contract would be issued by the Northeastern UDWR. Hand crews carrying chain saws will be used to remove the trees.

Monitoring:

The vegetative monitoring for this project would be the establishment of density studies to monitor to determine if the objective of reducing the P-J stems/acre from 100 to 10. In addition, photo plots would be established and before and after treatment photos would be taken.

Partners:

N/A

Future Management:

Since no seed is being applied, there would be no need for any grazing deferment. Ongoing winter/spring season cattle grazing would continue as presently managed. Existing management of the project area is determined to be adequate to ensure the success of the project. The proposed project is expected to ensure the continued availability for forage in the future for livestock which will result in the continued viability of the ongoing grazing system.

Domestic Livestock Benefit:

N/A

| BUDGET | WRI/DWR | Other | Budget Total | In-Kind Total | Grand Total |
|---------------|--------------|--------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | \$122,454.00 | \$0.00 | \$122,454.00 | \$15,000.00 | \$137,454.00 |

| Item | Description | WRI | Other | In-Kind | Year |
|--------------------------|--|------------|--------|------------|------|
| Archaeological Clearance | BLM Archeologist will complete surveys and reports | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$5,000.00 | 2016 |
| NEPA | VFO, BLM will complete all NEPA requirements for the project. | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$10,000.0 | 2016 |
| Contractual Services | Northeastern UDWR will contract out 2,031 acres of Slashing, estimated at \$60/acre. The other 1,846 acres will be proposed in 2017. | \$122,454. | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2016 |

| FUNDING | WRI/DWR | Other | Funding Total | In-Kind Total | Grand Total |
|----------------|-------------|--------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| | \$67,876.02 | \$0.00 | \$67,876.02 | \$15,000.00 | \$82,876.02 |

| Source | Phase | Description | Amount | Other | In-Kind | Year |
|-----------------------|-------|--|------------|--------|------------|------|
| Questar | NC92 | BLM - Compensatory Mitigation for NEPA #DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0050-EA | \$20,625.0 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2017 |
| American Gilsonite | NC92 | BLM - compensatory mitigation for NEPA #: DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0063-EA | \$412.50 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2017 |
| Crescent Point Energy | NC92 | BLM - Compensatory Mitigation for NEPA #DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2015-0113-EA | \$30,363.7 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2017 |
| BLM | N646 | | \$16,474.7 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2016 |
| BLM | | N/A | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$15,000.0 | 2016 |

| EXPENSE | WRI/DWR | Other | Expense Total | In-Kind Total | Grand Total |
|---------|---------|--------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$15,000.00 | \$15,000.00 |

| Source | Phase | Description | Amount | Other | In-Kind | Year |
|-----------------------|-------|--|--------|--------|------------|------|
| Questar | NC92 | BLM - Compensatory Mitigation for NEPA #DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2016-0050-EA | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2017 |
| American Gilsonite | NC92 | N/A | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| Crescent Point Energy | NC92 | N/A | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| BLM | N646 | Bid was lower than anticipated and the number of acres originally proposed were decreased. | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | 2017 |
| BLM | | Nepa and SHPO Consult was completed by the BLM | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$15,000.0 | 2017 |

SPECIES

| Species | "N" Rank | HIG/F Rank |
|---------------------|----------|------------|
| Mule Deer | | 1 |
| Threat | | Impact |
| No Threat | | NA |
| Elk | | 2 |
| Threat | | Impact |
| No Threat | | NA |
| Greater Sage-grouse | N3 | 1 |
| Threat | | Impact |
| No Threat | | NA |

HABITATS

PROJECT COMMENTS

| | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Comment | 06/01/2015 | Type: Project | Commenter N/A |
| Contracter will furnish equipment | | | |
| Comment | 08/23/2016 | Type: Admin | Commenter Tyler Thompson |
| Amended Right-of-Way UTU-0-18084 Questar FL-89 8-inch replacement pipeline: NEPA # DOI-BLM-UT-2016-0050 WRI Project #3515 Shiner Basin P-J lop and scatter vegetation treatment project NEPA # DOI-BLM-UT-2015-0113-EA | | | |

COMPLETION

Start Date:

08/05/2016

End Date:

08/30/2016

FY Implemented:

2016

FY Completed:

2017

Final Methods:

The project targeted Phase I Pinyon Juniper invasion. Trees were removed using chain saws and a foot crew. Trees were cut with chain saws and lopped over so that was less than 3 feet of debris on the ground.

Project Narrative:

UDWR initiated the contract with Summit Resources. The Bid came back at \$33.42/acre. Summitt was able to complete the work in 3 weeks, with no issues. This area has been identified as big game crucial habitat and is within a PHMA and SGMA for Greater Sage-grouse. Collared grouse data was used to determine the treatment boundaries, which also incorporates a fuel break to protect the sage-steppe habitat from large unwanted fires.

Future Management:

BLM coordinated with livestock grazers and no rest was required. The grazers were not affected by the project, therefore, there was no change in management. The project area will be monitored for re-growth. Another lop & scatter treatment contract may be implemented if there is significant regrowth. Another option is to use the BLM fuel crew to cut any regrowth throughout the project area

Map Features

| ID | Feature Category | Action | Treatment/Type |
|------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 5451 | Terrestrial Treatment Area | Vegetation removal / hand crew | Lop and scatter |

