

DECISION MEMO

Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Project

**USDA Forest Service
Logan Ranger District, Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Cache County, Utah**

Background and History

Sagebrush communities in the project area are generally old and dense. The relatively few aspen stands are generally mature and have varying amounts of regeneration. The Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment project's primary objective is to reduce sagebrush canopy cover and/or create more early seral sagebrush and aspen stands, in order to increase grass and forb cover and diversity, to improve wildlife habitat.

Project Area

The project area is located in the Saddle Creek drainage in the headwaters of the Blacksmith Fork southeast of Logan, Utah. It lies generally west of Saddle Creek between Dip Hollow and Elk Valley (see the Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Project Map, Appendix A). The Saddle Creek analysis area is within the Cache-Box Elder Management Area (MA) as described in the Wasatch-Cache Revised Forest Plan (pages 4-128 to 4-139). For a summary of the Cache-Box Elder MA, see Appendix B.

Decision and Rationale

I have decided to implement the Saddle Creek vegetation treatment project in the units shown on the attached map. My decision is to treat approximately 775 acres. About 540 acres will be burned and 235 acres mechanically treated. Mechanical treatment will be accomplished using a piece of equipment called a Dixie Harrow that is pulled behind a tractor. It removes the sagebrush without affecting the desirable native grasses and forbs that are present on the site. The Dixie Harrow method allows for very site-specific treatment. Vegetation in Units 5 and 7 will be mechanically treated unless steep slopes prevent safe tractor operation. In those instances, vegetation will then be burned.

I have made this decision based on a thorough review of the interdisciplinary environmental analysis documented in the project record. The resource technical reports rely on the best available science and include a disclosure of the scientific analysis, consideration of research including responsible opposing views, and acknowledgement of unavailable and/or uncertain information.

The absence of frequent fire and the presence of heavy livestock and wildlife browsing in the Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Project area have contributed to a situation where the sagebrush communities are skewed toward older age classes and have a dense canopy cover. Fires, which historically occurred in sagebrush communities every 20 to 50 years, providing a mosaic of age classes and canopy cover, have been suppressed for many years, contributing to the current deteriorated condition that is inconsistent with the normal successional trends in forest ecosystems.

I am making this decision to increase the diversity of habitat in the area by accomplishing the following objectives:

- Restoring the mosaic of age-class and structure diversity among sagebrush communities and any incidental aspen within the landscape
- Improving the native understory of grasses and forbs

While not a primary objective, this project also has the benefit of breaking up the sagebrush canopy continuity, so that a wildfire is likely to be more patchy leaving unburned islands.

Fundamental to making this project successful is implementing rest from livestock grazing as the vegetation regrows. Guideline 73 requires that livestock use is delayed in post-fire and post harvest created forest openings until successful regeneration of the shrub and tree component occurs. In sagebrush successful regeneration is accomplished typically after two years of growth. All the units planned for treatment are part of an allotment and actively grazed. To ensure livestock grazing is properly managed post treatment, it is likely that temporary electric fence will be necessary on cattle allotments. For sheep allotments other methods such as increased herding will most likely be effective. Frequent range inspections will ensure Guideline 73 is met.

Implementation of this project will provide a mosaic of regenerated sagebrush stands and a small amount of aspen through the use of prescribed fire and mechanical treatment. Within the burn units, not all acres would be burned completely and within the mechanically treated units, islands of vegetation would remain. Bitterbrush is an important component in the Saddle Creek landscape and efforts will be made to avoid treatment to the extent possible.

Aspen presence in the project area is limited to incidental stringers with fairly good diversity represented. Treatment in aspen will be limited but may result in a slight increase in aspen in the project area.

I am also requiring that prescribed burning portion of the Saddle Creek project be implemented with a portion of the nearby Hells Hollow burn project. While the two projects are not connected we can take advantage of their proximity. By creating greater acreages of regenerating aspen we can better disperse big game and lessen the likelihood of over-utilizing suckering aspen.

Site studies revealed that while the sagebrush is old and decadent there is a relatively healthy and diverse understory of native grasses and forbs. Seeding after treatment will not be necessary or desirable. Plants native to the site have the best capability to thrive post treatment.

Prescribed fire and mechanical treatment will be the methods of treatment for the identified units. There will be situations where some shrubs or small trees may be cut prior to the burn to achieve better ignition. This material will not be commercially removed from the area. Some vegetation may also be cut by hand or small machine (such as a small trail cat) and cleared to create a line cleared of vegetation for a defendable boundary to the fire, where needed. In many cases, roads, trails, or natural openings are used for this purpose, where they are available.

