United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918
http://www.or.blm.gov/Vale/

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1742
OR-030-02-026

September 10, 2002

Dear Interested Party:

The Overshoe/Basque Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR)/Environmental Assessment (EA No. OR-030-02-026) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is available for viewing at http:www.or.blm.gov/vale/ under NEPA Planning and Environmental Analyses, Schedule of Proposed Actions, or at the Vale District Office of the BLM, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon. A copy is available upon request.

On July 7, 2002 A lightning storm ignited the Overshoe Fire (N238), twenty five miles south of Burns Junction and four miles east of Highway 95. The Overshoe fire burned approximately 430 acres of public land in the Pronghorn Pasture of the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment (#01201), Jordan Resource Area, Vale District. Seven days later on July 14, 2002 a lightning storm ignited the Basque Fire (N252), twenty three miles south of Burns Junction, south of the Whitehorse Road and west of Highway 95. This fire is located approximately five miles west of the Overshoe Fire. The Basque Fire burned approximately 2,322 acres in the Barren Valley North Pasture of the Barren Valley Allotment (#10801), Jordan Resource Area, Vale District.

The proposed action would allow seeding of 2,180 acres within the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment and the Barren Valley Allotment, which were burned by wildfire, with a mixture of adapted perennial plant species, primarily native species. Seven miles of protective fencing would also be constructed to protect the seedings and burned areas from livestock grazing. The project would stabilize soil, reduce establishment and re-establishment of annual grasses and noxious weeds, restore wildlife habitat, and reduce future fire hazards and fire frequency, in cheatgrass dominated areas.

The burned and seeded areas in both pastures would be closed to livestock grazing for at least two growing seasons, or until or until plants are established and able to withstand grazing.

Comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the identified administrative office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as a part of the EA document or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality.

If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

We are allowing a fifteen (15) day comment period which will end on September 25, 2002 prior to issuing a decision. All comments received within 15 days from the date of this letter will be taken into consideration prior to a decision being issued. A copy of the decision will be sent to those who comment or request it. All comments should be in writing and should be directed to the Jordan Resource Area Field Manager at the above address. Any questions regarding this plan or the analysis should be directed to Tom Miles at (541) 473-3144.

Sincerely,

s/Jerry L. Taylor

Jerry L. Taylor
Jordan Field Office Manager

Environmental Assessment of Overshoe/Basque ESR Plan
EA No. OR-030-02-026

I. PURPOSE AND NEED

A. Background

On July 7, 2002 a lightning storm ignited the Overshoe Fire (N238) twenty five miles south of Burns Junction, four miles east of Highway 95, in T. 36 S., R. 40 E., Sec. 28. The Overshoe fire burned approximately 430 acres of public land in the Pronghorn Pasture of the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment (#01201), Jordan Resource Area, Vale District. The Overshoe Fire was contained on 7-8-02 and was declared out on 7-9-02. (see map 1)

Seven days later on July 14, 2002 a lightning storm ignited the Basque Fire (N252) twenty three miles south of Burns Junction, south of the Whitehorse Road and west of Highway 95, in T. 35 S., R. 39 E., Sections 34 & 35, and T. 36 S., R. 39 E., Sections 15, 16, 21, 22, & 28. This fire is located approximately five miles west of the Overshoe Fire. The Basque Fire burned approximately 2,322 acres in the Barren Valley North Pasture of the Barren Valley Allotment (#10801), Jordan Resource Area, Vale District. The Basque Fire was contained on 7-15-02 and was declared out on 7-22-02. (See map 1)

These two fires are very similar except for a slight difference in the lower country. Both fires have lower country dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*) and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) with remnant bottlebrush squirreltail and Sandberg's bluegrass plants, but the lower country of the Basque fire showed signs of being slightly drier with more calcareous soils as evidenced by a few scattered plants of shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) and spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*). Bluebunch wheatgrass doesn't naturally occur, as a dominant species, in these lower elevation areas of either Overshoe or Basque Fire areas.

The upper country, approximately one half of the area burned in both fires, was dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush with an understory of bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudorogneria spicata*), bottlebrush squirreltail, and Sandberg bluegrass. Cheatgrass was dispersed throughout all the upper country preburn The loss of shrub cover leaves many open niches which cheatgrass and weeds may fill.

The Overshoe and Basque Fires rate of spread was medium to high resulting from erratic winds, low relative humidity, and dry fine fuel conditions. Because of a relatively low fire line intensity on the north flank of both fires, much of the cheatgrass seed duff layer remains in-tact. Within the fire perimeter of both fires about 5% of the vegetation remains in unburned islands. Fire suppression activities on the Overshoe Fire consisting of one heavy engine and 3 medium engines. The Basque Fire suppression activities included 2 heavy engines, 3 light engines, and 1 D6 Cat.

B. Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the ESR effort is to establish adapted perennial plant species in order to: stabilize soils, prevent re-invasion of cheatgrass, reduce fire frequency and future fire hazards, maintain and/or restore ecological integrity and function, re-establish a shrub cover for multiple rooting depth and wildlife habitat, and establish a perennial forage base for wildlife and livestock.

The ESR effort needs to be protected by closing the burned areas within all of the pastures to livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons or until plants are well established and able to withstand grazing in the long-term. It is standard practice to close burned areas and seeded areas to livestock grazing for a time, to facilitate recovery, through protective fencing and/or grazing closures.

ESR Objectives to address purpose and need:

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.

5. Restore vegetative structure, in order to capture and hold snow during the winter months and manage moisture on site more effectively.

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.

II. CONSISTENCY WITH LAND USE PLANS

The proposed ESR effort is consistent with the preferred Land Use Alternative for the Southern Malheur Management Framework Plan (MFP) (1983) and the Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) (1984), and is consistent with the Proposed Southeast Oregon RMP/Final EIS (April, 2001).

III. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to seed approximately 330 acres of the Overshoe Fire and 1,850 acres in the Basque Fire for a total of 2,180 acres with an adapted perennial seed mix using rangeland drills. The remaining 100 acres of Overshoe and 242 acres of Basque would be allowed to recover naturally. The total seeded acres would also be aerial seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush seed. (See maps 2 and 3)

Seed varieties used would be based on availability and site suitability. The first preference for the lower country, based on availability, would be to use cultivars of native species. The second preference would be a fall back position should suitable natives not be available for use. The upper country would receive priority for native seed based on relative probability of success. Only natives are proposed for the upper country. The proposed seed mixes are listed below:

Basque Fire (N252)

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
#1 Seed Mixture (1st Preference)				
Lower Country Seed Mix (1500 acres)				
Bottlebrush Squirreltail	5.00	7,500	$37.17	$278,775.00
Sandberg Bluegrass	1.00	1,500	$2.50	$3,750.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	1,500	$10.00	$15,000.00
Shadscale	2.00	3,000	$5.09	$15,270.00
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	750	$3.17	$2,377.00
Western Yarrow	0.10	150	$6.60	$990.00
Total	**9.60**	**14,400**		**$316,162.00**
Upper Country Seed Mix (350 acres)				
Bluebunch Wheatgrass P7	6.00	2,100	$18.20	$38,220.00
Sandberg Bluegrass	1.00	350	$2.50	$875.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	350	$10.00	$3,500.00
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	175	$3.17	$554.75
TOTAL	**8.50**	**2,975**		**$43,149.75**

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
#2 Seed Mixture (2nd Preference)				
Lower Country Seed Mix (1500 acres)				
Crested wheatgrass (Siberian)	6.00	9,000	$1.40	$12,600.00
Russian wildrye	1.00	1,500	$6.96	$10,440.00

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	750	$3.17	$2,377.50
Western Yarrow	0.10	150	$6.60	$990.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	1,500	$10.00	$15,000.00
TOTAL	**8.60**	**12,900**		**$41,407.50**
Upper Country Seed Mix (350 acres)				
Same as above for upper country 1st preference.				

