

## DECISION RECORD

**EA Number: OR-056-01-086**

**Title of Action: Grass Valley Complex / Starvation Ridge Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan**

**BLM Office: Prineville District, Deschutes Resource Area**

Decision: Based on the information in the EA and other scientific information available at this time, it is my decision to allow the Grass Valley Complex / Starvation Ridge Fires Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan to proceed as described in the Proposed Action. No written comments were received. The seeding using approximately 65% native species mix, will be accomplished through rangeland drilling or ATV powered broadcast seeding and harrowing. Seed application will be done prior to March 15, 2001 to maximize establishment of seeded species.

Noxious weed treatments and reconstruction or repair of minor improvements (fences, a cultural resource enclosure and spring developments) destroyed in the Grass Valley Complex, will also be implemented as specified in the EA/ESR plan.

No livestock grazing will be authorized for two consecutive growing seasons on the fire rehabilitation areas. As specified in the EA/ESR plan, temporary electric fencing will be utilized to separate rehabilitation treatment areas from areas unburned and still authorized for grazing.

Alternatives Considered: Other than the Proposed Action, two alternatives were analyzed in the EA including the No Action Alternative and Alternative 1. Alternative 1 considered not seeding yet reconstructing or minor repairs to improvements that were damaged in the fires. Another alternative was considered but dismissed due to high cost and low projected success. This alternative involved seeding only native species.

Rationale for Decision: The decision to implement the Proposed Action was made because of: 1) potential for erosion in upland habitat; 2) potential for noxious weed spread during the first few years following wildfire disturbance; 3) the need to accelerate the recovery of wildlife habitat; 4) the need to repair fences to not only protect the seedings, but to allow for recovery of burned vegetation; 5) the need to repair the spring developments and cultural resource enclosure to protect riparian and cultural resources.

The decision to plant a mixture of native and non-native species was made because there is the potential for severe competition of seeded species with cheatgrass and medusa head rye and the need to establish perennial vegetation as quickly as possible to lower erosion potential and compete with noxious weeds. There are only three non-native species to be seeded which are: crested wheatgrass, small burnet, and dryland alfalfa. All of these species have been planted on rangelands extensively throughout the west. None of the species has a propensity to expand from the sites seeded. In addition, there is no evidence of these three non-native species cross pollinate with native species. There are no known sensitive plant species that occur in the project area, therefore there is expected to be no impact on sensitive plants. A prehistoric cultural resource site adjacent to one of the ATV seedings will be avoided to protect it from disturbance resulting from project implementation.

The window of opportunity to get seed planted before the annual grasses start to grow is rapidly approaching. If the burned areas are not planted by mid-March the possibility of success will decrease immensely. The BLM feels that the seed mixture described in the proposed action strikes a good balance, with mostly native species being planted, and it the best mix to accomplish erosion, watershed and noxious weed objectives. In the long term, conversion of areas that were dominated by annual grasses prior to the fire to perennial species will ensure public lands meet Rangeland Health Standards in the future.

Fence repair / reconstruction and use of temporary electric fencing are needed to protect the burned and seeded areas of public land from livestock grazing that is authorized on unburned lands.

Repair of the spring developments will ensure recovery of isolated riparian areas which will result in improved vegetative condition, wildlife habitat and water quality.

Repair of the cultural resource enclosure in Macks Canyon Campground will ensure continued protection of a prehistoric site from vandalism and artifact theft.

Conclusion: The Decision does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation and is accordance with the Land Use Plans for the project area, including:

- Two Rivers Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision, June 1986.
- Lower Deschutes River Management Plan and Environmental Statement, May 1991.
- John Day River Management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments, Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, March 2001.

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Date