As noted on page 4-60 of the Revised Forest Plan, prescribed fire refers to any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and site-specific NEPA analysis requirements must be met prior to ignition. Prescribed fire plans are documents prepared by qualified personnel, approved by the agency administrator, and include criteria for the conditions under which the fire will be conducted (a prescription). Prescribed fire activities include actually lighting a fire using a fire accelerant with ground or aviation equipment and personnel and may include the following: removal or piling of vegetation to secure

perimeter lines, clearing areas for helicopter operations, clearing holding lines to bare mineral soil using hand tools, using fire resistant foam or water on holding lines, constructing temporary camps for base operations, using aviation resources for fire retardant or water drops to reduce high-intensity fire behavior, closing areas to livestock grazing before and after burning, and closing roads and areas to the public before and after burning.

Prescribed fire will only be used when pre-established conditions (e.g., temperature, moisture, wind) meet specifications in the approved burn plan. The Forest Service only uses fire under certain weather conditions, making the results more predictable. The Saddle Creek prescribed burns will be ignited from the ground (by hand) and/or from the air (using helicopters).

Forest Service fire resources likely used on this project include one or more helicopters, a 20-person fire crew, and 2 to 3 fire engines. If needed, 1 to 2 additional fire crews, an additional engine, and an additional helicopter will be located 3 to 4 hours away. Additional Forest Service personnel will be used for public information and patrol of road closures.

The attached map shows the prescribed burn units. The area within the outer boundary (analysis area) but outside the burn units will not be actively ignited. However, even under the best of conditions, there is some unpredictability associated with prescribed fire. If fire inadvertently spreads into this area (within the analysis area but outside the burn units) the fire would not be actively suppressed. Effects of inadvertent fire in this area have been considered in this analysis. Any fire that spreads beyond the outer boundary (analysis area) would be actively suppressed. The buck-and-pole fence that exists along the Hells Hollow-Saddle Creek Rd to protect the riparian area will be defended from fire; the road will act as a fire line and mechanical treatment will be used in this area

Monitoring and follow-up will be conducted to insure this decision is implemented consistent with goals and objectives in the Revised Forest Plan, as summarized in the Appendix.

Design Features and Mitigation Measures

The Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment project is designed to reduce negative environmental effects by allowing the treatments to take place only under pre-approved conditions. Areas that were inherently higher risk for adverse effects (such as steep slopes, shallow soils) were eliminated from further consideration. The burn unit boundaries and unit locations within the landscape were designed to minimize the risk of escaped fire. To protect water quality, fish species, amphibians, and aquatic macro-invertebrates, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) as described in the Revised Forest Plan (Glossary-19) are a key part of this project.

In addition, the following measures, included as part of the decision, are intended to help achieve objectives and reduce environmental impacts from the treatments.

Measures to achieve objectives

- 1) Treat 50 to 80% of the sagebrush type within the treatment units, including incidental aspen stringers, with a goal of 60 to 80% mortality in the overstory in order to ensure top kill. This will encourage growth from aspen roots to gain any possible aspen regeneration.

Measures to protect soil quality

- 2) The design should have an overall objective of producing a “cool burn” for these areas. Design features to achieve a cool burn include such things as timing (ignition when heavy fuels are relatively wet or humidity is relatively high), ignition schemes or patterns that result in lower fire line intensities in these areas, or pre-ignition treatments that either reduce the intensity or concentration of the heavy fuels.

Mitigation measures for grazing management

- 3) Keeping livestock out of the burn units will involve changes in grazing management. (Forest Plan Guideline 73) Temporary fences will be installed to aid in coordination of grazing allotments and rest periods following burns. Other grazing practices such as increased herding efforts, non-use of some pastures or units, trailing and bedding in new areas, and close monitoring of livestock use will likely be required as well.

Measures to minimize the creation and/or use of unauthorized ATV trails

- 4) Any hand lines that are created as a fire break will be reclaimed (covered with vegetation and woody debris) to blend in with the surrounding areas, to prevent use as a new trail or pathway.
- 5) If the use of fire equipment creates visible evidence of travel ways off a system road, signs and rock barriers will be installed after the burns to minimize future unauthorized vehicular use.