Overshoe Fire (N238)

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
#1 Seed Mixture (1st Preference)				
Lower Country Seed Mix (130 acres)				
Bottlebrush Squirreltail	5.00	650	$37.17	$24,160.50
Sandberg Bluegrass	1.00	130	$2.50	$325.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	130	$10.00	$1,300.00
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	65	$3.17	$206.05
Western Yarrow	0.10	13	$6.60	$85.80
Total	**7.60**	**988**		**$26,077.35**
Upper Country Seed Mix (200 acres)				
Bluebunch Wheatgrass P7	6.00	1,200	$18.20	$21,840.00
Sandberg Bluegrass	1.00	200	$2.50	$500.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	200	$10.00	$2,000.00
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	100	$3.17	$317.00
TOTAL	**7.75**	**1,700**		**$24,657.00**

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
#2 Seed Mixture (2nd Preference)				
Lower Country Seed Mix (130 acres)				
Crested wheatgrass (Siberian)	6.00	1,200	$1.40	$1,680.00
Russian wildrye	1.00	200	$6.96	$1,392.00
Apar, Lewis Flax	0.50	100	$3.17	$317.00
Western Yarrow	0.10	20	$6.60	$132.00
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	1.00	200	$10.00	$416.50
TOTAL	**7.85**	**1,720**		**$3,937.50**

Species*	Pounds per acre	Total Pounds	Approx. Cost per pound	Total Cost
Upper Country Seed Mix (200 aces)				
Same as above for upper country 1st preference.				

* Species type and mixture is subject to seed availability and preference is based on the above table.

The 1st and only preference for the upper country is to augment existing natives and fill niches left by lost sagebrush cover, to preclude cheatgrass invasion. The 2nd preference lower country mix would be used in the lower flat areas that are dominated by or now open to invasion by cheatgrass. If native seeds are not available for the upper country, then the upper country would not be seeded since the seeding is for augmentation of an already existing understory of native grasses. If the upper country is not seeded we expect it would still come back to a native dominated plant community although cheatgrass would increase. Wyoming big sagebrush seed would be broadcasted aerially over all of the lower and upper country seeded areas.

Livestock grazing would be excluded from the burned areas in the Pronghorn Pasture of the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment, and the Barren Valley North Pasture of the Barren Valley Allotment for at least two growing seasons or until sufficient establishment has occurred to allow grazing to resume.

Livestock grazing would be excluded from the Overshoe ESR areas within Pronghorn Pasture by constructing 3 miles of temporary electric fence. (see map 2) The electric fence would have one strand of barbed wire on the top and one-two strands of smooth wire or cable for the lower wires. The barbed top wire would have flagging attached to allow wildlife to see the fence and avoid collisions. The barbs serve to hold the flagging in place.

Protection would be provided to the Basque ESR areas on Barren Valley Allotment by erecting 4 miles of permanent fence (see map 3). The permanent fence in the Barren Valley Allotment would be a three strand barbed wire fence with proper wire spacing to allow for safe wildlife passage. The permanent fence was selected instead of a temporary electric fence since a problem with controlling cattle in the Barren Valley Allotment exists which a permanent fence in the proposed location would fix. Presently cattle travel around the north end of the ridge that bisects the Barren Valley Pasture making the control of grazing within the pasture difficult. The fence would keep cattle in the flat areas either east or west of the ridge, which would help with management of grazing utilization levels.

All fences would be built to BLM specifications. The permanent fence would be built with steel fence posts at 16.5 foot centers with the three wires spaced at 16", 26" and 38" above the ground. The bottom wire would be smooth and the top two wires would be barbed. The temporary electric fence would be built with steel and possibly

fiberglass fence posts at about 30 foot centers. The top wire would be barbed to hold flagging for warning people, wildlife and livestock of the presence of a fence. The bottom two wires would be smooth. The three wires would be spaced at 20", 30", 42" from the ground. Every quarter of a mile either a easy panel brace or rock crib would be placed for stretching wires.

Monitoring of the seeded area would be conducted for at least 2 years post treatment. This would include livestock use supervision, weed monitoring, and vegetation monitoring. If weeds invade the rehabilitated areas, then weed control measures would be implemented which may include chemical or mechanical treatments as per the Integrated Weed Control Plan and Environmental Assessment #OR-030-89-19.

B. Alternative 1

No Action

No emergency rehabilitation would be done.

C. Other Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Further Analysis

1. Same as the proposed action except the Pronghorn Pasture and the Barren Valley Allotment would be totally closed to livestock grazing until seeded and native plant health has been restored.

This alternative was determined to be unreasonable since there are approximately 14,580 acres of unburned rangeland within the Pronghorn Pasture and approximately 6,850 acres of unburned rangeland within the Barren Valley North Pasture that could be grazed if protection measures are implemented for only the ESR areas. Protective fencing around the burned areas would allow grazing use on the unburned rangeland.

2. Same as the proposed action except no protective fence would be erected and cattle would not be excluded.

This alternative was determined to be unreasonable because the success of the seeding depends on rest from livestock grazing to become well established. If the seedlings were grazed too soon, they could be plucked entirely from the ground because the plant did not had enough time to establish a strong root system. Normally, two growing seasons rest is necessary in this area.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Vegetation

Historically, the upper country of both fires supported a Wyoming big sagebrush overstory with a bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail understory. The drier lower country areas of both fires historically supported Wyoming big sagebrush, spiny hopsage, Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail and Thurber's needlegrass (*Stipa thurburiana*) with shadscale, occupying portions of the lower country in the Basque Fire burned area. On the Overshoe Fire burned area there are inclusions of black sage sites that exist between the upper country Wyoming big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass sites and the lower country Wyoming big sagebrush/spiny hopsage/ Thurber's needle grass sites. The understory of the black sage sites is mainly Sandberg's bluegrass with some occasional bottlebrush squirreltail.

Historic grazing practices (late 1860s to early 1960s) resulted in the removal of most native perennial grasses in the lower country areas. This has resulted in the invasion of cheatgrass. Presently, right before the wildfires the lower country areas were dominated by Wyoming sagebrush with an understory of cheatgrass, clasping pepperweed (*Lepidium perfoliatum*), tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*) and bottlebrush squirreltail and Sandberg's bluegrass. Although, the cheatgrass did not form a solid mat under the sagebrush overstory, it did represent the most dominant understory species which presents problems for natural reestablishment of a native plant community. If cheatgrass is allowed to dominate and take over a site then the high flammabillity of cheatgrass increases the frequency of fire. The driving force for cheatgrass dominance on public lands today is fire. Peters and Bunting point out correctly that ". . . fire helped determine the physiognomy and species composition of many communities." They also point out that, since the introduction of cheatgrass, fuel loads and fuel distribution has been altered, and fire frequency has increased. The fire cycle being changed perpetuates itself without intervention (Peters and Bunting, 1994). In the case of the Jackies Butte area of the Jordan Resource area fire cycles have changed from one every 25-75 years to one every 3.4 years as a result of cheatgrass.

The upper country areas in both fires in general supported sufficient cover of native plants to regenerate naturally, however occasional areas of lower native plant densities than desirable, with understories of cheatgrass, exist. These areas are open to cheatgrass invasion as many niches have been created by the elimination of sagebrush. There are also several sites within both fires that are either too steep or too rocky to effectively seed with rangeland drills. However, these sites generally support good cover of native perennial vegetation and should recover naturally.

B. Noxious Weeds

There are no known noxious weeds in the rehabilitation area; however, diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) is found about eight miles south of the fires at the Blue Mountain Pit. Cheatgrass, a county noxious weed, has been discussed in the vegetation section.

