

A composite image showing two aerial firefighting aircraft in action. One aircraft is in the foreground, banking to the left and dropping a large volume of bright red fire retardant onto a forest fire. Another aircraft is visible in the upper right, also flying over the fire. The background consists of a forested hillside. The image is overlaid with vertical green and grey bars.

5. Consultation and Coordination

Fire Management
Amendment
Environmental
Assessment

CHAPTER 5 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

During the planning process for this environmental assessment, formal and informal efforts were made by the BLM to involve other federal agencies, state and local governments and the public. The BLM initiated the EA process by requesting comments to determine the scope of issues and concerns that needed to be addressed during the EA process. Public scoping meetings were conducted in September, 2001. Additional public meetings were held in May, 2002. Also as part of the resource inventory, various agencies have been contacted to request data. The EA has been distributed to relevant agencies and the interested public for review and comment. This chapter describes these efforts, including the formal consultation required and the public involvement activities that were conducted.

A. Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted

A number of persons, groups and agencies were consulted throughout the FMA/EA process. These included:

- Elko Field Office Mailing List
- Nevada Division of Forestry
- Nevada Division of Wildlife
- Nevada Natural Heritage Program
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Public Land Users Advisory Council
- Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group
- Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group Fire Management Pod

Native American and Section 7 Consultation are discussed below.

Native American Consultation

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-665), the National Environmental Policy Act (P.L. 91-190), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (P.L. 94-579), the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (P.L. 95-341), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601) and Executive Order 13007, the BLM has provided the affected Tribes and Bands the opportunity to comment and consult on proposed BLM land management actions. Consultation will remain ongoing for this particular action due to the sensitivity and sacred nature of Native American religious activities, ceremonies, and religious site locations. Traditional practitioners are often reluctant to release sacred or religious information until there exists a direct and immediate threat to an area of cultural significance.

Section 7 Consultation

Because BLM's fire management programs have the potential to affect species that are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), it was necessary to coordinate and consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This was first done at the national level, resulting in certain agreements and guidelines between the two agencies. At the state level, BLM began consulting with the local USFWS staff in Reno early on in this project. It was agreed then that the species needing to be covered by a Section 7 (of the ESA) Consultation between the two agencies for the Fire Management Plan Amendment are Lahontan cutthroat trout, Independence Valley speckled dace, Clover Valley speckled dace, and Columbia spotted frog. The first meeting was held on 20 November 2001 between BLM Elko Field Office and



USFWS Reno Field Office to initiate early coordination/informal consultation for the proposed Fire Management Amendment. USFWS responded to BLM's 14 December 2001 request for a species list on 26 December 2001. In accordance with the August 30, 2000 interagency Memorandum of Agreement for Programmatic Section 7 Consultations and Coordination, a consultation agreement was developed to define the process, products, actions, and timeframes and to serve as the guiding document for both BLM and the USFWS throughout the consultation process. This consultation agreement was approved on 9 September 2002. As part of the early coordination process, the Elko BLM also developed draft Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for species protection to be included as part of the proposed action for the Fire Management Amendment. BLM incorporated USFWS comments to the draft SOPs in January 2002. These SOPs are designed to be consistent with the national guidelines issued in April 2000, as amended, with respect to application and use of fire retardants and suppressant foams. The SOPs for the listed species are incorporated into the BA as mitigation. The potential affects on listed species are addressed in the biological assessment which has been prepared. The BA concludes that the Proposed Action may affect Lahontan cutthroat trout, the Independence Valley speckled dace, the Clover Valley speckled dace, and the Columbia spotted frog, but that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect any of these species. BLM has submitted the BA to the USFWS with a request for their concurrence with this conclusion.

B. Public Involvement Activities

Public involvement, at the earliest stages of planning, was critical to the success of this project. As part of the public scoping process, the District mailed newsletters to 730 individuals, agencies and groups on the District's mailing list; issued a news release; and ran radio announcements to notify the public of scoping meetings. Public scoping meetings were held September 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2001, in Elko, Eureka, Jackpot and Wells.

Newsletters to 730 individuals, radio announcements and new releases were also used to notify the public of a second round of meetings to discuss the Proposed Action. These meetings were held on May 20, 21, 22 and 23, 2002, in Elko, Eureka, Jackpot and Wells. These meetings led to further refinements. Comments received at the scoping and public meeting included:

- Citizens would like to see more use of the local community to fight fires. Reasons cited include reduced cost, more local knowledge, more equipment and faster response time.
- Allow more dormant season grazing use after a burn. Do not simply close allotment for 2 years following a burn.
- The local community would like to see greater use of grazing to manage fuel loads.
- The use of prescribed fire, mechanical manipulation and herbicide are acceptable means to manage high fuel load areas.

