

**Vale District Bureau of Land Management
Cedar Mountain Fire Emergency Stabilization Plan (M707)
Environmental Assessment
EA No. OR-030-03-20**

Finding of No Significant Impact

The Malheur Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management, Vale District has analyzed a proposal to construct and maintain temporary fencing to protect areas burned during the July 2003 Cedar Mountain Fire from livestock grazing and to monitor native vegetation recovery.

Based on the following summary of consequences and as discussed in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the proposed action will best meet resource management objectives defined in the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (USDI-BLM 2002), which constitutes the land use plan for Malheur Resource Area:

- \$ Construction and maintenance of temporary fencing to exclude livestock grazing would eliminate livestock grazing impacts upon fully available grasses and forbs, would reduce grazing impacts from deer, pronghorn, and elk, and allow recovery of desirable plant species which survived the fire by maximizing the potential of native vegetation to recover from fire impacts, . Retention of unburned portions of the Juniper Mountain Pasture available for livestock grazing as authorized by permit would avoid unnecessary impacts to the affected livestock operator and the local farming/ranching economy.

- \$ Short-term negative impacts from the fire to desired perennial vegetation communities and thus watershed stability would be diminished by the long-term benefits to these resource values and indirect benefits to wildlife habitat, support of local economic enterprises, and enhancement of amenities. Monitoring would provide valuable information for the analysis of treatment success.

Impacts to critical elements of the human environment, including ten points of significance identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), are not determined to be in excess of limits requiring the development of an environmental impact statement.

Additionally, management direction provided in the selected alternative is more consistent with the BLM policy (Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook H-1742) and the record of decision of the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan than other alternatives analyzed. The Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan states, “Areas burned by wildfire, including those subsequently rehabilitated, will be rested from grazing for one full year and through a second growing season at a minimum, or until monitoring data or professional judgment indicate that health and vigor of desired vegetation has recovered to levels adequate to support and protect upland function.”

Thus, on the basis of the information contained in this environmental assessment and all other information available, it is my determination that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

/s/ Tom Dabbs

08-05-2003

Tom Dabbs
Acting Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

Date

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1. Purpose of and Need for Action

A lightning caused fire originating on public land in T.26 S., R.41 E., W.M. Section 20 was detected on July 7, 2003. Cedar Mountain Fire (M707) spread to include approximately 30 acres prior to containment at 21:00 on July 8 and control at 18:56 on July 9 (figure 1). The fire occurred exclusively on public land administered by the Vale District Bureau of Land Management. Suppression activities were limited to direct attack and mop-up by hand crews and a helicopter. Access to the fire was by way of two-tracks and roads within Cedar Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and foot travel cross country.

Cedar Mountain Fire occurred well within the boundaries of the Juniper Mountain Pasture of Turnbull Allotment (00303). The burned area is dominated by native sagebrush/bunchgrass vegetation communities with scattered juniper. Native communities contained dispersed western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*), Wyoming and/or mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus sp.*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Thurber's needlegrass (*Stipa thurberiana*), and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), clasping pepperweed (*Lepidium perfoliatum*), and other annual species are present, although of little significance except immediately adjacent to stock water reservoirs more than one half mile from the fire boundary. Sagebrush steppe vegetation communities with scattered juniper provide summer or year-long habitat for a number of wildlife species including big game animals, upland game species, and sagebrush dependent species.

Interagency guidance and BLM policy, as stated in the Interagency Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook and draft Bureau of Land Management Supplemental ESR Guidance (May 20, 2002) provides for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation where fire has an adverse impact on vegetation, soils, and watersheds and also to minimize other adverse changes to the extent practicable, including the following:

- loss of vegetative cover for watershed protection;
- loss of soil and on-site productivity;
- loss of water control and deterioration of water quality;
- invasion of burned area by flammable annual species which increase the potential for repeated wildfire.

Although the area burned by Cedar Mountain Fire is not in need of immediate stabilization or rehabilitation to minimize soil movement, preserve on-site productivity, reduce the invasion and increased dominance of undesirable flammable annual plants or to reduce the potential for increased dominance of existing noxious weed, it is in need of short term protection from grazing impacts to ensure that the impacts identified above do not occur long term. These long term objectives can be met by protecting residual native vegetation communities during a period necessary for recovery of health and

vigor. This environmental assessment analyzes the benefits and risks of implementing stabilization actions to protect native perennial vegetation as compared to a no action alternative.