Measures to minimize impacts on recreation use and opportunities

- 6) At least one month in advance of the prescribed burns, place temporary signs along the roads in the areas that are expected to be closed or impacted by the burns, announcing the event and suggesting that other areas be considered for hunting and camping.
- 7) Put an announcement in the newspaper at least one month ahead of opening day of the hunts. Encourage the newspaper to write an article suggesting hunters consider other areas in their hunt planning and explain how prescribed fire improves deer and elk habitat and may improve future hunts.
- 8) Provide a sufficient number of Forest Service employees to manage road closures, roadblocks, and patrols. Train the employees, develop flyers explaining the burns, and suggest other areas for recreation and hunting.
- 9) Avoid scheduling the prescribed burns during weekends or holidays (heaviest use periods).
- 10) Protect Concentrated Use Areas (defined as five or more camp fire rings in one area) from an intense fire that will remove all the large trees that provide shelter and shade.

Measures for public safety

- 11) Determine if a special closure order will be necessary to ensure public safety in the area during the burns; develop and use the order as needed.
- 12) Protect trail and road signs from fire, especially signs used to block motorized traffic.

- 13) Protect road culverts and ensure their ability to function.

Measures to avoid noxious weeds

- 14) There is one patch of Canada thistle in a seep on the southernmost unit. Thistle will be treated while it is dormant prior to flowering to prevent seed spread into the newly treated area.
- 15) All equipment brought to the site will be cleaned of plant debris and mud. If equipment leaves site prior to completing project it should be cleaned again prior to reentering the project area.
- 16) Take measures immediately following the prescribed burns to monitor and treat new noxious weed infestations within approximately 200 feet of roads.

Measures to protect scenic quality

- 17) Where possible, construct hand lines so they follow the natural contour of the land. Where needed, hand lines will be reclaimed (covered with vegetation and woody debris or seeded) to minimize visual impacts.

Measures to protect wildlife habitat and migratory birds

- 18) Avoid ignitions in areas where beavers are active; these areas generally coincide with designated RHCAs (riparian areas) and the protection afforded to the RHCA by the 50 foot buffer zone between treated vegetation and Saddle Creek will provide protection for beavers and their habitats.
- 19) To minimize impact to nesting migratory birds, the majority of prescribed burns will take place either before nesting in the early spring (generally before April 15) or after nesting in the fall (generally after August 15).
- 20) Allow the existing wildlife corridor between units 1 and 2 to remain unburned.
- 21) Avoid treating bitterbrush to the extent possible.

Measures to protect at risk plant species habitat

- 22) Perform treatments within *Arabis glabra* habitat in the fall when the plants are not actively growing.

Measures to protect water and aquatic resources

- 23) A 50 foot flat RHCA buffer zone between treated vegetation and Saddle Creek will be implemented to minimize any sediment movement. The RHCA is an area of no ground disturbance. Staging areas, camps, helispots, and other centers for prescribed fire activities must be located outside of the RHCA. Additionally, chemical retardant, foam, or other fire retardants must not be used in these areas. Fire ignitions should occur outside of the RHCA's. Incidental backing of fire into an RCHA is acceptable because it would be an indirect and cooler burn. No mechanical treatment will occur within RHCAS, including any treatment around ephemeral streams.

Reason for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action

Based on public input, interdisciplinary team review, past experience, and consideration of the resource conditions listed below, I have determined the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effect to either the physical or biological components of the environment. As such, this is a decision that has been categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed action falls under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 - Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, Chapter 30, Section 31.2 Category 6 – Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.

The Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment project fits this category because: 1) it does not involve the use of herbicides; 2) no new roads will be constructed; and 3) it will improve wildlife habitat by increasing age class and structural diversity in sagebrush communities.

As described in the mitigation section above, all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts have been incorporated into the decision. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action for the resource conditions listed below.

a. Federally listed threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. The project will have “no effect” on the identified threatened, endangered, proposed, and/or candidate species (Maguire’s primrose, Canada lynx, yellow-billed cuckoo, black-footed ferret, and bald eagle) or designated critical habitat. The finding for lynx is based on the determination the project will restore age-class diversity in vegetation and the treatments occur primarily in aspen which has lower snowshoe hare use than conifer. For the following Forest Service sensitive species (Logan buckwheat, Maguire’s draba, Brownie ladyslipper, Bonneville cutthroat trout, great gray owl, three-toed woodpecker, pygmy rabbit, boreal owl, northern goshawk, sage grouse, Columbia sharp-tailed grouse, peregrine falcon, and wolverine) a finding of “no impact” is given. A finding of “may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species” is given for the flammulated owl, spotted bat, and Townsend’s big-eared bat. The determinations are documented in the Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation (BA/BE) for this project (available in the project file).

b. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

There will be no effect on flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds. Saddle Creek has a narrow floodplain that is about 20 feet wide adjacent to the creek. Other streams within the project area are steep and do not have a floodplain associated with them. Most of the burn units are dry uplands but small areas of wetland that are less than 1 acre in size occur near seeps, livestock ponds, and at beaver ponds on Saddle Creek. Floodplains and wetlands will be protected under Riparian Habitat Conservation Area designations. Other streams in the area are ephemeral and do not have floodplains or wetlands near them.