C. Livestock Grazing

The Overshoe Fire burned in the Pronghorn Pasture of the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment (#01201). The Pronghorn Pasture has 15,083 acres of which 430 acres burned (about 3% of the total pasture). The pasture is authorized for 462 AUMs with an average stocking rate of 33 acres per AUM. Only one permittee grazes cattle in this pasture.

Total permitted use (AUMs) for the pasture are listed below:

Permittee	**AUMs**
Dave Etchart	462
TOTAL	**462**

The Basque Fire burned in the Barren Valley North Pasture of the Barren Valley Allotment (#10801). The Barren Valley North Pasture has 9433 acres of which 2,322 acres burned (approximately 25% of the total pasture). This pasture is authorized for 154 AUMs with an average stocking rate of 61 acres per AUM. Only one permittee grazes cattle in this pasture.

Total permitted use (AUMs) for the pasture is listed below.

Permittee	**AUMs**
Richard Yturriondobeitia	154
TOTAL	**154**

The Barren Valley North Pasture has a major ridge that runs north-south through the approximate middle of the pasture separating the pasture into essentially two fields, one on the east of the ridge and one on the west. (see map 3) However, the north end of the ridge is readily accessible for cattle to move back and forth between the fields making control of livestock use in the fields relatively difficult. The rancher has indicated in the past the building of a fence to separate the two fields would help in managing livestock use to avoid over utilization of any one field. An EA was completed to allow building of an electric fence in the past. However, since the need is permanent a standard barbed wire fence may provide a better option, one that does not require constant checking to insure the fence is hot like the case is with an electric fence.

D. Soils

Overshoe Fire

The soils found in the burned area were surveyed and described in Oregon's Long Range Requirements for Water 1969, Appendix I-11, Owyhee Drainage Basin. The burned area consists of two soil mapping units from this fourth-order soil survey. The two units incorporate only one classification unit each and make up approximately 80 percent of each unit with the remaining percentage comprised of inclusion or variants of each soil. Each unit has only one slope group; Unit 26, 0 to 3 percent, and Unit 75, 12 to 20 percent.

Soils within the burned area consist of deep, silty, and well drained underlain by somewhat consolidated lacustrine sediments (Unit 26) and loamy, shallow, well drained (Unit 75) over basalt, rhyolite or welded tuff. Typically, these soils occur on nearly level basin terraces and on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus (0-20% slopes). The effect rooting depth on these soils is shallow to deep (10-60 inches) and Unit 75 is limited primarily by depth to parent material. The burned areas lie within the 8-11 inch precipitation zone yet could receive wide variations in precipitation from drought to wet years.

Unit 26/1 CU 26 soils, about 80 percent, 0-3 percent slopes.

Unit 75/4 CU 75 soils, about 80 percent, 12-20 percent slopes.

Classification Unit 26

Soils are silty, well drained, and deep soils on nearly level basin terraces underlain by somewhat consolidated lacustrine sediments. Soils occur usually at elevations of 4,000 to 5,500 feet and have a high potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation is on the low side of the 8 to 11 inch range, and mean annual air temperature centers around 45 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of silt loam, over silt loams, and silt loam laminated sediments. Native vegetation consisted mostly of western wheatgrass, squirreltail grass, silver sagebrush, and big sagebrush.

Classification Unit 75

Soils are shallow, loamy, very stony, and well drained soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. They occur on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus with some very steep faulted and dissected terrain. Soils occur at elevations from 4,000 to 6,000 feet and stones limit their potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation is on the low side of the 8 to 11 inch range, and mean annual air temperature centers around 45 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of very stony silt loam, over stony loam, over stony silt loam, to bedrock at about 15 inches. Native vegetation consisted mostly of bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and big and low sagebrush.

The majority of the burned area (approximately 80%) consist of Unit 75/4 on steeper and dissected uplands. The remaining area is located on nearly level basin terraces. Additional soil inclusions can be found throughout the project area that contain varying degrees of surface textures and roughness and are variants of Unit 26 or 75.

Basque Fire

The soils found in the burned area were surveyed and described in Oregon's Long Range Requirements for Water 1969, Appendix I-11, Owyhee Drainage Basin. The burned area consists of five soil mapping units from this fourth-order soil survey. The five units incorporate eight classification units that occur in various percentages within each unit and have slope groups that range between 0-60+ percent.

Soils within the burned area consist of shallow to deep, well drained soils with surface textures from loamy sands to silty loams, subsurface textures from sandy loams to heavy clay loams clayey subsoils and some with cemented pans. Typically, these soils occur on gently sloping to moderately steep old fans and on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus and some very steep faulted and dissected terrain (0-60+ percent slopes). The effect rooting depth on these soils is shallow to deep (10-40 inches) and limited primarily by depth to cemented pans and parent material. The burned areas lie within the 8-11 inch precipitation zone yet could receive wide variations in precipitation from drought to wet years.

Unit 1-3-50 CU soils, CU soils 30 percent, CU 50 soils 20 percent, 0-3 percent slopes.

Unit 55/2-3 CU 55 soils, 3-7 percent slopes, 30 percent CU 55 soils, 7-12 percent slopes.
Unit 56/3-4 CU 56 soils about 80 percent, 07-20 percent slopes.
Unit 75-96/5-6 CU 75 soils, CU 96 soils about 30 percent, 20-60 percent slopes.
Unit 96-76/5-6 CU 96 soils, CU 76 soils about 30 percent, 20-60 percent slopes.

Classification Unit 1

Soils are deep, well drained, medium-textured soils derived from recent alluvium on nearly level fans and bottomland. Soils occur usually at elevations of 2,500 to 4,700 feet and have a high potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8-11 inches and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of gray silt loam, brown silt loam, to stratified very fine sandy loam and silt loam with some fine gravel layers. Native vegetation consisted mostly of basin wild ryegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, and big sagebrush.

Classification Unit 3

Soils are shallow, silty, well drained underlain by gravel on nearly level recent fans and bottomland. Soils occur usually at elevations of 3,000 to 4,500 feet and have a good potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8-10 inches and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of gray very fine sandy loam, to brown silt loam to brown loamy gravel. Depth to gravel substratum is usually 16 inches. Native vegetation consisted mostly of basin wild ryegrass, rabbitbrush, and big sagebrush.

Classification Unit 50

Soils are shallow, somewhat excessively drained underlain by hardpan on nearly level old fans and terraces. Soils occur usually at elevations of 4,000 to 5,000 feet and have a some potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8-10 inches and mean annual air temperature centers around 45 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of brown loamy sand, to brown sandy loam, to brown sandy loam, to silica cemented pan in a gravelly loam matrix 4 to 20 inches thick. Native vegetation consisted of big sagebrush, Atriplex spp., budsage, rabbitbrush, horse brush, squirreltail grass, and needlegrass.

Classification Unit 55

Soils are shallow, loamy, well drained with cemented pans on very extensive to moderately steep old fans and high terrace remnants. Soils occur usually at elevations of 3,000 to 5,500 feet and have a good potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8-11 inches and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of brownish gray gravelly loam, to brown gravelly loam, to silica and lime cemented pan 6 to 20 inches thick over stratified loamy sand and gravel. Native vegetation consisted of big sagebrush, low sagebrush, rabbitbrush, budsage, Atriplex spp., neddlegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and squirreltail grass.

Classification Unit 56

Soils are shallow, well drained with clayey subsoils and cemented pans on very extensive, gently sloping to moderately steep old fans and high terrace remnants. Soils occur usually at elevations of 3,000 to 5,500 feet and have potential for range seeding limited by hardpan and slope. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8-11 inches and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of brownish gray gravelly loam, to light brown gravelly clay loam, to brown gravelly heavy clay loam, to silica cemented gravelly pan 6 to 20 inches thick over stratified loamy sand and gravel. Native vegetation consisted of big sagebrush, low sagebrush, rabbitbrush, budsage, Atriplex spp., neddlegrass, and squirreltail grass.

