

DECISION RECORD

IV. DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Overshoe/Basque ESR Plan. I have reviewed this plan conformance and NEPA compliance record and have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with an approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required. The Proposed Action would not create any irretrievable or irreversible commitment of resources as the seeding of these areas can be reversed by chemical, mechanical and/or grazing treatment, with reseeding. Though the use of adapted, native, perennial cultivars for all seed mixtures is preferred, if seed is not available and non-native perennials are used instead there still would be no significant impact. The use of non-native, perennial bunch grasses to replace non-native, annual cheatgrass would allow for attainment of ESR objectives and would not constitute irretrievable or irreversible commitment of resources; nor would it constitute a significant impact on the human environment. Seeding augmentation of the upper country sites with native species, to fill open niches left by the loss of sagebrush would not constitute a significant impact. It would merely minimize future encroachment by cheatgrass and weedy species and speed natural recovery.

Following the No Action alternative or seeding native cultivars, which are not adapted to the dry low country sites, would result in significant negative impacts, as cheatgrass and associated weeds would quickly dominate. This would allow fire frequencies, fire hazards and fire suppression costs to increase. Rangeland, soil, and watershed health and function would be degraded. Wildlife habitat would be degraded. Recreational opportunities would be impaired. Permitted livestock grazing would be interrupted more frequently by the loss of forage to more frequent wildfire, and drought impacts would be greater as the forage base would be dominated by annual plants rather than more stable perennials.

The direct impacts of drilling, under the Proposed Action, would be short term and not significant. Cultural sites would be inventoried and protected by mitigation measures to avoid any surface resources encountered needing protection (such as rock structures, historic dump sites, etc.). The drilling activity itself would not significantly impact site integrity of buried sites, as the drills would not cut below the 10 cm “zone of disturbance”.

All fencing actions proposed would have minimal, short term impacts to the human environment.

Actions proposed in the ESR should meet the objectives of the ESR which are: 1. Stabilize soils from wind and water erosion by augmenting native range with adapted, perennial plant species. 2. Reduce the probability of the establishment and site dominance of annual grasses and weeds through seeding adapted, perennial plant species. 3. Reduce future fire hazards in cheatgrass dominated areas by seeding adapted, perennial plant species. 4. Maintain or restore ecological integrity and function to the ESR area by seeding adapted perennial plant species. 5. Restore vegetative structure, in order to capture and hold snow during the winter months and manage moisture on site more effectively by reestablishing a sagebrush community 6. Protect the ESR area by excluding livestock grazing, in the seeded and burned areas, for at least two growing seasons (i.e. first full year and until seed ripe the second year) or until plants are sufficiently established to withstand grazing, by fencing off the burned

areas from access by livestock.

The implementation of the Overshoe/Basque ESR Plan is a solid decision since all the objectives of the ESR plan should be accomplished by the implementation of the proposed action of the EA without significant effects to the human environment.

Tom Miles, Acting Jordan Field Manager October 3, 2002

Approving Official

Date