Water originating in the Blacksmith Fork drainage is used for municipal purposes by Hyrum City which takes the water from springs located near the Blacksmith Fork River about 15 miles below the burn units.

No adverse effects would occur to any municipal watersheds in the project area because the water sources for drinking water are located many miles outside of the analysis area and would not likely to be influenced by any surface runoff from the project.

c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas. The Saddle Creek project area contains no Congressionally-designated areas.

d. Inventoried roadless areas. The Saddle Creek project area contains no inventoried roadless areas.

e. Research Natural Areas. The Saddle Creek project area contains no Research Natural Areas.

f. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. No such religious or cultural sites are present.

g. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. The Saddle Creek project area has been surveyed for cultural resources and none were found. The USDA-FS has made the determination and the Utah SHPO concurred on August 22, 2007 there will be no historic properties affected (concurrence letter is available in the project file).

Public Involvement

The Forest Service conducted the public scoping process concurrent with formal notice and comment by mailing a letter describing the proposal to 97 individuals, agencies, and organizations on July 3, 2007. Due to a District Court Decision in California on September 16, 2005, some actions that are categorically excluded from documentation are subject to notice and comment and administrative review. This project is one of those actions. Consequently, an opportunity for notice and comment was provided and a legal notice was posted in the Salt Lake Tribune on July 7, 2007. Two responses regarding this project were received. Documentation of public scoping is in the project file and comment letters are available for review through the Logan Ranger District.

Findings Required by Other Laws

National Forest Management Act - This decision is consistent with the intent of the 2003 Revised Forest Plan's forestwide desired future condition, goals, and subgoals listed on pages [4-5 through 4-25] and the desired future condition of the Cache-Box Elder Management Area on pages [4-128-4-139]. The project incorporates applicable forestwide standards and guidelines from Chapter 4, Section A4 and is consistent with the management prescription direction mapped for the area. (See Appendix C).

Clean Water Act – The Clean Water Act requires each state to implement its own water quality standards. The State of Utah's Water Quality Anti-degradation Policy requires maintenance of water quality to protect existing in-stream Beneficial Uses on streams designated as Category I High Quality Water. All surface waters geographically located within the boundaries of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest whether on public or private lands are designated as Category I High Quality Water. This means they will be maintained at existing high quality. New point sources

will not be allowed and non-point sources will be controlled to the extent feasible through the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) or regulatory programs. The State of Utah and the Forest Service agreed through a 1993 MOU to use Forest Plan standards and guidelines and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2509.22 Soil and Water Conservation Practices (SWCPs) as BMPs. The requirement for using SWCPs in my decision meets the water quality protection elements of the Utah Non-point Source Management Plan and Non-point Source Management Plan for silvicultural activities.

Executive Order 11990 of May 1977 – This order requires the Forest Service to take action to minimize destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. In compliance with this order, Forest Service direction requires that analysis be completed to determine whether adverse impacts would result.

Wetlands within the project area were identified. Impacts will be prevented by implementation RHCA as described in mitigation measures. My decision is in compliance with EO 11990

Executive Order 11988 of May 1977 – This order required the Forest Service to provide leadership and take action to (1) minimize adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains and reduce risk of flood loss, (2) minimize impacts of floods on human safety, health and welfare, and (3) restore and preserve natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

There are very limited floodplains within the project area and will not be disturbed because of RHCA's.

Endangered Species Act - This Act directs that all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered, and threatened (and proposed) species of fish, wildlife and plants. This obligation is further clarified in a National Interagency Memorandum of Agreement (dated August 30, 2000) which states our shared mission to "...enhance conservation of imperiled species while delivering appropriate goods and services provided by the lands and resources."