In addition to other National Environmental Policy Act requirements, this environmental assessment was completed to ensure that treatments identified in the Emergency Stabilization Plan are consistent with the applicable land use plan objectives and decisions. Construction of temporary fencing to control grazing impacts to fire impacted vegetation resources is consistent with the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (SEORMP&ROD) as follows:

- The Desired Range of Future Conditions (DRFC) (p 24) defines goals as follow:
 1. “Rangeland vegetation includes a mosaic of multiple-aged shrubs, forbs, and native and desirable nonnative perennial grasses. Shrub overstories are present in a variety of spatial arrangements and scales across the landscape level, including some large contiguous blocks, islands, and corridors. Plant communities not meeting DRFC’s show upward trends in condition and structural diversity. Desirable plants continue to improve in health and vigor. New infestations of noxious weeds are not common across the landscape, and existing large infestations are declining. Populations and habitat of rare plant species are stable or continue to improve in vigor and distribution.”
 2. “Upland soils have sufficient vegetation cover to minimize accelerated soil erosion. Physical and chemical soil properties as adequate for vegetation growth and hydrologic function appropriate to the specific soil type, landform, and climate.”
 3. “Western juniper dominance is limited to rock outcrops, ridges, mesas, or other sites where wildfire frequency is limited by site productivity. Western juniper generally occurs in low densities in association with vigorous shrub, grass, and forb species, consistent with site potential. Historic western juniper sites retain old growth characteristics.”
 4. “Wildland and prescribed fire play an active role in defining the composition of vegetation and limiting the dominance of woody species.”
 5. “The amount and diversity of wildlife habitat are maintained or improved through time. Late-seral grass/shrublands exist in blocks of various sizes in well-distributed patterns across the landscape. Ongoing management of rangeland habitat components and conditions (such as vegetation cover, forage, and roads) and of key areas helps to maintain big game populations near State wildlife agency objectives. ... Improvement in the conditions of grass/shrubland steppe and riparian areas benefits a variety of wildlife species by increasing the quality, quantity, and variety of habitat. Such species include upland game, raptors, and nongame species. ...”
 6. “Large portions of the landscape have a protective soil cover of deep-rooted plants and litter which supports proper hydrologic function.”
- Specific resource management objectives of the SEORMP&ROD include:
 1. Rangeland Vegetation: “Restore, protect, and enhance the diversity and distribution of desirable vegetation communities including perennial native and desirable introduced plant species. Provide for their continued existence and normal function in nutrient, water, and

energy cycles. Manage big sagebrush cover in seedings and on native rangeland to meet the life history requirements of sagebrush-dependent wildlife. Control the introduction and proliferation of noxious weed species and reduce the extent and density of established weed species to within acceptable limits.”

2. Forest and Woodlands: “Restore productivity and biodiversity in western juniper and quaking aspen woodland areas. Manage western juniper areas where encroachment or increased density is threatening other resource values. Retain old growth characteristics in historic western juniper sites not prone to frequent fire. ...”
3. Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat: “Manage upland habitats in forest, woodland, and rangeland vegetation types so that the forage, water, cover, structure, and security necessary for wildlife are available on the public land.”
4. Rangeland/Grazing Use: “Provide for a sustained level of livestock grazing consistent with other resource objectives and public land use allocations.”

Temporary fencing to ensure short-term exclusion of livestock from burned areas, pending recovery of residual vegetation, is also consistent with policy as stated in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742) and the SEORMP&ROD as stated on page 40, “Areas burned by wildland fire, including those subsequently rehabilitated, will be rested from grazing for one full year and through a second growing season at a minimum, or until monitoring data or professional judgment indicate that health and vigor of desired vegetation has recovered to levels adequate to support and protect upland function.”

Decisions to be made as a result of information provided in this environmental assessment include what practices would be implemented, if any, to exclude physical livestock impacts, herbivory, and other impacts which limit recovery and establishment of desired vegetation resources following the fire. No other federal, state or local government is involved in the NEPA analysis of the proposed actions, beyond issue identification, review, and comment on content of the document.

Internal scoping of issues relevant to the need for stabilization actions and protection from livestock impacts identified the need to ensure that vegetation communities are managed to attain desired future conditions subsequent to the fire, including meeting riparian, upland vegetation, watershed, special status species, and cultural resource management objectives presented in the land use plan. The level of controversy of potential stabilization actions implemented is moderate with two regional environmental organizations requesting to be informed of proposed actions in Quartz Mountain grazing allotment. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is typically informed of proposed fire stabilization actions, as is the Malheur County Court. Memoranda of Understanding between BLM and a number of Tribes (The Burns Paiute Tribe, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation) are in place to define coordination.

Proposed protection of vegetation resources would be implemented as annual workload for BLM staff and/or through contract with private entrepreneurs. Temporary fencing would be maintained by the

livestock operator benefiting from retaining the remainder of Juniper Mountain Pasture available for grazing.

2. Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

Alternatives considered and analyzed include the proposed action to construct temporary exclusion fencing with annual monitoring and a no action alternative. Seeding of desirable native and/or nonnative grass and forb species was not considered due to the late-seral condition of vegetation communities burned. Similarly, with the presence of mountain big sagebrush immediately adjacent to the relatively small area burned, it was determined that seeding of sagebrush or other shrub species was not necessary.

2.1. Alternatives Analyzed

2.1.1. Proposed Action:

Due to the location of Cedar Mountain Fire internal to established pastures, approximately 1.25 miles of temporary fencing would be proposed to exclude livestock grazing from areas burned by the fire (figure 1). The temporary fence would be built without vehicular access to the site and consistent with the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP) (USDI-BLM 1995). The burned and enclosed area would be excluded from livestock grazing through July 15, 2005 and until monitoring indicates that desired residual perennial vegetation has recovered to levels that are adequate to support and protect upland function.

No seeding or planting of grass, forb, or shrub species is proposed as identified above. No repair of permanent livestock management fence is required since the fire was internal to Juniper Mountain Pasture.

Monitoring of the burned area would consist of livestock use supervision, vegetation monitoring and weed monitoring. Detected weeds would be controlled utilizing herbicide and mechanical methods in accordance with the EA and Decision Record for the Noxious Weed Control Program 1994-1998 (USDI/BLM 1994).

2.1.2. No Action Alternative:

No emergency rehabilitation would be completed. Revegetation of the burned areas would be allowed to occur from seed and plant materials which remain on site and viable following the fire. Livestock would be excluded from Juniper Mountain Pasture for two growing seasons. No monitoring of the burned area would be completed beyond that scheduled prior to the fire.

3. Affected Environment

This section presents relevant resource components of the existing environment; that is the baseline environment.

3.1. *Vegetation, Soils and Watershed:*

Native shrub steppe vegetation communities contained Wyoming and/or mountain big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Thurber's needlegrass, and Sandberg bluegrass prior to the 2003 fires. Native perennial bunchgrasses were in or near the seed ripe stage of growth, thus were not seriously depleted of reserves with the loss of this year's growth and had not dried to the point of supporting a hot fire in the crowns of plants. Areas immediately adjacent to livestock water sources and more than one half mile outside the fire boundary were dominated by annual and biennial herbaceous species including cheatgrass, and tumble mustard. Western juniper was scattered throughout the burned area with a number of smaller junipers burned by the fire, but only a few larger juniper trees impacted or killed by the burn. Microbiotic crusts composed of cyanobacteria, green algae, lichens, mosses, microfungi, and/or other bacteria occupy many open spaces between higher plants.

The soils found in the area of the Cedar Mountain Fire were surveyed and described in Oregon's Long Range Requirements for Water 1969, Appendix I 11, Owyhee Drainage Basin. Two soil units make up the burned area; Unit 76 soils are on 12 to 20 percent slopes on the western half of the burn unit and Unit S76 are on 20 to 60 percent slopes on the eastern half of the burn unit.

Unit 76 soils are shallow, clayey, very stony, well drained soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. These soils occur on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus and some very steep faulted and dissected terrain. Native vegetation consists mostly of big sagebrush, low sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Sandberg bluegrass. Stones limit the potential of this soil for rangeland seeding.

Unit S76 soils are shallow, well drained, extremely stony soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. These soils occur on gently undulating to steep lava plateaus. Native vegetation consists mostly of low sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Sandberg bluegrass. Stones and slope limit the potential of this soil for rangeland seeding.

No perennial water sources lie within the proposed treatment area. Drainage is to the west into Little Mud Flat, north to Butte Creek and Dry Creek, east to Owyhee Reservoir, north to Snake River and Columbia River, and west to the Pacific Ocean.

3.2. *Noxious Weeds:*

Noxious weeds within the perimeter of Cedar Mountain are scarce with only a trace of cheatgrass

present. Within the vicinity of Cedar Mountain, whitetop (*Cardia draba*) dominates a number of dry lakebed soils near Crowley Ranch, eight miles west of the fire. Similarly, Russian knapweed is present approximately six miles north of the fire on private land at Slayton Well. Vehicle transport along roads and livestock remain the primary agent of noxious weed dispersal, especially for those seeds which are not wind dispersed.

3.3. Livestock Grazing:

Cedar Mountain Fire is entirely within the 31,000 acre Juniper Mountain Pasture of Turnbull Allotment (00303). Although two permittees are authorized to graze livestock in the community Turnbull Allotment, only one currently is authorized to use Juniper Mountain Pasture in the grazing rotation. Within the 79,609 acre (public) Turnbull Allotment, Steve and Jackie Russel hold a permit for 3911 animal unit months (AUMs) active authorization to graze cattle and horses, whereas Ronald Sutphin holds a permit for 2943 AUMs active authorization to graze cattle. No grazing authorization for use in Turnbull Allotment is currently held in suspension.