The results of these meetings helped to formulate and refine alternatives. For example, grazing as a tool is considered in the alternatives as well as a description concerning the closure period of allotments is provided. A full list of comments received during these meetings are summarized in Appendix 1

Additional comments were received during the draft FMA/EA public review process. Letters and responses are found in a separate document entitled Public Comment Letters and Responses, and can be requested from the BLM Elko District. Responding individuals and organizations to the draft FMA/EA included:



- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Nevada Division of Wildlife
- Goods From The Woods
- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
- Committee for the High Desert and Western Watersheds Project
- Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
- Wildlife Management Institute
- Mark Belles

Based on comments received, additional information was included describing the relationship between pinyon and juniper woodlands, riparian areas and fire. Sage grouse SOP's were added and modifications were made to rehabilitation standard operating procedures. A range condition class was provided to further described range lands. Maps were also modified to increase legibility. Additional changes can be found in the Public Comment Letters and Responses document.

C. List of Preparers

1. Elko BLM Field Office

- | | | |
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| Carol Marchio | - | Soil, Water, Air |
| Clint Oke | - | Renewable Resources |
| Dave Stout | - | Management Direction |
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| Helen Hankins | - | Management Direction |
| Janice Stadelman | - | Mining |
| Jason Allen | - | Realty |
| Jeff Arnberger | - | Fire Control Officer |
| Joe Freeland | - | Project Manager, Fire Management |
| Karl Scheetz | - | Range Management |
| Kathy McKinstry | - | Wild Horses and Burros |
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| Mark Coca | - | Weeds |
| Marlene Braun | - | Environmental Coordination |
| Melissa Peterson | - | Public Affairs |
| Ray Lister | - | Wildlife |
| Skip Ritter | - | Forestry |
| Steve Dondero | - | Recreation/Wilderness |
| Tamara Hawthorn | - | Wilderness Study Areas |
| Tim Murphy | - | Archaeology, Paleontology |
| Tom Warren | - | Fire Rehabilitation |

2. EDAW, Inc.

- | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Brian Hoffmann | - | Special Status Species |
| Bruce Meighen | - | Project Manager |
| Cannon Ivers | - | Graphic Design |
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| Craig Taggart | - | Visual Resources |
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Paula Jacks - Fire Ecology
Tom Keith - Technical Oversight

Acronyms & Terminology

The following key fire management terminology and acronyms will be used frequently throughout this document. A general definition is included for each word or phrase.

BA	Biological Assessment
BAER	Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Plans
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIDC	Elko Interagency Dispatch Center
ESR	Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation
District	Lands administered by the Elko Field Office
Firebreaks	Any area that, because it fails to provide additional fuel to the fire, serves to substantially impede or stop the progress of a wildfire. Firebreaks can be man-made or may be natural barriers. For example, it may be a relatively narrow (20 to 30 feet wide), strategically placed line from which all vegetation is removed down to the mineral soil. Existing barriers, such as roads, barren rocky areas devoid of vegetation, streams and lakes may also serve as firebreaks.
Fire Frequency	The number of fires per unit time.
Fire Line	A narrow line, typically 2 to 10 feet wide, from which all vegetation is removed down to mineral soil by clearing just ahead of firing out the line. The fire line may be a roadway or simply a strip cleared by hand or machine, strictly for fire control purposes. Often, it is a line within a wider break, such as a roadway within a fuelbreak.
Fire Regime	The type of fire, intensity, rate of spread, frequency, interval (time between fires) and season of burn make up the fire regime.
Fire Road	A 30-foot wide road from which all vegetation is removed down to the mineral soil.
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
FMO	Fire Management Officer.
FMP	The Fire Management Plan is an administrative document prepared by the fire management officer that identifies the most efficient fire



organization that meets the BLM's mission to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands.

FMA	The Fire Management Amendment is an amendment of the Elko and Wells Resource Management Plans and provides the necessary guidance for an effective integrated fire management program.
FMC	Fire Management Categories are geographical areas that outline general fire management strategies.
Fuelbreak	A strategically located, wide block, or strip, on which a cover of dense, heavy or flammable vegetation has been permanently changed to one of lower fuel volume or reduced flammability as an aid to fire control.
Fuel Loading	Fuel loading refers to the volume of all vegetation susceptible to wildland fires (as in grasslands, coastal sage scrub and chaparral) and is expressed in pounds or tons per acre for a given area.
MIST	Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics are based on the "light hand on the land" practices to minimize disturbance caused by suppression actions.
NDF	Nevada Division of Forestry
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NFRP	Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan
Polygons	Geographic areas based on resource management objectives and goals with reference to fire management practices. They comprise the larger FMC's.
Prescribed Burn	A controlled fire set by land managers under prescribed circumstances to reduce fuel loads in order to reduce the risk of wildland fire hazard and/or achieve other resource management objectives.
RMP	A Resource Management Plan provides guidance and ensures that public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress as stated in FLPMA.
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VFD	Volunteer Fire Department



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