Based on the disclosure in wildlife specialist report, concerning threatened and endangered or proposed wildlife, plant or fish species, correspondence with the USFWS and the Biological Assessment, it has been determined there are no adverse effects to populations of endangered, and threatened (and proposed) species of fish, wildlife and plants relative to this decision.

Executive Order 13186 of January 10, 2001 – Based on the discussion in the wildlife specialist report, information in the project file concerning migratory birds, and implementation of mitigation measure 18, my decision is in compliance with this Executive Order for the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species – This Executive Order directs that Federal Agencies should not authorize any activities that would increase the spread of invasive species. Based on the mitigation measures 14-16 included as part of my decision, the approved activity will not increase the spread of invasive species.

American Antiquities Act of 1906 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 – Based on the discussion in specialists report concerning Heritage Resources and the project file documentation, it has been determined there would be no measurable effects to any historic properties relative to this decision. SHPO concurred with this finding on August 22, 2007.

Prime Farmland, Rangeland and Forest Land (Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum 1827) – There is no prime farmland within the project area. The Decision does not make any changes to grazing allotments found within the project area.

Civil rights – Based on comments received during scoping no conflicts have been identified with other Federal, State or local agencies or with Native Americans, other minorities women, or civil rights of any United States citizen.

Executive Order 12898 of February 16, 1994 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice on Minority Populations and Low-income Populations” - This order requires federal Agencies to the extent practicable and permitted by law to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate disproportionately high and adverse human health effects, of its programs and policies and activities on minorities and low-income populations in the United States and territorial possessions. In compliance with this Executive Order the Wasatch-National Forest through public involvement efforts attempted to identify interested and affected parties, including minorities and low-income populations for this project. A comment period was held for 30 days following the publication of the legal notice in the Salt Lake Tribune.

No minorities and low-income populations were identified during public involvement activities.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule of January 12, 2001 - The intent of the rule is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System in the context of multiple use management. The 2001 RACR prohibits road construction and reconstruction and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands.

This project does not involve any inventoried roadless areas.

Implementation Date

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days following the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Appeals must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days of the publication of this notice in the Salt Lake Tribune. Appeals must be sent to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401; or by fax to 801-625-5277; or by email to: appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Emailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (doc) and must include the project name in the subject line. Appeals may also be hand delivered to the above address, during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Contact Person

For further information contact Richard Williams at (801) 236-3441.

David R. Myers

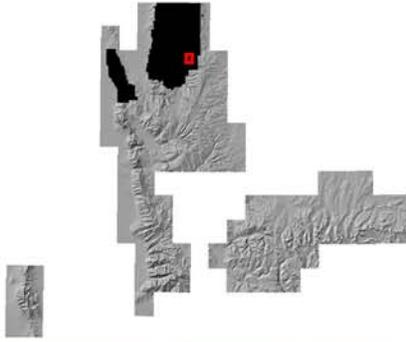
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David R. Myers
Deputy Forest Supervisor

