Appendix B—Wildlife Design Features under the Proposed Action

INTRODUCTION

As described in other sections of this document, some actions or procedures related to wildlife are determined by existing policy and would be followed under both alternatives. General procedures related to rehabilitation after wildland fire, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) coordination, and monitoring would apply to both alternatives. These procedures are summarized below, and will not be discussed further in this appendix.

- *Rehabilitation after wildland fire*: Consistent with Departmental Policy on Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR), the following factors affecting wildlife are addressed through the ESR process:
  - Emergency Stabilization or Rehabilitation actions are generally undertaken to reduce risks significantly or to improve lands unlikely to recover naturally.
  - If natural recovery is unlikely, plantings or seedings may be used for stabilization, to prevent T&E or other Special Status Species habitat from being permanently impaired, or to facilitate natural succession of vegetative communities that were largely native before the fire but would be subject to aggressive invasion of non-native species after the fire.
  - Native species are considered preferable where plantings or seedings are necessary.

- *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) coordination*: Fuels treatments will be coordinated with stakeholders, including private landowners and state and federal agencies (including those with responsibilities for wildlife management).

- *Monitoring (Refer to BLM 9214 Manual-Prescribed Fire Management Handbook, or 2002 Red Book, 6-11)* will be implemented on the projects to determine the success of the project in meeting project objectives. Fire personnel monitor the immediate effects of fuels treatment (including first order fire effects), and subsequent monitoring is completed by the benefiting activity.

NEW DESIGN FEATURES

Design features are standard operating procedures or criteria applied to proposed projects on public lands. The following is a summary of design features to be considered in fire planning and in projects implemented through contracts or with government employees (under Alternative B).

The objective of the design features is to provide guidance for the protection of wildlife and habitat that are not provided in other planning or guidance. Threatened and Endangered Species protection is provided by recovery or conservation plans and is described in other sections of this plan. These design criteria were developed for species or habitat not designated or protected under Special Status Species programs.

The following design features are divided into design features for wildland fire and fuels project planning, and design features to be incorporated during wildland fire response or fuels project implementation.

Alternative B Design Features for Wildland Fire Suppression and Rehabilitation: Features listed below are designed to minimize wildlife habitat loss during wildland fire and wildland fire suppression.

Design features for wildland fire planning:

- Appropriate resource staff, including fire specialists and wildlife biologists, should review Fire Management Plans (FMPs) annually to incorporate new wildlife habitat information in setting wildfire suppression priorities. Distribute updates to fire dispatchers for initial attack planning.

- Avoid disturbance or degradation of designated habitats of concern by placement of temporary facilities (such as fire camps, staging areas, and helibases) and infrastructure.

- During multiple ignition episodes ensure that priority wildlife habitat data are available during initial attack and incorporated into Wildland Fire Situation Analyses (WFSAs).

Design Features for wildland fire response:

- Give wildland fire suppression priority to designated known wildlife habitat, especially known special status species habitat, unless doing so would compromise protection of human life or property.

- Use direct attack tactics when it is safe and effective at minimizing the amount of wildlife habitat imperiled by wildland fire.

- Retain unburned areas (including interior islands and patches between roads and fire perimeter) of wildlife habitat, unless doing so would compromise safety, resource protection, or wildfire control objectives.

- Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) (See Red Book for description) or light-on-the land tactics should be considered during fire suppression in high priority wildlife habitat (such as sagebrush habitats).

Alternative B Design Features for Fuels Management:

Design features for fuels management planning:

- Cumulative effects of wildfires and vegetation treatments on wildlife habitat in the area should be considered in site-specific NEPA analyses.

- Where appropriate, adopt vegetation treatments in wildlife habitat areas to control invasive weeds and aid the recovery of native vegetation.

- Wildlife habitat enhancements should be included in fuels project design when feasible.

- Fire Management Plans (FMPs) should identify crucial wildlife habitat needs. Where appropriate, existing wildlife protection measures from other programs (i.e., oil and gas) should be adopted.

- Field Office Fire Management Plans should include measures to reduce or minimize impacts to migratory birds.

Design Features for fuels project implementation:

- Fuels projects should be designed to enhance wildlife species and habitat diversity in concert with fuels management objectives by:

    · Burning in a mosaic pattern to create ecotones or edge effect in vegetation

    · Using mechanical treatments to create diversity in burn patterns in areas where fuel type and loadings are contiguous

Grassland features:

- If treatment areas are dominated by exotic annual grasses (such as cheatgrass) projects should include restoration and, if necessary, reseeding to re-establish native vegetation.

Forestland and woodland features:

- General: Treatments should maintain snags and down woody debris as important habitat features. The amount of snags and debris should be based on apparent natural occurrence in the larger area surrounding fuels projects.

- Aspen: Fuels treatments in aspen stands could be used to improve vigor, stimulate regeneration, increase vegetative diversity, and preserve the genetics of aspen clones in degraded aspen stands.

- Juniper: To achieve fuels management benefits while minimizing impact to wildlife, treatments should focus on dense young juniper as opposed to mature, large juniper. Data from Maser and Gashwiler (1977) suggest that mature or old and decadent juniper stands harbored the most avian and mammal species. Additionally, Sauder (2002) found that areas with high densities of young juniper have the lowest abundance and diversity of birds. Manage ecotones to have juniper with prominent shrub understories to promote wildlife diversity.

Shrubland features:

- Sagebrush: Vegetation management strategies should be consistent with historical succession and disturbance regimes. Strategies should be based on comparison of historical and current ecological processes and landscape patterns, and should address the habitat needs of sage grouse and other sagebrush dependent species.

- Fuels treatments in sage grouse habitats would be carefully analyzed, including consideration of available historical and current ecological processes and landscape patterns. Treatments should consider the habitat needs of migratory and non-migratory sage grouse populations, as determined from available habitat data, scientific research (such as Connelly et al 2000), and existing management guidance.

- Shrubs along riparian zones, meadows, lake beds, and farmlands should be maintained to provide habitat diversity, forage, and hiding cover for wildlife.