



Bureau of Land Management

UTAH
NEWS

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Bureau of Land Management Announces the Coal Mine Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Vernal, Utah-- Our proposed action is needed primarily to reduce the risk of wildfires leaving or entering private property adjacent to the Coal Mine Basin fuels project. An additional need is to maintain important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.

The goals of the Coal Mine Hazardous Fuel Reduction project include:

- Establish a “green strip” of fire resistant vegetation adjacent to private property.
- Reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels by removing Pinyon-Juniper encroachment into treated sagebrush communities.
- Maintain areas that provide for important ecological functions and habitat for keystone species.
- Maintain important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.
- Reduce the risk of soil erosion.
- Reduce the concentration of downy brome (cheat grass).
- Reduce the risk of large fire events.

The proposed action is comprised of five different treatments:

- 1) Slashing: Treatment one involves a hand lop and scatter on 423 acres located on the ridgetop at the northeastern portion of the project. This area was treated with a mastication bullhog in 2004 removing pinyon and juniper trees (PJ) with an accompanying seeding. The slashing will preserve the treatment from additional PJ encroachment into the area. This area has approximately 60 to 100 seedlings and saplings per acre. These seedlings are predominately less than 3 feet in height.
- 2) Bullhog: the second treatment involves a bullhog mastication device mounted on a rubber tracked skid steer or a rubber tired tractor. The bullhog methodology involves the chipping of the pinyon pine and juniper trees with a reciprocating drum. The mastication treatment is over approximately 863 acres. These areas contain approximately 300 to 350 trees per acre, average 12 to 15 feet in height, 4 to 6 inches in diameter at root collar with an average age of 58 years.

- 3) Seeding: an aerial application of seed across 349 acres in the southeast area of the project. The goal of the seeding is to establish a fire resistant vegetation community that will compete with invasive species and retain fuel moisture longer into the summer months.
- 4) Mowing: The fourth treatment would be mowing approximately 80 acres in the southeastern portion of the project. Mowing sagebrush and other forbes and grasses will achieve the following: decrease the amount of hazardous fuels, increase the success of the herbicide reaching the soil and increase the chance of seeding success by removing competition. Mowing will take place primarily in areas with little Pinyon and Juniper cover.
- 5) Herbicide: The final treatment is comprised of weed control. Weeds expected to be controlled include primarily downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*), although houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*); black henbane (*Hysocyamus niger*); musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*); Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*); and knapweeds (*Centaurea* species) would be treated if found. Only BLM- approved herbicides would be used to control noxious weeds, and label instructions and buffer distances in the 2007 BLM Vegetation Treatment using Herbicides Environmental Assessment and/or the Vernal Noxious Weed Environmental Assessment would be followed. The herbicide Plateau (Imazapic) would be used to control cheatgrass.

Treatment name	Hand lop and scatter	Mastication only	Mastication plus green strip
Units	A	B	C
Hand lop and scatter	423		
Mastication/mulching		645	289
Seeding			349
Mowing sagebrush			80
Herbicide treatment			349

– BLM –

The BLM manages more land – 253 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.