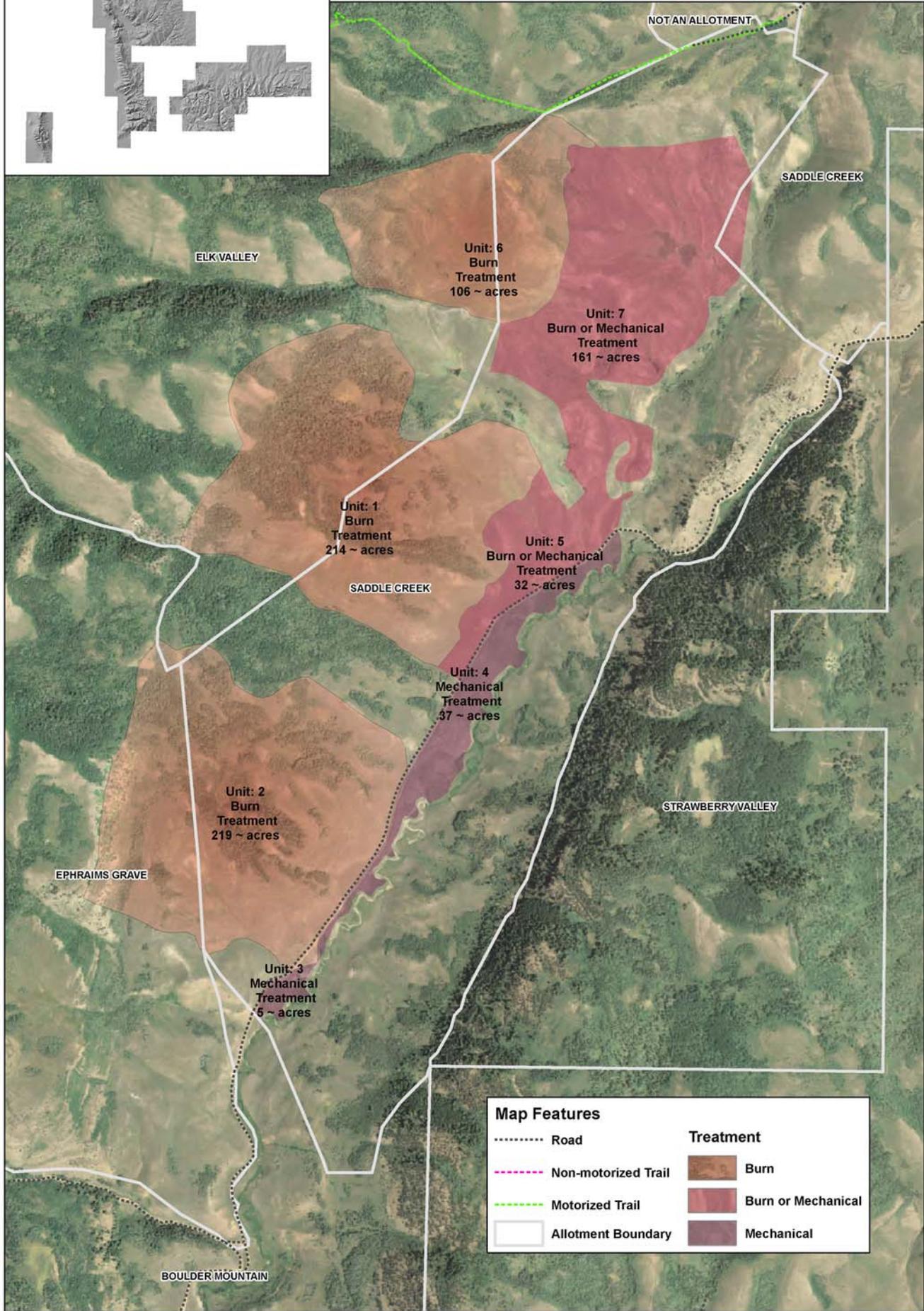
Date

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Appendix A
Saddle Creek Vicinity Map



NOT AN ALLOTMENT



ELK VALLEY

SADDLE CREEK

Unit: 6
Burn
Treatment
106 ~ acres

Unit: 7
Burn or Mechanical
Treatment
161 ~ acres

Unit: 1
Burn
Treatment
214 ~ acres

Unit: 5
Burn or Mechanical
Treatment
32 ~ acres

SADDLE CREEK

Unit: 4
Mechanical
Treatment
37 ~ acres

STRAWBERRY VALLEY

Unit: 2
Burn
Treatment
219 ~ acres

EPHRAIMS GRAVE

Unit: 3
Mechanical
Treatment
5 ~ acres

BOULDER MOUNTAIN

Map Features

- Road
- - - - Non-motorized Trail
- Motorized Trail
- Allotment Boundary

Treatment

- Burn
- Burn or Mechanical
- Mechanical

Appendix B

Cache Box Elder Management Area A Summary of Desired Future Conditions (Revised Forest Plan, pages 4-128 to 4-139)

Watershed Desired Future Conditions:

Watersheds will be properly functioning with adequate ground cover to prevent soil erosion, and provide infiltration and moisture holding for storage and release of water to streams and aquifers. Stream flows will remain natural with the exception of the three Logan River dams and the municipal water withdrawals. Spring sources and associated wetlands will be protected from excessive use and will be restored to proper functioning. Riparian areas will be properly functioning with deep-rooted vegetation or armoring along banks to allow for sediment filtering and erosion prevention. Riparian areas will be protected from overuse and trampling from livestock grazing and recreation uses. Spring sources will be fenced and provide water for livestock.

Biodiversity/Viability Desired Future Conditions:

Vegetation and Disturbance Processes

Restoration and/or maintenance of a healthy and sustainable, broad scale, north-south wildlife corridor within this management area will be a priority in all management decisions. Vegetation will form a mosaic of habitat types, diverse in species composition and structure approximating historic patterns. Fire use will play a role in reducing fuels, and restoring and maintaining the dynamic of aspen and mountain brush regeneration, and the balance of age classes in these types. Vegetation treatments (including such things as fire use and timber harvest) will be used to improve the ratio of aspen to conifer in the mix of vegetation across the landscape. In the spruce-fir forest, along the eastern portion of the management area, selective timber harvest will be used to approximate small-scale historic disturbances common in this type, such as spruce beetle infestations and small fires. Spruce beetle activity will remain at endemic levels.