These operators are separated into two areas-of-use, with Steve and Jackie Russell authorized to graze livestock within Juniper Mountain Pasture.

Turnbull Allotment was classified in the “M” (maintain) category allotments for management in the 1984 Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary Record of Decision, with that classification carried forward into the SEORMP-ROD. The season of use authorized within the area-of-use of Turnbull Allotment which included Juniper Mountain Pasture is between April 1 and October 31 annually with a deferred rotation system.

3.4. Wildlife:

The proposed treatment area is within summer and/or year-long range for mule deer, elk and pronghorn antelope. Other wildlife species found in the area include neotropical migratory song birds, small mammals and reptiles. Although dominance of western juniper continues to increase within the vegetation communities of Cedar Mountain, periodic natural caused fires have tended to reduce that rate of increase, thus maintaining quality wildlife habitat with security provided by limited human activity.

No known wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are present within or adjacent to Turnbull Allotment. Special status wildlife species found in the area include burrowing owls (BLM sensitive species). This species nests in annual vegetation habitat typical of the low elevation areas outside the treatment area. Two sage grouse leks and presumed nesting and brood rearing habitats are located within adjoining pastures, six miles northwest of the burned areas. Other special status wildlife species know from the area of Cedar Mountain include Ferruginous hawk, loggerhead shrike, and long-eared myotis.

3.5. Recreation and Visual Resources:

Dispersed outdoor recreation near the proposed fire stabilization area consists primarily of hunting of upland birds and big game animals. Some dispersed general sightseeing occurs. The burned area is within a visual resource management Class I area. The objective of Class I VRM is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes, and it allows limited management activity. The level of change should be low and must not attract attention. Class I is assigned to those areas where a management decision has been made to preserve a natural landscape. This includes areas such as wilderness study areas, the wild sections of national wild and scenic rivers, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas.

3.6. Wilderness Study Areas

Cedar Mountain was inventoried for wilderness values in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Within the Oregon Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (December 1989), the 33,600 acre wilderness study area was recommended not suitable for designation as wilderness, although pending congressional action relative to designation or release, the area continues to be managed in accordance with the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review.

3.7. Cultural Resources and Paleontology

The continued use of the northern Great Basin is evident from the nature and extent of the diversity of the cultural resources that represent the prehistoric lifeways of Native American peoples. The tool kit assemblage represents styles which characterize big game hunters and represents the PaleoIndian period. The climax of cultural development from 11,000-8,000 B.P., is represented by a lithic technology characterized by seven different projectile point styles. The diversity in projectile point styles suggests not only an improvement in lithic technology but also experimentation with hafting methods. With the eruption of Mt. Mazama at 7070 B.P., people appear to be moving from lower elevation lake sites to higher elevation spring sites as the climate becomes hotter and drier. As climatic conditions shift to warm and moist after 5000 BP, the predominate projectile point style is a slender corner notched point with continued use of the previous styles. In the northern Great Basin, Catlow twine is now an important class of perishable artifact. From 3000 B.P. to 1000 A.D. occupation continues without much change in the northern Great Basin. The archaeological evidence suggests a rather stable cultural environment where changes reflect the relative intensity of certain activities. Beginning about 1000 A.D., the Numic speaking Northern Paiute settled into this area. Overall, the prehistory of the northern Great Basin shows long continuity and adaptive change to distinctive ecosystems with a changing climate. The subsistence economy was strongly oriented toward the utilization of more than 50 plant species because these provided a more abundant and dependable than fowl, fish or mammals. Mammals provided skins, furs, tools and many other by-products of aesthetic and practical value. Insects were often eaten; beetles, grasshoppers, locusts, crickets, ants and caterpillars were consumed, as well as most eggs and larva which provided a readily available, storable, high protein food source. Prehistoric sites in the area reflect the diverse cultural heritage. Rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs),

toolstone quarry sites which offer a wide variety of stone material for use (cherts, mudstones, jaspers, obsidians, quartz, basalts), camping sites, as well as rock alignments and rock cairns used as hunting blinds all reflect the presence of Native Americans on the landscape.