Classification Unit 75

Soils are shallow, loamy, very stony, and well drained soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. They occur on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus with some very steep faulted and dissected terrain. Soils occur at elevations from 4,000 to 6,000 feet and stones limit their potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation is on the low side of the 8 to 11 inch range, and mean annual air temperature centers around 45 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of very stony silt loam, over gray stony loam, over gray stony silt loam, to bedrock at about 15 inches. Native vegetation consisted mostly of bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and big and low sagebrush.

Classification Unit 76

Soils are shallow, clayey, very stony, well drained soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. They occur on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus and some very steep

faulted and dissected terrain. Soils occur at elevations from 3,500 to 6,500 feet and stones limit potential for range seeding. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 11 inches, and mean annual air temperature centers around 47 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of gray very stony silt loam, brown stony silty clay, to brown stony and channery heavy silty clay loams over fractured bedrock at 18+ inches.

Classification Unit 96

Unit 96 is a miscellaneous land unit consisting of rough, steeply sloping areas that are predominantly shallow, very stony soils interspersed with rock outcroppings.

E. Watershed

There are no perennial or intermittent flowing streams near the Overshoe and Basque fires. All drainages in and near these burned areas are ephemeral and are located in the upper headwaters of the Owyhee River.

F. Wildlife

The proposed treatment area is year-long and winter habitat for a number of wildlife species, including mule deer, pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, and other sagebrush dependent species. Sage grouse are known to be present in the areas in and adjacent to the treatment areas. The nearest sage grouse lek is approximately six miles west from the Basque Fire and approximately seven miles southeast from the Overshoe Fire. It is likely that sage grouse used the treatment areas for nesting or wintering prior to the fires. Both pronghorn antelope and mule deer use the proposed treatment areas year-long.

The rangelands adjacent to the treatment areas consist of big sagebrush, shadscale, and black sagebrush with an understory of both perennial and annual herbaceous species. The surrounding areas continue to provide the habitat components required by sagebrush dependent species, but due to the expansion of cheatgrass in the area, it is critical to reestablish perennial species in the proposed treatment areas to help ward off the future encroachment of cheatgrass.

There are no species federally listed as threatened or endangered within the proposed treatment area, therefore, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is not required. There are no federal Threatened or Endangered wildlife species in the proposed treatment areas so there will be no requirement to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Section 7 of The Endangered Species Act.

G. Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in the proposed fire rehabilitation area consists primarily of hunting of upland birds and big game animals. Some dispersed general sightseeing

and day hiking may occur. According to the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan the Basque Fire is within a visual resource management class III. The Overshoe Fire is within a visual resource management class IV area, with low visual sensitivity and a low (class C) scenic quality rating.

H. Cultural and Palentological Resources

Pre-European contact Native American peoples living in southeastern Oregon were entirely dependent upon the locally available food resources. As climatic fluctuations created population and habitat changes in the plant and animal communities, humans adjusted their hunting and gathering areas and their technology accordingly. The Native people of the Great Basin, who practiced the ancestral life ways into the 19th century, were heirs to an extremely ancient cultural tradition with a technology both effective and efficient, with many multi-functional, light-weight and expendable tools.

Exploration into this area during the Historic period began with the expeditions of John Jacob Aster, after he heard the stories from the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806. The first written observations of southeastern Oregon can be found in journals kept by men involved in the expansion of fir trapping territory. Trapping occurred along the major and minor tributaries of the Owyhee River. The era of the fur trade provided the basis for American families to travel west.

Prehistoric and historic use of southeastern Oregon is documented by the archaeological record. Several archaeological excavations have generated information that establishes long-term human occupation in Malheur and Harney Counties. Excavations at five stratified spring sites indicate that prehistoric people occupied southeast Oregon from about 11,000 to 150 years ago. An excavation at the Dirty Shame rockshelter, on a tributary of the Owyhee River, documented occupation of the shelter from 9500 to 400 years ago.

Within 5 miles of the Overshoe Well fire area, three surveys for cultural resources have been conducted covering approximately 30 acres. The results of these surveys located 2 lithic scatter sites and several isolated artifacts. No surveys have been conducted within the area of the burn. Within 5 miles fo the boundaries of the Basque Station fire area, five surveys for cultural resources have been conducted which covered approximately 50 acres. Two isolated artifacts were located as a result of these surveys. The artifacts were non-diagnostic projectile points of black obsidian. There are no historic trails or wagon roads though these project areas.

Paleontology

At present, there are no known floral or faunal fossil localites in the areas of these fires.

I. Special Status Plant Species

No threatened and endangered or special status plant species are known to occupy the burned area. However, solitary milkvetch (*Astragalus solitarius*) is found in and near Wyoming big sagebrush sites within several miles of both burned areas. This species has been a US Fish and Wildlife species of concern. Due to its wide range from McDermitt to Westfall and inventoried numbers, it is considered stable at this time.

J. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

No areas of critical environmental concern are located within either fire boundary, although the proposed Mendi Gore Playa ACEC/RNA (Research Natural Area) occurs one half mile to the west of Overshoe Burn. The relevant and important values for which this ACEC/RNA has been proposed include the extensive winterfat playa community and the black sagebrush community west of the playa.

K. Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

1. Air Quality
2. Wild and Scenic Rivers
3. Native American Religious Concerns
4. Hazardous wastes
5. Prime or unique farmlands
6. Wilderness Study Areas
7. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
8. Wetlands/Riparian, Flood Plains
9. Water quality
10. Environmental justice
11. Adverse energy impact

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Proposed Action

1. Vegetation

Seeding would provide an opportunity to establish a more stable perennial vegetal cover consisting of adapted perennial plant species and Wyoming big sagebrush. Site specifically adapted perennial grasses would replace annuals, stabilize watersheds, reduce the potential for noxious weed invasion and create habitat diversity. Most importantly, the adapted perennial plant species seed mix would replace more

flammable annuals thereby potentially reducing the spread of wildfire, frequency of wildfire and the size of future burns.

Establishment of sagebrush, shadscale and forbs would provide vegetative diversity and structure to the community that has been lost to the cumulative effect of historical grazing practices. Additionally, sagebrush would establish a deep-rooted shrub component in the vegetative community and increase effective precipitation on site by capturing/holding snow during the winter months.

Moreover, establishing an adapted perennial vegetative community would restore ecological stability, resiliency and function thereby rehabilitating rangeland processes.

Based on previous BLM seedings in similar soil types and precipitation zones, native grass seed mixes have been far less successful than non-native grass seed mixes in the lower elevation, drier, flats which occur on both of these fires. Native grass species adapted to drier sites are typically in short supply and few sources are available for squirreltail and Sandberg's bluegrass. Bluebunch wheatgrass cultivars are not as adapted to the drier sites. Native grass seed mixes, including bluebunch wheatgrass varieties, have been more successful in the upper elevation areas where precipitation is slightly higher and soils are more developed.

If the lower country burned areas are seeded with a native grass seed mix, the chances of establishment are lower than if the area is seeded with a non-native grass seed mix. However, odds of success with natives are improved by the fact that the preburn vegetation was dominated by brush species which now leaves open niches for natives. The window of opportunity to establish natives exists now, where it would not if cheatgrass was already a dominant mat of vegetation. If the seeding is unsuccessful, the risk of a near mono-culture of cheatgrass is high. The mono-culture would increase the potential for noxious weed invasion and increased fire frequency and size. In addition, a unsuccessful seeding would also result in a direct loss of wildlife habitat, diversity and rangeland health.