Wildlife Habitat

Restoration and maintenance of a healthy and sustainable, broad scale, north-south wildlife corridor within this management area will be a priority in all management decisions.

Terrestrial Wildlife Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Protection/Recovery

TES species and other species of concern are covered in Forest-wide DFC's. TES species with suitable habitat or present within the unit include bald eagle, Canada lynx, wolverine, Townsend's (western) big-eared bat, boreal owl, flammulated owl, northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, northern three-toed woodpecker, and Bonneville cutthroat trout. Management activities will conform to objectives, standards and guides as identified in Conservation Strategies, Agreements, and/or Guidelines for protection of TES species.

Fish Habitat

Aquatic habitats will be managed to maintain cool, clear water and well-vegetated stream banks for cover and bank stability.

Amphibians and Invertebrates Habitat

Marshy edges of ponds, lakes and springs will be protected to allow for the development of in-water and riparian vegetation.

Appendix C

Management Prescription Categories (MPC) Applicable In the Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Project (Revised Forest Plan, pages 4-57 to 4-78)

Management Prescriptions are defined in the Revised Forest Plan as “management practices and intensity selected and scheduled for application on a specific area to attain multiple-use and other goals and objectives.” Management Prescription Categories provide a general sense of the management or treatment of the land intended to result in a particular condition being achieved or set of values being restored or maintained. Each Prescription includes a set of standards and guidelines showing activities that are not allowed, and parameters within which activities that are allowed should be conducted.

The following are management prescriptions found within the Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Area.

3.1 Aquatic Habitat (3.1A) /Watershed (3.1W) Emphasis: Emphasis is on maintaining or improving quality of watershed conditions and aquatic habitats. Watershed function and aquatic habitat values are recognized as important and may require restoration to reach desired conditions. Areas of municipal watershed and public drinking water sources will be managed to maintain or improve soil processes and watershed conditions. Where improvement is needed, it is achieved by implementing watershed improvement projects, and by applying soil and water conservation practices to land-disturbing activities.

3.1A consists of the stream and adjacent riparian areas (or 300 feet either side of the stream whichever is greater). Because of the large number of existing facilities (roads, developed recreation sites, trails), already located within areas mapped as 3.1A, and because of their relatively high value and small proportion of the landscape, development outside already developed areas within this prescription is to be avoided. Protect or restore proper hydrologic functioning.

(S3.1A-1) New recreation facility development is not allowed.

(S3.1A-2) Cutting fuelwood larger than 5 inches in diameter is not allowed.

(G3.1A-1) Timber harvest, vegetation/fuel treatments, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use are allowed only for the purposes of maintaining, improving or restoring riparian and aquatic habitat to desired conditions or to protect property in the wildland urban interface.

(G3.1A-2) Livestock grazing is allowed with the utilization standard for Riparian Class 1, and to meet site-specifically developed desired conditions.

(G3.1A-3) Road construction is not allowed except for road crossings.

(G3.1A-4) New trail construction is allowed if consistent with site-specifically defined riparian management objectives.

3.2 Terrestrial Habitats (3.2U Undeveloped/3.2D Developed) Emphasis: Manage upland habitats to provide for sustaining and/or recovering desired plant and animal species and/or communities. Maintain or restore lands to meet desired conditions of habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Considerations for these areas include winter ranges and **corridors** for seasonal migrations as well as movement of genetic materials, individuals, and populations; vegetation composition, structure, and pattern needed for life cycle stages; needs for control or eradication of undesirable non-native species; and protection of special or unique habitats.

3.2D consists of those terrestrial habitat areas where development is allowed for the purpose of maintaining, improving, or restoring key habitat elements.

(G3.2D-1) Timber harvest, road construction, vegetation/fuel treatment, prescribed fire and wildland fire use are allowed for the purposes of maintaining, improving or restoring terrestrial habitat, for oil and gas exploration, for hazardous fuel reduction, and to protect property in the wildland urban interface.

(G3.2D-2) Grazing is allowed on open allotments to meet site-specifically defined desired conditions.

(G3.2D-3) New recreation development and new trail construction are allowed with consideration of existing road/trail densities and site-specifically defined terrestrial habitat desired conditions.