White European exploration into this area 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 fur trapping territory. A great push for settlement of the west came in 1843 when the Oregon Trail opened a corridor of travel to the Willamette Valley. Conflicts over the available resources arose between miners, settlers and Native Americans. It was up to the military to protect the settlers and miners. From 1864 to 1867, numerous military maps were made, roads were constructed and posts were established throughout eastern Oregon. The army's function was primarily to protect transport routes to the Owyhee Mines in the vicinity of Silver City, Idaho and to protect civilian settlements. After the end of General Crook's campaign in 1868, the Indians in southeastern Oregon were subdued and confined to reservations. Some Paiutes accompanied the Fort Hall Bannocks in a brief uprising called the Bannock War of 1878. By 1884, sheep had become more profitable than cattle and were moved to market in the east along the same routes that brought settlers to the west. The coming of the railroad also brought a new method of moving livestock to the stockyards. Both cattle and sheep raising prospered during the 1890s. Sheep outfits tended to be small and numerous, while cattle operations were larger and fewer. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 along with the Great Depression led to an abrupt and permanent drop in the number of sheep, while fostering a long-term increase in the number of beef cattle, which has continued to the present.

Cultural Resource surveys are often associated with surface disturbing projects such as the construction of pipelines, reservoirs, and/or spring development etc. The designation of this area as a Wilderness Study Area limits surface disturbing activities, thereby limiting surveys for prehistoric and historic cultural resources. Within a radius of 5 miles from the Cedar Mountain Fire, no surveys for cultural resources have been conducted.

Paleontology

Fossil flora and faunal localities north of Cedar Mountain are usually part of the Deer Butte or Grassy Mountain formations. The Deer Butte formation has yielded Miocene age vertebrates including a variety of shrews and moles, kangaroo rat, mice, beaver, carnivores and hoofed mammals including horse, rhino, antelope, and camel. In the area surrounding Cedar Mountain, no fossil flora or faunal resources have been identified.

3.8. Special Status Plants:

No plant species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are known to be present within the area burned. Additionally, surveys have not located any special status plant species within ten miles of the fire. As a result, analysis of impacts to special status plant species from

actions considered will not be included in the environmental consequences section.

3.9. *Climate/Topography:*

Cedar Mountain Fire occurred in rocky rolling hills at approximately 5200 feet elevation above sea level. Semi desert shrub steppe vegetation communities result from cold winters and hot dry summers. The long term average annual precipitation is 12-14 inches (SEORMP-ROD map HYDR-1)). Precipitation occurs primarily as snow fall during the winter with occasional mid-summer thunder storms, often accompanied by lightning.

Neither the proposed actions nor the no action alternative will impact climate or topography.

3.10. *Other Mandatory Elements:*

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

- Air Quality
- Wild Horse/Burro Management
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Hazardous Wastes
- Prime or Unique Farmlands
- Wetlands/Riparian/Flood Plains
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Research Natural Areas
- Environmental Justice
- Actions to Expedite Energy-Related Projects (Executive Order No. 13212 of May 18, 2001)

4. Environmental Consequences

This chapter is organized by alternatives to illustrate the differences between the proposed action and the no action alternative.

4.1. *Proposed Action Alternative:*

Consequences of implementing the proposed alternative, temporary fencing to exclude livestock grazing and monitoring of recovery of existing vegetation recovery, would result as summarized in the following sections.

4.1.1. *Vegetation, Soils and Watershed:*

Temporary exclusion of livestock from a portion of Juniper Mountain Pasture would allow recovery of

residual desirable species without impacts from cattle grazing and reduced impacts from wildlife species.

Soil erosion would increase in the short term as a result of loss of vegetative and litter cover from the fire. Soil erosion rates would decrease as perennial species, including grasses, forbs, and shrubs which in combination fill much of the soil profile with roots, regain dominance of the site in years subsequent to the fire.

4.1.2. Noxious weeds:

Reestablishment of perennial species would help prevent the potential for introduction and spread of noxious weeds, particularly whitetop and Russian knapweed. Reestablishment of a diverse shrub component through natural seed dispersal from surrounding vegetation communities would more fully occupy the soil profile with roots of desirable shrub species as compared to shallow rooted perennial grasses and forbs alone. Restoration of full occupation of the soil profile with roots of desirable species would provide additional competition to reduce establishment of deep rooted weedy species.

Reestablishment of diverse perennial vegetation communities including grasses, forbs, and shrubs would help prevent or minimize the proliferation and invasion of noxious weed species within the burned area and adjacent to roads impacted by suppression actions. A reduction in the occurrence of weeds adjacent to roads would limit transport of seed to new sites within the burn area and offsite. Increased inventory for noxious weeds and appropriate treatment would preclude their establishment and spread into niches opened by the fire.

4.1.3. Livestock Grazing:

Livestock would be excluded from the burned portion of Juniper Mountain Pasture through at least two growing seasons and until existing perennial herbaceous species regain vigor. This area comprises approximately 30 acres (about 0.1 percent) of Juniper Mountain Pasture.