The Overshoe Fire would have three miles of electric fence constructed to protect the burn. The fence could create the potential for cattle to trail adjacent to the fence. The fence could change the livestock use patterns of the pasture, which could potentially impact those areas that may not have received as much grazing use in the past. However, since only 3% of the pasture would be fenced off, the impacts would be negligible. To ensure existing standards are not being extended grazing use would be monitored. Upon removal of the fence, revegetation of any trails would be expected. There should be no long term negative effects to the vegetation associated with fencing.

The Basque Fire would have four miles of permanent fence constructed to protect the burned areas and seeding. Cattle may trail along the fence, thus creating a permanent trail. However, the fence is proposed in a mountainous section of the pasture where existing grazing use is light. Since this mountainous section receives light use, the

impacts of the fence or resulting cattle use patterns are expected to be minimal. The fence would be expected to keep cattle in either of two flat areas that lie east and west of the mountainous section. This would allow for better control of livestock grazing use.

Some off-road travel would be required to construct and maintain the fences resulting in temporary vehicle tracks along fence lines and potential vegetation impacts from the vehicle tire. However, these impacts would be mitigated by restrictions on travel to times when soils are dry and firm enough to insure no rutting occurs.

2. Noxious weeds

Establishment of perennial species would help prevent the spread and takeover of the site by noxious weeds. Establishment of a shrub component would occupy the niche (deep rooted shrubs) in the plant community that perennial grasses alone cannot fill. This would help prevent or minimize the invasion of noxious weed species which will readily invade and fill this niche. Future monitoring would insure that no new infestations of noxious weeds would become established.

3. Livestock Grazing

Livestock would be excluded from the burned portion of the Pronghorn Pasture in the Fifteen Mile Community Allotment for at least two growing seasons by the use of a temporary electric fence. Permitted use in this pasture would not be reduced. Actual use has recently been 146 head of cattle for 45 days in the Pronghorn Pasture or 221 AUMS. However, the permittee is authorized to harvest 462 AUMs. Since; the pasture has been used at an average of 11% utilization for the last 5 years, the fire affected only 3% of the pasture, and the actual use is less than the use permitted, a reduction in permitted AUMs is not needed.

Total permitted use (AUMs) for the Pronghorn Pasture during the ESR closure are listed below:

Permittee	**AUMs**
Dave Etchart	462
TOTAL	**462**

The Barren Valley North Pasture of the Barren Valley Allotment would have grazing excluded from the burned area within the pasture for at least two growing seasons. This would be accomplished by building a permanent fence. The construction of the permanent fence would allow for grazing in 44 percent of the pasture. Therefore, permitted AUMs would be decreased by 56 percent. However, grazing use will be

based on staying below 50% utilization (per Souther Malheur MFP) on the portion of the pasture that would be open to grazing. If after using the total permitted use (68 AUMs) utilization levels are under 50% then extensions of grazing use would be allowed as long as 50% utilization is not exceeded and plant health is maintained.

Total permitted use (AUMs) for the Barren Valley North Pasture during the ESR closure are listed below.

Permittee	**AUMs**
Richard Yturriondobeitia	68
TOTAL	**68**

In the short term there may be more cost to the grazing permittee to replace the loss of AUMs in the Barren Valley North Pasture. However, the Barren Valley North Pasture is very conservatively rated at 61 acres per AUM and there would be a strong likelihood, in most years, that additional grazing would be allowed up to the utilization limits of 50% maximum (utilization levels have been an average of 17% for the last 2 years). This would mitigate some of the 56% reduction in AUMs above. Fire frequencies would remain low as would the associated disruption of grazing from wildfire.

In the long term, positive benefits would accrue to both livestock operators due to the establishment of adapted perennial vegetation, since a more stable forage base would be established.

4. Soils

Soils within the burned areas contain fine-textured to loamy sand soil surfaces. The loss of vegetation and vegetative matter in the surface horizon from the fire would subject the soils to enhanced wind and water erosion. Because this area receives limited precipitation, soils that were subject to the fire with insufficient soil moisture could cause the loss of some soil microorganisms and crusts, vegetative matter, soil nutrients and some remnant desirable grass and shrub species. The greatest remaining impacts to soils are from the removal of vegetation and the resultant wind and water erosion. Impacts to the soil resources are expected to be the greatest from the fire after the first year. Moderate soil impacts would be expected during the drilling phase of the rehabilitation project. However, the effects are not expected to be significant because of minimal slopes and relatively low precipitation within the project area. In addition, wind and water erosion rates will decrease after the seeding becomes established. The fire effects on existing annual species would not cause great changes in surface soil physical and chemical properties because of the low fuel loading (1 hr fuels) and rapid rates of spread. The greatest effect would be the short term loss of soil productivity

due to a temporary change in vegetative cover, surface organic matter and soil organisms in the upper few inches of the surface. Soil surface characteristics should return to pre-fire conditions within three growing seasons, maybe longer for microbiotic crusts. The impact of rangeland drilling equipment would loosen and displace the top two to three inches of the soil within the furrows which are usually twelve inches apart. This would be temporary, however, as the furrows act as moisture traps and the new plants would begin to stabilize the soil within the first year of drilling. Soils in CU 56 located in the middle one-third of the burnt area (east to west) in the Basque fire have potential for rangeland seeding but are limited by depth to hardpan, permeability, and slope percentage on the steeper areas where this soil is found. Drilling in soils located in CU 75 and 76 may be limited by steep slopes and stones.

Depletion of soil nutrients and effects to the reestablishment of micro biotic crust formation from water erosion would be short-term until revegetation has occurred. The potential for wind erosion effects on crust and nutrients once vegetation is reestablished would also be reduced. In addition, water erosion in this area is low due to relatively flat to rolling terrain in most of the areas to receive rangeland drilling, whereas wind erosion on CU 50 is rated as moderate because of loamy sand soil surface texture. Recovery of all types of micro biotic crust components is faster in fine-textured soils than in course-textured soils, as fine-textured soils are often stabilized by chemical and rain crusts and retain soil surface moisture longer (as reviewed in Harper and Marble 1988, Johannes 1993; Ladyman and Muldavin 1996). Recovery of some site's wind resistance is also more rapid in fine-textured soils, probably due to physical or rain crust formation after rainfall. Silty soils show a 50% recovery of wind resistance after a single large rain event. This physical or rain crust layer is often harder than the rest of the soil because compounds such as salts, lime, and silica are deposited at the surface as water evaporates.

Remaining microbiotic crusts would not be affected by the proposed action except during the short-term disturbance from drilling seed into the soil surface. Over the long-term because microbiotic crust expand very slowly over sites limited by moisture, the recovery rate of crusts that exist after fire and in some of the same areas that have burned over the last 30 years will be limited. Microbiotic crustal organisms are metabolically active only when wet; thus, recovery is faster in regions and micro sites with greater effective precipitation (Johannes et al. 1993; Harper and Marble 1988). Crusts on north and east slopes, as well as at higher elevations, will recover more quickly than crusts on south and west slopes and at lower elevations.

Water quantity in the form of overland flow is expected to slightly increase into ephemeral streams over the short-term (one-three years) until vegetation in treated areas recover and provide interception and cover protection from high-intensity thunderstorms. Once regrowth of vegetation occurs in these areas overland flows would decrease from increased vegetative litter and infiltration of water into the soil profile thereby the possibility of sediment transport to streams would be reduced.

With the implementation of protective fences soil compaction could be a possibility in the form of cattle trails and vehicle tracks directly adjacent to the fences. These impacts could be permanent in the case of the permanent fence and reversible in the case of the temporary fence, however both impacts are considered very minimal.

