



Proposed Action

Bartholomew Canyon Vegetation Treatment

Spanish Fork Ranger District Uinta National Forest

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to restore the oak/maple community, improve wildlife habitat, reduce departure from historic ecological conditions and improve firefighter access in the Bartholomew Canyon Area of Hobbler Creek Canyon.

The oak/maple community in the Bartholomew Canyon consists of large continuous canopies of mature/decadent oak and maple. Thick continuous canopy discourages use by many wildlife species, because of the lack of herbaceous understory forage production and seed production. Decadent oak produce fewer acorns, which are used by a variety of wildlife species. Wildlife species benefit from openings in the shrub/tree canopy and from a diversity of age and structural classes of shrubs/trees. These treatments would enhance critical habitat for moose, elk, mountain goats and turkeys. While this area is not critical habitat for mule deer it is summer range habitat.

User created roads and ATV trails are fragmenting wildlife habitat and disturbing the animals. This is big game winter range. As development of houses in the area (on private land) increases the big game winter range decreases and the more critical it will be to have a properly functioning big game winter range on National Forest System lands. Winters with abundant snowfall increase the need for proper functioning winter range will increase.

Fuels have been building up over the years on Forest System Lands due to human cultural practices and changing climatic conditions. There are no recorded large fires (>100 acres) from 1960s to present within the project area (Forest Service Fire History Data). There have been a couple of large fires in areas not too far removed from the project area including the Cherry Creek II wildfire of 2003 that burned over 5,000 acres. Hobbler Creek is federally listed as one of Utah's Communities at Risk. The 2006 Northern Utah Regional Wildfire Protection Plan (RWPP) designates Hobbler Creek as a High Risk area for wildfire. Risk of wildfire is a safety concern for private land owners in the Left Fork of Hobbler Creek. Fuels need to be treated along the Forest System/Private boundaries to reduce the potential impact of a wildfire on the Hobbler Creek community. Hazardous fuels reduction treatments would help minimize the risks to private land, structures, and natural resources from potential wildland fires. Access to the area is risky for firefighters; the roads are narrow and thick with brush, providing for low visibility and lack of turn around space. Springville City has public works infrastructure in the area that would



be at risk if a wildfire occurred. Powerlines have a lot of brush and small trees growing under and adjacent to them. Loss of the infrastructure such as the water supply lines and water tank due to a large wildfire event would decrease the available water to the residents of Springville City.

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed actions are:

- 1) Mechanically treat approximately 30-60 percent of oak/maple vegetation type within approximately 1,500 acres of National Forest System lands in the Bartholomew Canyon Area adjacent to National Forest System/Private Land Boundary and along the Bartholomew Canyon Roads. This fuel treatment would be as close to the boundary as topography allows (up to approximately 30 % slope). This treatment would remove brush and small trees. Stumps would be no higher than 6 inches. Trees and brush will be chipped and scattered on site. A four wheeler or pickup truck pulling a chipper/shredder, chainsaws, bullhog/masticator may be used in the project area. This treatment would remove ladder fuels. Treatment would be performed in a way to enhance wildlife habitat, creating a mosaic of open and sheltered areas and creating an edge effect. The proposed treatment location is in Utah County T7S R4E Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16 and 17. The mechanical treatment area ranges in elevation from 5,500 ft to 7,600 ft. Maintenance treatments would be performed on the treated area 3-10 years after the initial treatments to help maintain a lower fuel loading.
- 2) Use prescribed fire to treat 30-60 percent of the oak/maple vegetation type within approximately 3,500 acres of National Forest System lands in the Bartholomew Canyon Area. The prescribed fire would be to the west of the mechanical treatment area, allowing the mechanical treatment to act as a buffer between the prescribed fire area and the private property. The prescribed fire would take place one to two years after the mechanical treatment. The proposed prescribed fire would most likely be a spring fire. The proposed treatment location is in Utah County T6S R3E Section 36, T6S R4E Section 31, T7S R3E Section 1 and 2, and T7S R4E Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18. The prescribed fire area ranges in elevation from 6,100 ft to 11,068 ft.
- 3) Obliterate, close and reseed user created roads and ATV trails.
- 4) Improve defensible space (30-60 feet) around Springville City infrastructure under special use permit on National Forest System lands.
- 5) Create turn outs and parking for emergency vehicles and other equipment, and add gravel to the road.

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES:

The following are preliminary alternatives to the Proposed Action described above. There may be other alternatives developed during the analysis.

- No Action. The project will not take place.
- Mechanical Only. Mechanical treatments would be the only treatment used within the project area.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES:

The preliminary issues for this project are:

- Water quality
- Soil movement
- Management Indicator Species
- Avalanches
- Threatened Endangered and Forest Service Sensitive Species
- Big game habitat
- Migratory birds
- Public Safety
- Protection of Springville City Infrastructure
- Inventoried Roadless Area (South Fork of Provo River Roadless Area)
- Impacts to Forest Service Road 244