Scheduled grazing within Juniper Mountain Pasture, as defined in the allotment management plan with a deferred system, identifies an estimated average annual use of 1,756 AUMs by cattle. This use represents approximately 44 percent of the authorized use of 3911 AUMs in Tumbull Allotment by Steve and Jackie Russell. Thus, the proportionate loss of forage productivity from fencing out the area burned represents less than 0.1 percent of this operator's authorization. No adjustment in the established grazing schedule would be necessary as a result of excluding livestock from approximately 30 acres within Juniper Mountain Pasture.

In the long term, slight positive benefits would accrue to the livestock operator due to the maintenance of perennial vegetation and reduction of western juniper dominance within a small portion of Cedar Mountain.

4.1.4. Wildlife:

The proposed action would result in the reestablishment and maintenance of high quality year-long forage, browse, and cover for mule deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope within the project area with the maintenance of desirable herbaceous and shrub species. Structural habitat for sagebrush dependent species would be restored in the long term with reestablishment of desirable shrub species. Foraging and habitat values provided by perennial herbaceous species would be maintained. Small burns, such as these, are great for providing a mosaic of habitats for wildlife and the rest would be beneficial.

The potential for wildlife entrapment in temporary fencing would be present, though negligible with the small size of the enclosure and the typical one wire or two wire construction of temporary fencing.

4.1.5. Recreation and Visual Resources:

Impacts to dispersed recreation activities would be insignificant. In the event that fencing activities occur during hunting seasons, any game species close to the activities would be temporarily disturbed.

Visual resources within and adjacent to the proposed action would be maintained with restoration of desirable perennial plant species and vegetation structure. Surface impacts of the proposed rehabilitation efforts do not exceed management objectives for visual resource Class I. Temporary visual evidence of the temporary fence would be minimal due to its small size and location in an obscure canyon with scattered western juniper.

4.1.6. Wilderness Study Area

In accordance with IMP, new temporary livestock developments may be approved if they truly enhance wilderness values and satisfy the nonimpairment criteria. Surface disturbance created by construction and removal of approximately 1.25 miles of temporary fence would be very minimal and be outweighed by the enhancement in opportunity to maintain high seral vegetation communities which contribute to Cedar Mountain WSA's wilderness values. In the event of wilderness designation, this short and temporary fence could be easily and immediately removed in the event it is found to not be consistent with designation.

4.1.7. Cultural Resources:

A Class III cultural resources survey and a survey for paleo resources would be conducted prior to surface disturbing activities. Recorded sites, prehistoric, historic or fossil localities would be flagged and avoided during rehabilitation activities.

4.2. No Action Alternative:

Consequences of implementing the no action alternative, exclusion of livestock from the 31,000 acre Juniper Mountain Pasture of Turnbull Allotment to implement policy, would result as summarized in the following sections.

4.2.1. Vegetation, Soils and Watersheds:

Temporary exclusion of livestock from Juniper Mountain Pasture would allow recovery of residual desirable species within the burned area without impacts from cattle grazing, although without reduced impacts from wildlife species.

Soil erosion would increase in the short term as a result of loss of vegetation and litter cover from the fire. Soil erosion rates would decrease as perennial species, including grasses, forbs, and shrubs, which in combination fill much of the soil profile with roots, regain dominance of the site in years subsequent to the fire.

4.2.2. Noxious weeds:

Reestablishment of perennial species would help prevent the potential for introduction and spread of noxious weeds, particularly whitetop and Russian knapweed. Reestablishment of a diverse shrub component through natural seed dispersal from surrounding vegetation communities would more fully occupy the soil profile with roots of desirable shrubs as compared to shallow rooted perennial grasses and forbs alone. Restoration of full occupation of the soil profile with roots of desirable species would provide additional competition to reduce establishment of deep rooted weedy species. Reestablishment of diverse perennial vegetation communities including grasses, forbs, and shrubs would help prevent or minimize the proliferation and invasion of noxious weed species within the burned area and adjacent to roads impacted by suppression actions. A reduction in the occurrence of weeds adjacent to roads would limit transport of seed to new sites within the burn area and offsite. Failure to intensify inventory for noxious weeds and appropriate treatment would encourage their spread and establishment into niches opened by the fire.

4.2.3. Livestock Grazing:

Livestock would be excluded from Juniper Mountain Pasture through at least two growing seasons and until existing perennial herbaceous species regain vigor. This area comprises approximately 31,000 acres of the 79,600 acres of public land within Turnbull Allotment.