5. Watershed

Soil erosion could increase in the short term as a result of loss of vegetative cover from the fire although overall erosion hazard is low due to slopes and low annual precipitation. Soil erosion rates would decrease as perennial species establish on the site over a two year period. The annual species which currently inhabit the area provide much less protection of the soil surface than would perennial species. Under this alternative, erosion rates would decrease further than under the no action alternative due to establishment of perennial species. Perennial vegetation would reduce soil erosion by providing improved protection of the soil surface, and by reducing the frequency of wildfire.

The construction of protective fences could create the potential for cattle trails directly adjacent to the fences. Also vehicle tracks from construction and maintenance could cause slight compaction of the soil. Cattle trails and vehicle tracks could potentially increase the risk of soil erosion in the form of overland flow.

6. Wildlife

A successful seeding would result in the reestablishment of year-long and winter forage, browse and cover for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and other sagebrush dependent species. The establishment of sagebrush and perennial grass and forb species would result in habitat and sagebrush cover capable of supporting the life history requirements of sagebrush dependent species.

The proposed action would also provide wildlife with the much needed forb and grass component that is considered lacking in many areas throughout the Vale District. Forage and habitat values provided by perennial herbaceous species would be improved with the implementation of the proposed action.

The construction of protective fences would not affect wildlife species other than having minimal impacts on wildlife by bisecting potential habitat. However, proper design and flagging would keep the fence from impending any migration or local movement. The fences would have minimal affect on other wildlife species potentially found within the general area.

7. Recreation and Visual Resources

Impacts to dispersed recreation activities would be insignificant. Should rehabilitation activities occur during game hunting seasons, any wildlife close to the activities would be temporarily disturbed.

Surface impacts of the proposed rehabilitation efforts do not exceed management objectives for visual resource class IV. Long term visual evidence of drilled seedings would remain evident.

Impacts from the construction of the temporary electric fence in the Overshoe Fire do not exceed management objectives for visual resource class IV. The construction of the permanent fence in the Basque Fire will be built in a manner which will conform with the management objectives for visual resource class III. The visual impacts for both fences would be minimal.

8. Cultural and Paleontological Resources

The areas proposed for rehabilitation would be inventoried for cultural and paleontologic resources prior to ground disturbing activities. Class III survey methods would be used in areas with a high probability for yielding cultural resources. Cultural resources discovered during the survey, and those previously recorded, would be flagged, recorded and avoided as appropriate. If fossil floral or faunal resources are located during the survey, depending on the nature and extent of the fossil locality, the area would either be flagged and avoided during rehabilitation activities or the fossils would be recovered prior to rehabilitation activities. A single pass with a rangeland drill through the area would be permitted to avoid "islands" without vegetation which could draw unwanted attention. Drilling activities proposed would have no adverse impacts to cultural resources located within the top 10 cm of sediment, which is considered the zone of disturbance.

9. Special Status Plant Species

Because special status plant species are not known to be present in the burned area, they would not be affected.

10. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)/WSAs

No areas of critical environmental concern are located within either fire boundary, although the proposed Mendi Gore Playa ACEC/RNA occurs one half mile to the west of Overshoe Burn. No impacts have occurred or would occur to this proposed ACEC/RNA as a result of the wildfire and rehabilitation effort if native species are used. Using non-native species may possibly result in establishment of individuals of these species in or near the winterfat playa which is being proposed as a natural area, however, chances are remote since the area in question is too dry for broadcast (surface) seeding. In any event the seeded non-native species are not "weedy' by nature and would not overtake or displace native species. Also, the proposed natural

area is west of the ESR area, upwind of prevailing westerly winds. No WSAs are involved.

B. No Action

1. Vegetation

Annual species would be expected to dominate the lower country sites, thus enhancing the chance of noxious weed invasion. Fire frequency would increase dramatically as cheatgrass takes hold. Fire suppression costs would increase. With the increase in fire frequency more native range would be put at risk of conversion to cheatgrass. The cumulative effects of repeated wildfire has caused a loss of vegetative diversity and structure in other areas. There would be a direct loss of wildlife habitat diversity and rangeland health. This trend would continue. The higher elevation sites may have enough perennial plant species to come back with out augmentation from seeding. However, augmenting these sites with native species would be expected to have a better outcome than no action as not seeding these areas may allow cheatgrass to get a stronger foothold.

2. Noxious weeds

The lower elevation site would be susceptible to domination by noxious weeds found adjacent to the site. Diffuse knapweed is an aggressive and highly invasive species. With little competition from perennial grasses and shrubs, this weed could dominate the burn area, especially in the lower elevation sites.

3. Livestock Grazing

Livestock would not be allowed to graze the burn area for two growing seasons. No long term benefits would occur as there would be no improvement to forage production or vegetative conditions and most likely a reduction in perennial grass forage could occur. Livestock production may be further negatively impacted in the long term if noxious weed species increase in the burn area and fire-return intervals increase.

4. Soils/Watershed

Soil erosion could increase in the short term as a result of loss of vegetative cover from the fire although erosion hazards are low in the flatter areas and low annual precipitation. Soil erosion rates would decrease as annual species establish and increase on the site. The increase in annual species within portions of the burned area would provide much less protection of the soil surface than would perennial species. Under this alternative, erosion rates would be higher than under the preferred alternative due to establishment of annual species. Annual vegetation would increase soil erosion by not providing adequate protection of the soil surface. In addition, an

increase in annual vegetation would increase the frequency of wildfire which would expose watersheds to more frequent periods of bare ground.

The fire return interval for this area has been increased by the number and occurrence of fire in the last 30-50 years. Fire is a natural determinant of the sagebrush-steppe potential vegetation types. Historical fire patterns helped create mosaics of successional stages in both vascular plant and biological soil crust. More productive sites generally have fire-return intervals of less than 30 years (Burkhardt and Tisdale 1976; Arno and Gruell 1983; Fisher et al. 1987). Fifty to 100 years has often been cited as the average return interval in shrub-steppe regions (Wright et al.1979; Peters and Bunting 1994) and is adequate to restore biological soil crust components. Failure to treat sites after fire can result in irreversible dominance by annual species (such as cheatgrass), which prevents the return of well-developed biological soil crust (Kaltenecker 1997, Kaltenecker et al. 1999a). With fire reoccurring at a quicker rate of return and burning some of the same sites, the potential for undesirable annual plant invasion has increased. This rate of return increases the potential for soil erosion, soil nutrient loss, and the effects to and loss of micro biotic crust.

6. Wildlife

Benefits from reestablishing sagebrush and perennial grass and forb species would not be attained. The loss of shrub cover would negatively impact sagebrush dependent species due to the slow natural recovery of Wyoming big sagebrush following fire. Benefits from increased forb and grass availability would also not be attained in the low elevation sites.

7. Recreation and Visual Resources

The return of game species for hunting may be lost. Low elevation domination by undesirable weed species would hinder efforts to restore game species habitat in the burn area. There would be an insignificant delay in returning the area to a preferred visual setting of some type of vegetative cover. Cheatgrass domination would degrade recreational experience of hiking at times when cheatgrass and weed seed is mature and sticks to clothing, especially socks.

8. Cultural and Paleontological Resources

There would be no effect to cultural or fossil resources as a result of the no action alternative. However, surface disturbance may be greater from livestock trampling and erosional factors without vegetation to provide surface stability.

9. Special Status Plant Species

Special status plant species would not be affected.

VI CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Richard Yturriondobeitia (Barren Valley Allotment Permittee)
Dave Etchart (Fifteen Mile Community Allotment Permittee)
Committee for Idaho High Deserts
Western Watersheds Project
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Department Fish and Wildlife

VII. MONITORING

A. Noxious Weeds

Intensive monitoring of the burned area for at least two years would be required to locate and control potential establishment of noxious weeds in the burned area. Intensive ground surveys would be conducted periodically from May through October.

