

Decision Memo

Silver Meadows and Fly Tree Area Restoration Project

USDA Forest Service
Heber-Kamas Ranger District, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Wasatch County, Utah

March, 2025

This decision incorporates all information in this document and included in the project file.

Project number in the Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System database:67840

Decision and Rationale

This document details my decision to authorize the proposal to restore wildlife and avian habitat on approximately 600 acres through timber harvest and 3,830 acres through fuels treatments.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). In particular, this action falls under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) - Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction. This category of action is applicable because project is designed to improve wildlife and avian habitat through the use of salvage sale, prescribed fire, and other non-herbicide and non-road habitat improvement measures.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – Potential effects to federally listed or proposed endangered species and habitat and Forest Service sensitive species were considered. The project would not result in significant or adverse effects to species or habitat.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are present in or near the project area, however, due to the limited scope and scale of the project, there would not be significant effects to water resources.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – Congressionally designated areas are not present.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas. Inventoried Roadless Areas are present in the Flytree Area. Design Criteria would reduce potential effects to the IRA by requiring further analysis if the IRA would be affected.
- Research natural areas – Research Natural Areas are not present.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – Potential effects to religious or cultural sites would be avoided.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – Potential effects to archaeological sites or historic properties or areas would be avoided.

Scoping

The project was entered into the Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System database and listed on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Schedule of Proposed Actions. The project was coordinated with and reviewed by the Forest Interdisciplinary Team.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Uinta National Forest, as amended.

The project is consistent with other applicable law, regulations, and policy.

Design Criteria

The following Design Criteria will be required as part of this decision:

Engineering:

- The project shall ensure that appropriate engineering principles are included in the package development and the design of relocated roads.
- Engineering must review and approve designs and specifications prior to offering the sale.

Fire & Fuels:

- Prescribed fire operations will have an approved burn plan.
- Use East Zone Fuels Management Best Management Practices (EZFM BMPs).

Fisheries:

- Ensure no piles are formed within RHCA's that may be burned at a later time. Boreal toad may hibernate in these piles and if burns are proposed to clean up debris, mortality could occur. Piles constructed in RHCA's may be left to provide hibernacula for boreal toad.
- Equipment exclusion zones (EEZ) will be established adjacent to streams and wetlands.
- Entry into EEZ should be avoided to the greatest extent possible but may be approved on a case-by-case basis following consultation with Forest Hydrologist or Soil Scientist to facilitate equipment access to treatment areas opposite EEZ.
- When burning upland areas, no ignitions would occur within RHCA's. Backburning fire would be allowed to enter wetland or riparian habitat.
- To ensure natural and beneficial volumes of large woody debris, downed trees should not be removed from perennial or ephemeral stream channels.
- Storage of fuels, lubricants, toxicants and hazardous materials is prohibited within RHCA's

Hydrology and Soils

- All Timber-Related Activities
 - Avoid equipment operation in wetlands, bogs, and wet meadows to limit soil damage, turbidity, and sediment production resulting from compaction, rutting, runoff concentration, and subsequent erosion.
 - Design timber harvest unit to ensure that timber harvest unit design will secure favorable conditions of water flow, maintain water quality and soil productivity, and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation.
 - Use Sale Area Maps for designating soil and water protection needs to delineate the location of protection areas and available water sources and to insure their recognition, proper consideration, and protection on the ground.
 - To limit the extent of potential ground cover loss and detrimental soil displacement, puddling, rutting, and compaction during treatment.

- Equipment operations should occur when soil is sufficiently dry or frozen and/or when there is ample snow cover to support large equipment to limit potential detrimental soil disturbance. Avoid equipment operation within 100-feet of ephemeral stream in burned area.
- Steep slopes or highly erodible soils should be avoided to extent practicable
- Skidding
 - Reuse existing or previous skid trails, landings, and roads to the extent practicable.
 - Minimize erosion and sedimentation and protect soil productivity by designing skidding patterns to best fit the terrain.
 - Skidding should follow the contour as much as possible. Avoid moving up and down the hillslope, especially in the post-fire environment.
 - Locate skid trails outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) to the extent practicable.
 - Locate skid trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade.
 - Limit the grade of constructed skid trails on geologically unstable, saturated, highly erodible, or easily compacted soils. Avoid long runs on steep slopes. Avoid skidding logs in or adjacent to a stream channel or other waterbody to the extent practicable. Skid across streams only at designated locations.
- Log Landings
 - Locate landings outside floodplains and RHCAs and as far from waterbodies as reasonably practicable based on travel routes and environmental considerations.
 - Avoid locating landings near any type of likely flow or sediment transport conduit during storms, such as ephemeral channels and swales, where practicable.
 - Avoid placing landings where skidding across drainage bottoms is required. Avoid locating landings on steep slopes or highly erodible soils.
- Area recovery
 - If possible, return as much coarse woody debris to the site as possible to maintain the protective soil surface cover and organic matter such as by:
 - Conducting Cut-to-length harvesting methods within harvest units.
 - Cutting tops off of merchantable timber and leaving within harvest units.
 - Lop and scatter nonmerchantable, dead trees to leave within unit.
 - Scattering slash from landings or piles to hill slopes after harvesting.
 - As much slash as possible should be left within the harvest unit that is still within fuel loading goals.
 - If possible, on-site topsoil should be conserved, kept weed-free, and replaced on disturbed areas where practical, such as landings.
 - Temp roads should be water barred and blocked off from public access with large natural items (e.g., boulders or logs).
 - Increase surface cover where able to reduce erosion and sediment delivery. This may include scattering slash, straw, mulch, hydromulch, and/or wood shreds along hillslopes. This can be beneficial near watercourses, but not so close as to be transported into the water during storm events.
 - Drainage from the project area should be carefully managed, especially on skid trails, while vegetation recovers. This could include increasing drainage frequency by reducing the distance between waterbars.