Scheduled grazing within Juniper Mountain Pasture, as defined in the allotment management plan with a deferred system, identifies an estimated average annual use of 1,756 AUMs by cattle. This use represents approximately 44 percent of the authorized use of 3911 AUMs in Turnbull Allotment by Steve and Jackie Russell. Thus, the proportionate loss of forage productivity from excluding from use

the entire Juniper Mountain Pasture represents a significant portion of this operator's authorization. Considerable adjustment in the established grazing schedule would be necessary as a result of excluding livestock from Juniper mountain Pasture or the livestock operator would be required to find alternate forage during those periods of scheduled use of Juniper Mountain Pasture in 2004, 2005, and additional years as required to restore vigor of fire impacted perennial vegetation.

In the long term, slight positive benefits would accrue to the livestock operator due to the maintenance of perennial vegetation and reduction of western juniper dominance within a small portion of Cedar Mountain.

4.2.4. Wildlife:

The no action alternative would result in the reestablishment and maintenance of high quality year-long forage, browse, and cover for mule deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope within the project area with the maintenance of desirable herbaceous and shrub species. Structural habitat for sagebrush dependent species would be restored in the long term with reestablishment of desirable shrub species. Foraging and habitat values provided by perennial herbaceous species would be maintained. In the event introduced weeds become abundant with limited inventory and treatment, wildlife habitats would decline in value.

4.2.5. Recreation and Visual Resources:

Recreation and visual resources would not be impacted with no stabilization activity planned as a result of the 2003 Cedar Mountain fire. In the event introduced weeds become abundant with limited inventory and treatment, recreation opportunities and visual resource values could decline in value within the area burned as well as additional areas where those weed become established.

4.2.6. Wilderness Study Area

Wilderness values would not be impacted with no stabilization activity planned as a result of the 2003 Cedar Mountain fire. In the event introduced weeds become abundant with limited inventory and treatment, wilderness values could decline in value within the area burned as well as additional areas where those weed become established.

4.2.7. Cultural Resources:

Cultural and paleo resources would not be impacted with no stabilization activity planned as a result of the 2003 Cedar Mountain fire.

5. Adverse Effects:

Unavoidable adverse effects from implementation of the proposed action or no action alternative are limited to those impacts to soil and vegetation function described in the text above.

6. Short-term and Long-term Impacts:

Short-term impacts to soil and vegetation resources during construction and removal of approximately 1.25 miles of temporary fence would be offset by long-term benefits to upland vegetation community function consistent with standards for rangeland health and guidelines for livestock management. Long-term control of the spread and introduction of noxious weed species would also occur with increased inventory and treatment. Long-term benefits resulting from the limited accumulation of fine fuels of annual species would limit spread of future fire in the burned and adjacent areas.

7. Irreversible or Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources:

Should the proposed fence not function as expected to protect recovering vegetation resources or should it have unforeseen negative impacts, it could be removed or redesigned with no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

8. Mitigating Actions

Due to the proposed fence location within WSA, transport of materials to the project site for construction and removal of materials at the end of the period deemed necessary to protect vegetation resources would be limited to helicopter or horse packing. Fence posts for the temporary electric fence would be green without white tops to limit visual impairment. Brace points would be built with EZ panels or similar structures to limit surface disturbance. The temporary fence would consist of one strand of electric cable or two strands, dependent on the need for a ground wire. All fence construction and removal would be without use of vehicles beyond BLM recognized roads and ways in WSA.

9. List of Preparers/Reviewers:

Steve Christensen	Rangeland Management Specialist
Bob Alward	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness
Jean Findley	Botanist
Diane Pritchard	Archaeologist
Shaney Rockefeller	Hydrologist/Soil Scientist
Al Bammann	Wildlife Biologist
Lynne Silva	Range Technician, Weeds
Tom Hilken	Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Tom Dabbs	Acting Field Manager, Malheur Resource Area

10. List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons to Whom Copies of the EA are Sent:

Steve and Jackie Russell; Livestock Operators Turnbull Allotment
Ronald Sutphin; Livestock Operators Turnbull Allotment
Hal Shepherd, Northwest Environmental Defense Center
Jon Marvel, Western Watersheds
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Natural Resources Council
Sierra Club, Oregon Chapter, High Desert Wilderness Committee
Joseph Higgins, Wilderness Watch, Pacific Northwest Office
Stuart Garrett, High Desert Chapter, Native Plant Society of Oregon
Audubon Society of Portland
Doug Heiken, Oregon Natural Resources Council
Mary Scurlock, Pacific River Council
Katie Fite, Committee for Idaho's High Desert
High Desert Wilderness Committee
Greeley Trust
Mark McKenzie
Sam McKenzie
Duncan McKenzie
Mary Ellen Allison
Bill Barnett, Owyhee Outback Ranch
John and Lisa Davis
Larry and Kay Davis
Walt Van Dyke, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Albert Teeman, Tribal Chairperson, Burns Paiute Tribe
Gary Burke, Tribal Chairperson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation

A file search completed July 21, 2003, identified no additional requests by members of the public to be considered an interested public for Turnbull Allotment.