B. Vegetation

The burned area would be monitored for at least two years to determine degree and extent of establishment of seeded species as well as success of natural recovery. Monitoring would be done in representative areas during the first three years of the project. Monitoring may include photo plots, line intercept, densities, and/or toe point transects to determine species occurrence, composition and vigor. This would determine the success of the individual species seeded.

Overshoe Fire: The above studies would be conducted at one randomly selected seeded area. One additional study (photo points and line intercept, densities, and/or toe-point transects) would be randomly placed in a non seeded area to determine natural rehabilitation success.

Basque Fire: The above studies would be conducted at two randomly selected seeded area. One additional study (photo points and line intercept, densities, and/or toe-point transects) would be randomly placed in non seeded areas to determine natural rehabilitation success.

Once studies are completed, the information learned will be disseminated through ESR meetings and seminars that we attend. The results of our EFR monitoring will be coordinated with the WO-220, EFR Coordinator.

C. Livestock

Periodic use supervision would be conducted in the project area to ensure livestock are excluded from the pasture during establishment and recovery vegetation on the burned area.

VIII. SUMMARY

The rehabilitation effort, as proposed, is expected to establish adapted perennials and would:

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.

5. Restore vegetative structure, in order to capture and hold snow during the winter months and manage moisture on site more effectively.

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.

Boundary fences would be restored for protection. The rehabilitation effort would be protected by fencing and closing the burned areas in the pastures to livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons until adequate plant establishment is achieved.

IX. REFERENCES

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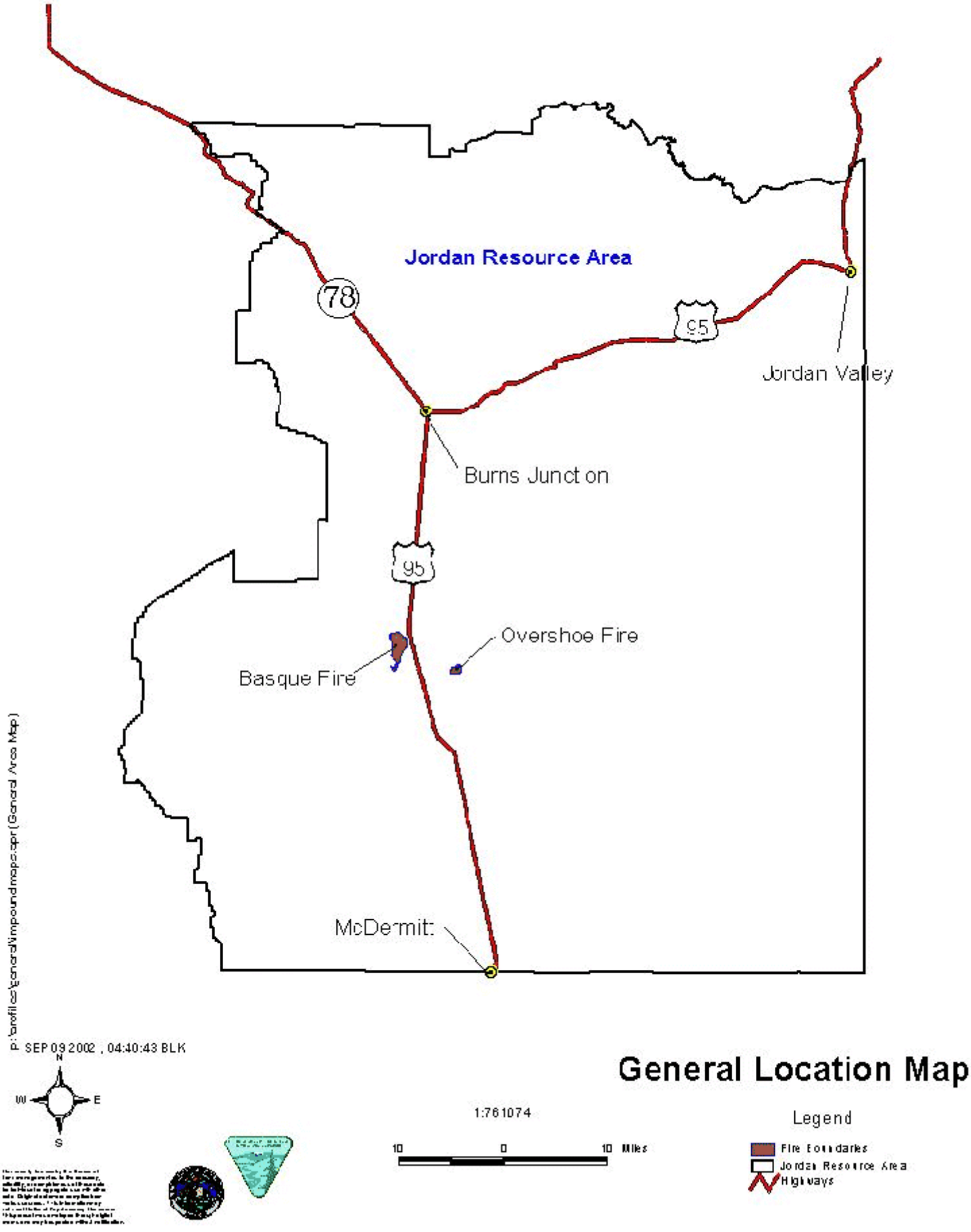
X. EFR PROJECT SUMMARY

Fire Name:	Overshoe Fire	Basque Fire
Fire Number:	N238	N252
Fire Control Date:	07/08	07/15
Acres BLM Burned:	430	2,322
Start of Rehabilitation Project (Mo/Yr):	09/02	09/02
Completion of Rehabilitation Project (Mo/Yr):	9/2004	9/2004
Miles of Temporary Fence:	3	0
Miles of Fence Rebuilt:	0	4
No. of Soil/Watershed Structures:	none	none
Acres Reforestation:	none	none
Acres of Revegetation:	330	1,850
Acres of Burned Area Protected for Natural Regeneration:	100	472
Total Acres Rehabilitated:	430	2,322
Estimated Funding Current Year (FY2002):		
Estimated Funding Second Year (FY2003):		
Estimated Funding Third Year (FY2004):		
Total Cost Rehabilitation Project:		

