



# WEST DESERT BLM FUELS MANAGEMENT

## Government Creek

Rockwell Ranch Section IV Shearing Corrals



### Background

Alterations in vegetation in the Great Basin are a common problem (Romme et al. 2002). An increase in sagebrush cover has created a more favorable environment for juniper establishment (Knight 1994). Juniper-pinyon communities today are more of a result of past human activity rather than a result of natural ecological processes (Creque 1999, Evans 1988). It is estimated that pinyon and juniper woodland have increased ten-fold over the past 130 years throughout the Intermountain West (Miller and Tausch 2001). Because of increased juniper cover in the analysis area (Christensen 1965, GLTI 1997), the SLFO BLM proposes to reduce fuels in an area between the Simpson and Sheeprock Mountains. Implementation of HFR projects intend to reduce the potential of wildland fire from burning across BLM managed lands, other federal, state, private, and tribal land—which place natural resources, human communities, and associated infrastructures at risk. Management actions seek to reduce the rate of spread, intensity, resistance to control, and crowning (movement of a fire from the understory into the crown of a tree canopy) potential of wildfires by reducing available fuel. The analysis area consists of approximately 19,000 acres of juniper and sagebrush on BLM managed land located in the valley between the Simpson and Sheeprock Mountains. Although some native understory still exists, it is being out competed by juniper and is at risk of conversion to juniper woodland barring any disturbance or to cheatgrass following wildfire.

In this light, it is evident that a hazardous fuels treatment is needed in order to begin the process of restoring the integrity of the sagebrush steppe and reduce the potential for large, devastating wildfires.

**Location:** 12 miles west of Vernon, Tooele County, UT

**Timeline:** Initiation 2003-ongoing

**Treatment Type:** Mechanical and Seeding

**Objectives:**

- Re-establish a more diverse plant community
- Introduce canopy spacing, age-class and size diversity in juniper component
- Increase vegetation diversity that would reduce the potential of high intensity, large wildland fires.

**For More Information:**

WDD Fuels Program, 801.977.4300

This multi-phased fuels treatment is needed in order to:

- (1) Produce safety areas for suppression resources;
- (2) Reduce fuel loadings, break up the continuity of the juniper canopy, increase vegetation diversity to reduce the potential of high-severity large wildland fires; and
- (3) Improve fire regime and condition class.