11. Literature Cited:

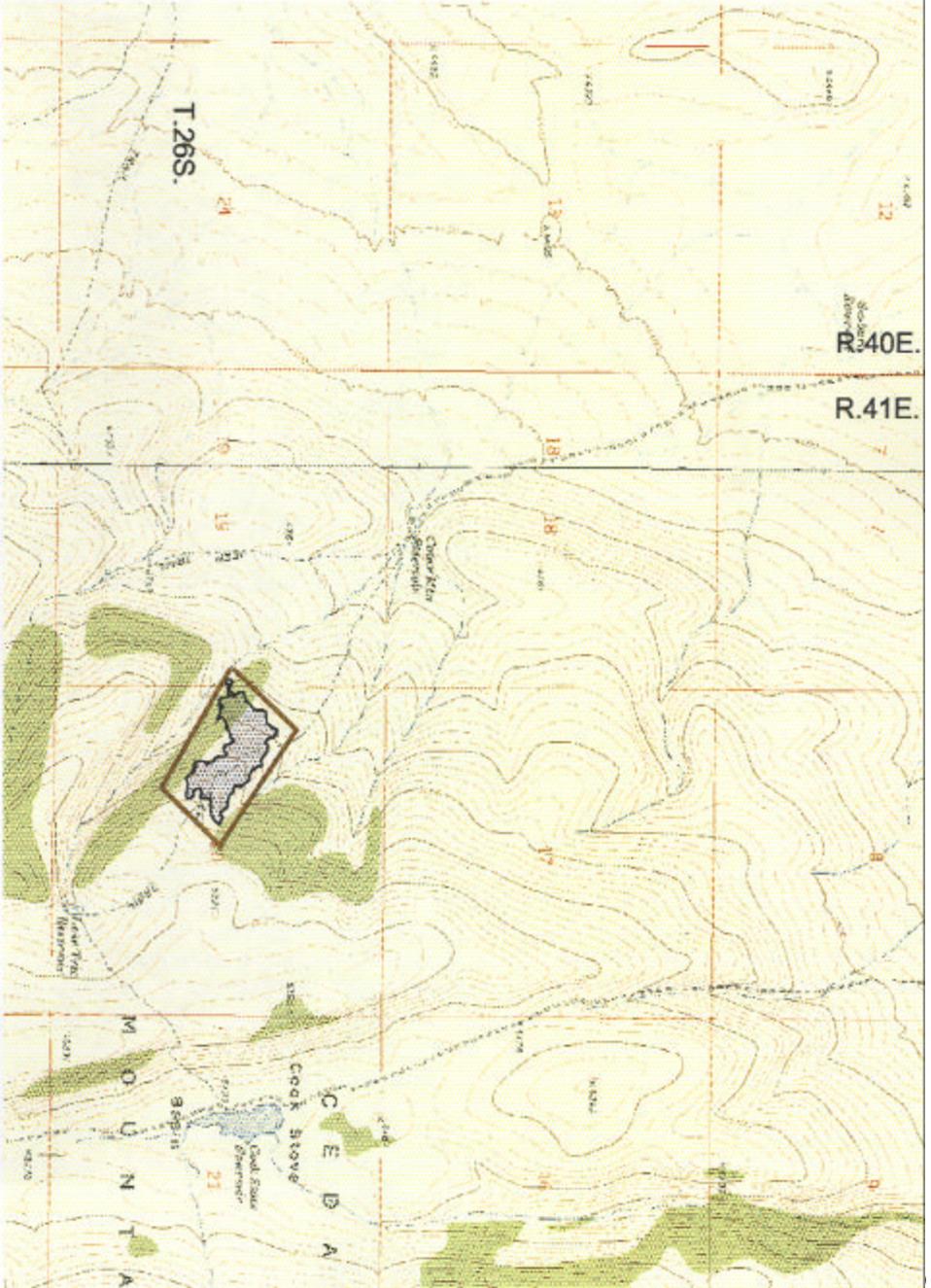
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USDI-BLM 1995. Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1). U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC. 49 p.

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-  Temp fence strip
-  Cedar Mountain Fire
-  Land Ownership
-  Bureau of Reclamation
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Private



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Figure 1:
Cedar Mountain Fire (M 707)
proposed temporary fence



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