XI. LIST OF PREPARERS/REVIEWERS

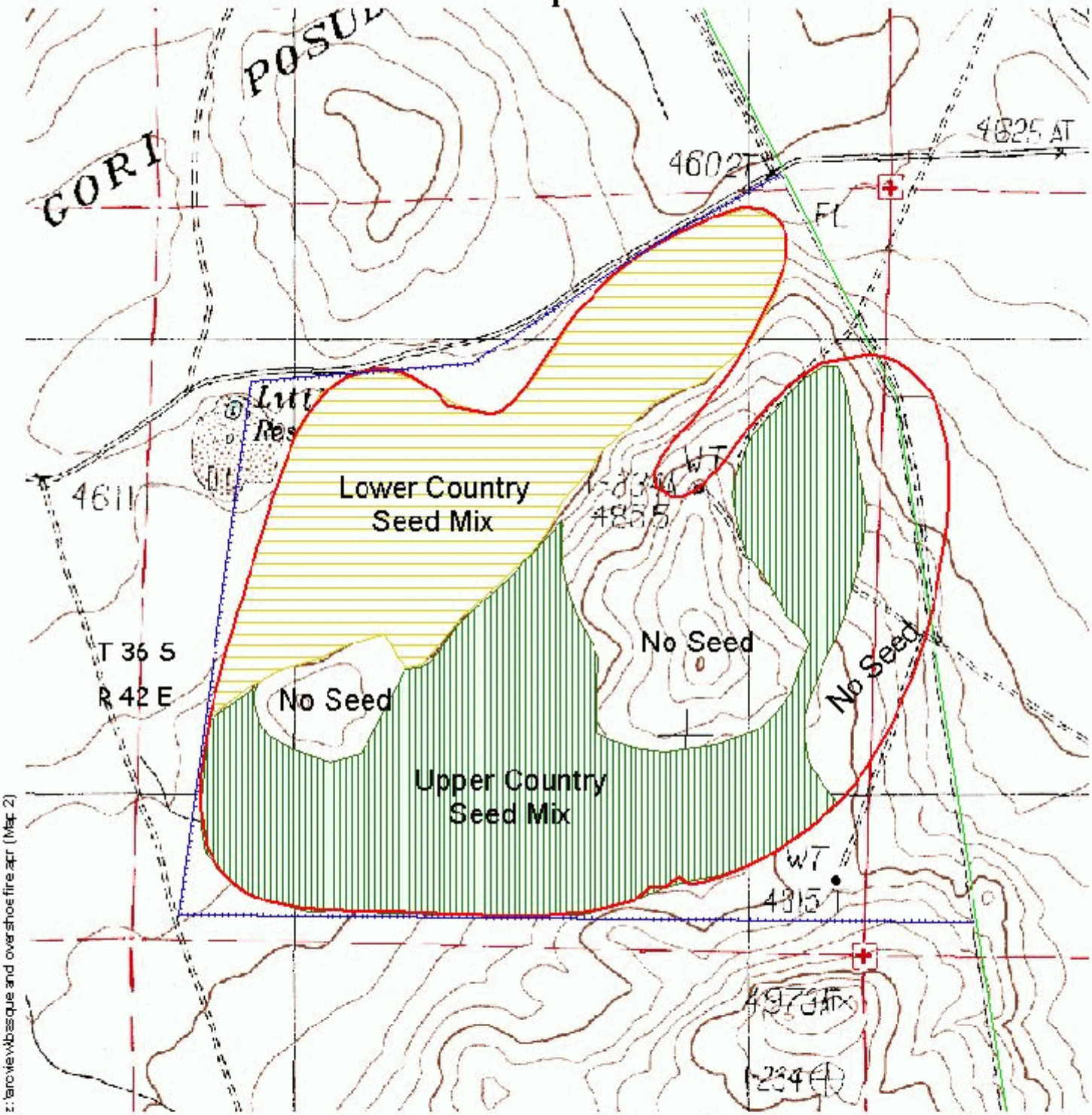
Tom Miles, Supervisory Range Management Specialist
Andy Bumgarner, Range Management Specialist
Cameron Rasor, Rangeland Management Specialist
Tom Christensen, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Jean Findley, Botanist
Jerry Taylor, Jordan Field Office Manager
Diane Pritchard, Archaeologist
Jack Wenderoth, Hydrologist
Marisa Meyer, Wildlife Biologist
Jerry Erstrom, Weed Coordinator
Dave Evans, Force Account Work Leader

Map1



General Location Map

Map 2



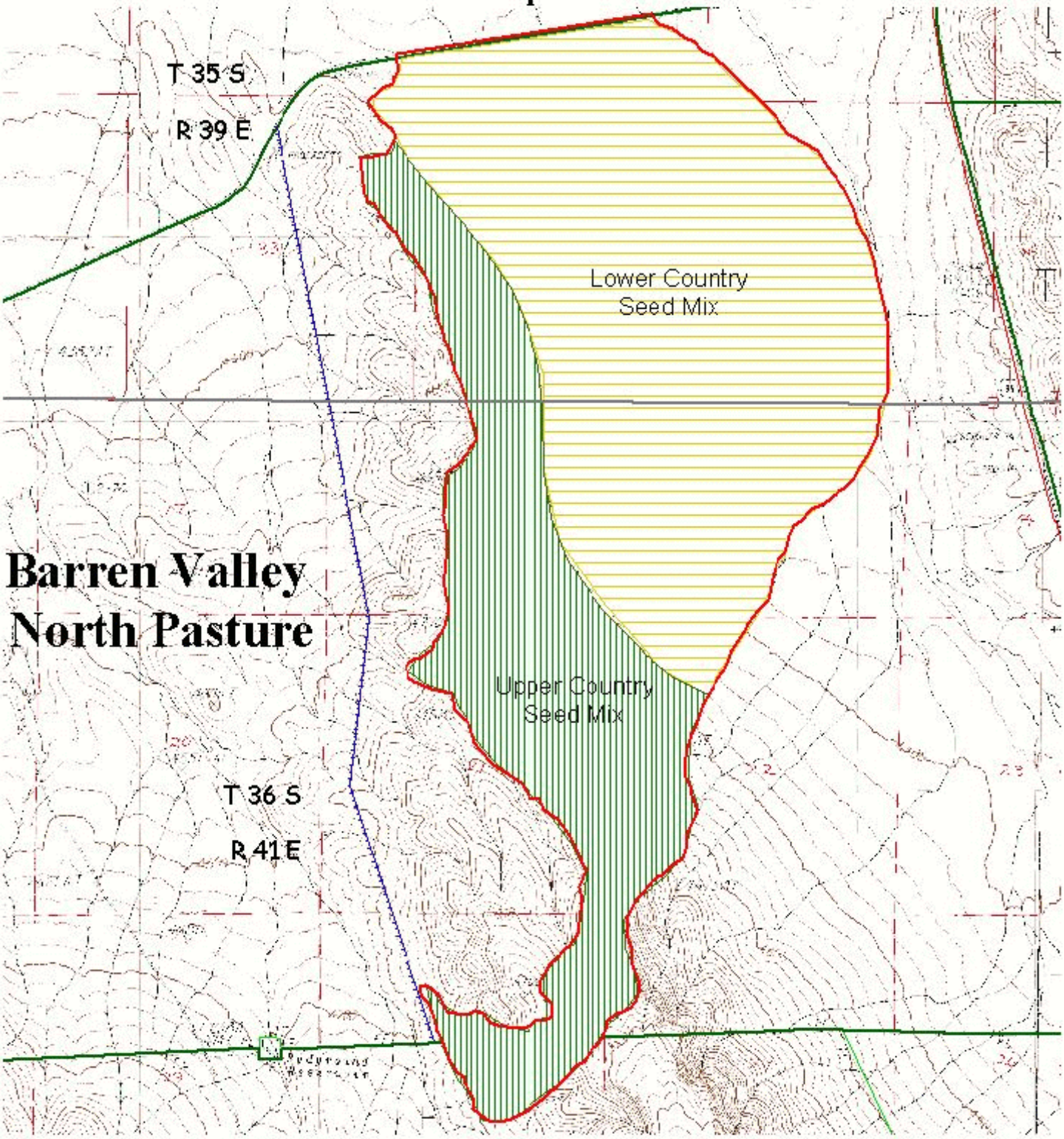
Overshoe Fire Seed Mixture and Protective Fence

0.5 0 0.5 Miles

N W E S

Township
Township Labels
Protective Fence
Fire Boundary
Upper Country Seed Mixture
Lower Country Seed Mixture
State and US Highways
Allotment Boundary
Pasture Boundary

Map 3



z:\arcview\basque and overshoe fire.apr (Map 3)

SEP 09 2002 , 04:25:24 BLK

Basque Fire Seed Mixture and Protective Fence

0.5 0 0.5 Miles

N W E S

Township
Township Labels
Protective Fence
Fire Boundary
Upper Country Seed Mixture
Lower Country Seed Mixture
State and US Highways
Allotment Boundary
Pasture Boundary

PART B: ESR FONSI /DECISION RECORD & ESR TEAM MEMBERS

Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Assessment No. **OR-030-02-026** for the **Overshoe/Basque ESR** adequately analyzes the impacts of the Proposed Action and indicates there will be no significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, no Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. 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.

s/Jerry L. Taylor	September 10, 2002
Authorized Official	Date