3.2U consists of those terrestrial habitat areas protected from development because of potential impacts to key habitat elements.

(S-3.2U) Timber harvest, road construction, and new recreation developments are not allowed.

(G3.2U-1) Vegetation/fuel treatment, prescribed fire and wildland fire use are allowed for the purposes of maintaining, improving or restoring terrestrial habitat, for hazardous fuel reduction, and to protect property in the wildland urban interface.

4.3 Emphasis on Backcountry Motorized Settings: These areas provide recreation opportunities in a more remote and isolated setting where visitors can obtain a higher degree of solitude and the environment is in a near-natural setting. Access to and within these areas is primarily through the use of motorized trails and roads. Sights of other visitors are low and sounds of other users are low to moderate. Visitors are largely managed off-site, with signs and regulations posted at area boundaries. Management of recreation impacts is of a semi-primitive nature with regulation of use a priority management tool over site modification. Visitor self-reliance is high. Management visibility is low with backcountry ranger patrols focusing on monitoring and maintaining natural conditions and processes.

(S4.3) New recreation development is not allowed.

(G4.3-1) Timber harvest, vegetation/fuels treatment, road construction, prescribed fire and wildland fire use are allowed to mimic historic conditions and to restore ecosystem functioning as compatible with the backcountry recreation opportunity and natural setting desired.

(G4.3-2) Grazing is allowed on open allotments to meet site-specifically defined desired conditions.

(G4.3-3) New trail construction is allowed.

Appendix D

Forest Plan Goals and Objectives Applicable to the Saddle Creek Vegetation Treatment Project (Revised Forest Plan, pages 4-16 to 4-34)

Forestwide Goals

Forestwide Goal 1 – Air Resource

Ensure National Forest management activities result in meeting state and federal air quality standards, and comply with local, state and federal air quality regulations and requirements.

Forestwide Goal 2-Watershed Health

Maintain and/or restore overall watershed health (proper functioning of physical, biological and chemical conditions). Provide for long-term soil productivity. Watershed health should be addressed across administrative and political boundaries.

Forestwide Goal 3-Biodiversity & Viability

Provide for sustained diversity of species at the genetic, populations, community and ecosystem levels. Maintain communities within their historic range of variation that sustains habitats for viable populations of species, restores or maintains hydrologic functions, and reduces potential for uncharacteristic high-intensity wildfires, and insect epidemics.

To achieve sustainable ecosystems, meet properly functioning condition (PFC) criteria for all vegetation types that occur in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Focus on approximating natural disturbances and processes by restoring composition, age class diversity, patch sizes, and patterns for all vegetation types. Guideline G-11 contains the desired landscape scale structure and pattern for vegetation cover types.

Forestwide Goal 4-Fire and Fuels Management

Wildland fire use and prescribed fire provide for ecosystem maintenance and restoration consistent with land uses and historic fire regimes. Fire suppression provides for public and firefighter safety and protection of other federal, state and private property and natural resources. Fuels are managed to reduce risk of property damage and uncharacteristic fires.

Objectives for Vegetation Management

Developed in response to Goal 2-watershed health, Goal 3-biodiversity and viability, Subgoals 3d-fire-adapted ecosystems, and Goal 4-fire and fuels management.

Purpose: To achieve forest and rangeland vegetation composition, structure, and patterns in properly functioning condition (i.e. within their historic ranges of variation). To move toward a variety of vegetation types, age classes, and patch sizes covering the landscape and

contributing to healthy watersheds, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats, recreation environments, and production of commodities such as wood and forage.

Need: A forestwide assessment concluded that aspen communities as well as conifer, sagebrush and several other vegetation types are currently outside the historic range of variation. This appears to be primarily related to successful fire suppression in vegetation types that evolved with repeated fires. A few *examples* of ramifications of the current situation include: fuel build-ups that may result in larger and hotter fires than historic; undesirable changes in vegetation composition and patterns such as extreme loss of aspen with its highly productive and diverse understory that provides habitat elements for many wildlife and bird species as well as outstanding scenery.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 3.b.** Stimulate aspen regeneration and reduce other encroaching woody species in aspen by treating (fire use and/or timber harvest) approximately 3,200 acres average annually for a 10-year total of 32,000 acres.
- 3.d.** Increase grass and forb production and plant species and age-class diversity in sagebrush by treating approximately 2,000 acres average annually for a 10-year total of 20,000 acres.