Fuels

- Avoid equipment operation in wetlands, bogs, and wet meadows to limit soil damage, turbidity, and sediment production resulting from compaction, rutting, runoff concentration, and subsequent erosion.
- For the fuels work in the post-fire area (if there is any), there should be extended no ignition zones around watercourses to retain as much of a buffer from erosion and sediment delivery.
- If applicable, burn Machine piles when conditions are favorable to reduce potential effects to soil such as when soil is moist, frozen, or over snow.

Special Use

- There is an LDS Camp (Camp Piuta) to the northeast of the Fly Tree sale, the Camp should be notified of the sale and logging truck traffic. Correspondence will be coordinated between project lead and District Permit Administrator.
- Fuel treatment areas overlap with the LDS Camp (Camp Piuta) permit boundary. Work with permit administration on fuel treatment within camp permit area. Coordinate with District Permit Administrator on resource and infrastructure objectives within camp permit area.
- Fuel treatment areas overlap the permit area for two- parallel 20" crude oil pipelines. No dozer line improvements or mechanical digging within pipeline right of way. Burning and felling trees is allowed. Prior to implementation identify above ground infrastructure and protect infrastructure during project implementation. Before closing access routes to pipeline consult with Supervisor's Office Special Use program.

Range:

- Coordinate with Rangeland Management Specialists on permittee access during timber harvest and when blocking roads and trails during prescribed fire events. This is to allow advanced notice to permittees.

Wildlife:

- If the project is slated to occur between May 1st- June 30th, coordinate with the wildlife biologist to clear the area for migratory birds. Also, if crews find any nests or encounter any nesting behavior, report to wildlife biologist.

Vegetation:

- Avoid milkweed plants as much as possible during construction. No recorded sightings in Project Area, but milkweed is present within geographical area of project.
- Avoid operating within the small marsh/seep located at 40.533602, -111.050139. This small marsh represents some of the best potential habitat for TESP species within the timber sale. As such, an avoidance is necessary in the interest of species health.
- If any TESP/R4FSS populations are located during implementation, all actions will cease, and the Forest Service Botanist or Ecologist will be notified to determine potential impacts/effects and potential mitigation measures.
- Avoid using or placing equipment, tools or supplies within TESP/ R4FSS populations or potential habitat (Silver Meadows EO).
- Trees will be directionally felled away from all buffered areas (Silver Meadows EO).
- Compacted soils will be prepared for reseeded.
- Native seeds and plant cuttings will be used for any revegetation or restoration activities within the project boundary.
- Do not pile cut trees or slash within TES plant populations (Silver Meadows EO).
- Do not apply ignition source directly within TES plant populations (Silver Meadows EO).
- Attempt to burn when TES plant populations are dormant.
- Where possible, do not construct fire-line within a TES plant population.

- If fire-line is necessary within TES populations, construct fire-line by hand or use wet line and existing features as fire-line.
- Rehabilitate constructed fire-line after implementation as needed.
- Do not leave cut materials on top of TES plant populations or within potential suitable habitat.
- Invasive/Noxious Plant Species:
 - All existing invasive plant infestations within or adjacent to the project area should be treated prior to project implementation.
 - Post project, monitor for new infestations of noxious and invasive weeds for a minimum of three years. Treat and/or remove any weeds located in the areas impacted by ground disturbing project work before they seed.
 - Avoid walking through, placing equipment, materials or supplies in any areas that are infested by noxious and invasive weeds.
 - All equipment should be cleaned and free of vegetation, soil, and debris prior to beginning work on Forest Service land.
 - Native seed mix used will be approved by the Forest Service Botanist and certified weed free for revegetation of areas of ground disturbance where reseeding is necessary.
 - All the applicable Uinta Forest Plan (FP) standards and guidelines for Noxious Weeds Management will be followed.

Roadless Areas:

- Prior to work occurring within the Inventoried Roadless Area near Flytree, a roadless briefing and associated analysis must occur. The work must be consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and applicable guidance.

Administrative Review (Appeal) and Implementation

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (Agriculture Act of 2014 [Pub. L. No. 113-79], Subtitle A, Sec. 8006). The project may be implemented immediately, with the design criteria listed above.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Bethany Nickison, Environmental Coordinator, at bethany.nickison@usda.gov.

Kenneth G. Verboncoeur
Deputy District Ranger
Heber-Kamas Ranger District
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Date

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