

13 July 2006

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management, Surprise Field Office, has completed a Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) CA-370-25-05 for juniper removal around the Stateline sage-grouse strutting ground, or lek. This lek is part of a complex of active leks all of which contribute to one of the largest sage-grouse populations in northeastern California. The Stateline lek however averages very low numbers of birds and habitat quality is believed to be an issue. The Proposed Action is located in Washoe County, Nevada, Township 46 North, Range 18 East, Sections 20 and 29 and is scheduled for the late summer to fall of FY 2006.

The Proposed Action is expected to increase habitat quality for sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species, and other sage-steppe species within the project boundaries. As part of state and local conservation efforts, risk assessments for various sage-grouse populations and their habitats were broken out by Population Management Unit (PMU). Risk to this species from juniper encroachment into its habitat was rated as "high" for this PMU. This project will entail continued cooperative monitoring of local sage-grouse populations in order to assess the effectiveness of these types of projects on sage-grouse populations.

The Surprise Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to mechanically remove encroaching juniper from an approximately one mile buffer around the Stateline lek. The one mile buffer around the lek is broken up into two units. These two units encompass about 345 acres, 235 acres in the north unit and 110 acres in the south unit (see map). As funding allows other juniper removal projects around leks with heavy juniper encroachment and low lek numbers are planned throughout the field office. Besides wildlife habitat issues, other elements of concern for this project include cultural resources and scenic byways.

A copy of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment is enclosed for your review and comment. Comments will be accepted through 15 July 2006. Please send comments to Owen Billingsley, Field Office Manager c/o of the Surprise Field Office, 602 Cressler Street, Cedarville, California, 96104.

After the public review has ended, comments will be analyzed and taken into consideration in the decision making process. BLM is expected to make a decision in July 2006.

Sincerely,

Owen Billingsley
Surprise Field Office Manager

Attachments: EA CA-370-25-05 with maps
List of those receiving copies of this mailing



**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

July 11, 2006

Preliminary Environmental Assessment CA-370-25-05

Juniper removal around the Stateline Greater sage-grouse lek

**Nevada Cowhead Allotment in the Cowhead/Massacre Management Area,
Barrel Springs, California & Nevada Border**

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Juniper removal around the Stateline Greater sage-grouse lek
CA-370-05-25

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Juniper removal around the Stateline Greater sage-grouse lek

CA – 370- 05-25

1.0 PURPOSE & NEED

1.1 Introduction:

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the Surprise Field Office relative to juniper removal around the Stateline Greater sage-grouse lek. The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or alternatives to the proposed action. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any “significant” impacts could result from the analyzed actions. “Significance” is defined by NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI). A Decision Record (DR), which includes a FONSI statement, is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementations of the proposed action will not result in “significant” environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the Cowhead/Massacre planning unit Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1981, as amended by the Approved Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing, 2000. If the decision maker determines that this project has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a Decision Record may be signed for the EA approving the alternative selected.

1.2 Background:

The Surprise Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to mechanically remove encroaching juniper from an approximately one mile buffer around the Stateline sage-grouse strutting ground (lek). The one mile buffer around Stateline lek is broken up into two units. These two units encompass about 345 acres, 235 acres in the north unit and 110 acres in the south unit (see map 1). As funding allows other juniper removal projects around leks with heavy juniper encroachment and low lek numbers are planned throughout the field office.

This lek is part of a complex of active leks all of which contribute to one of the largest sage-grouse populations in northeastern California, and the northwest corner of Nevada. The Proposed Action is located in Washoe County, Nevada, Township 46 North, Range 18 East, Sections 20 and 29 and is scheduled for the late summer to fall of FY 2006.

1.3 Need for the Proposed Action:

Due in part to past management as well as climatic changes, juniper have encroached into many areas in the Surprise Field Office but in particular in the northern half. Juniper can act as very effective perches for raptor predators but also reduce the amount and quality of sagebrush and forbs that are critical to the diet of sage-grouse. Removal of encroaching juniper will provide short and long term benefits to sage-grouse as well as other sage-steppe species.

1.4 Purpose of the Proposed Action:

The purpose of the proposed action is to increase habitat quality for a BLM sensitive species on approximately 345 acres. As part of state and local conservation efforts, risk assessments for various sage-grouse populations and their habitats were broken out by Population Management Unit (PMU). Risk to this species from juniper encroachment into its habitat was rated as “high” for this PMU. This project will entail continued monitoring of these populations in order to assess the effectiveness of these types of projects on sage-grouse populations.

1.5 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan(s):

The Proposed Action is subject to, and consistent with, Cowhead/Massacre planning unit Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1981, as amended by the Approved Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing, 2000, specifically:

Unit wide Land Use Objective and Goal #2 - Give special consideration and priority to the protection and management of areas with special environmental concern.

Policy and Management Guideline #4a. – Permanent roads or trails will not be constructed to project sites. Existing access and off-road vehicles will be used, where needed.

1.6 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans:

BLM manual 6840, part.06A3, 1)states, "The protection provided by the policy for candidate species shall be used as the minimum level of protection for BLM sensitive species", and 2) "For candidate species where lands administered by the BLM or BLM authorized actions have a significant effect on their status, manage the habitat to conserve species by ensuring that BLM activities affecting the habitat for candidate species are carried out in a manner that is consistent with the objectives for managing those species." This project will support local, state and national concerns for the Greater sage- grouse by implementing conservation measures outlined in the Vya PMU Conservation Strategy for sage-grouse.

This project helps to achieve the criteria to meet standard 5: Biodiversity, of the amended Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing, July 2000.

Approvals/surveys needed for this project are related to T&E fish and archeology, both of which occur either within the project boundaries or adjacent to it. The Bureau informally consulted with the Bend Office of the USFWS concerning possible effects of this project on T&E fish. Archeological surveys were conducted in the summer of 2005 and those finding led to a modification of the size and intensity of the project as well as identified additional mitigation measures.

This project has the full support of Washoe/Modoc Sage-Grouse Local Area Planning Group (Massacre and Vya PMU's), the Northeastern California Sage-grouse Working Group(Vya PMU), and local game departments.

1.7 Identification of Issues:

The project area encompasses a portion of habitat in the vicinity of the Stateline sage-grouse lek. The project area is important spring through fall brood rearing habitat for sage-grouse.

Broad scoping for this project took place during development of the sage-grouse Conservation Strategy for the Vya PMU. Several meetings between state, federal, and private entities took place in California and Nevada outlining mechanical removal of juniper as part of the conservation effort for the species with specific emphasis placed in the general area of this project. In addition grazing permittees who use the area and both state and federal wildlife agencies have been informally notified of this project. Formal scoping will take place during the public comment period phase of the EA.

The area around the Stateline lek is dotted with important archeological information and occurs along the Barrel Springs scenic Byway. These resources have changed both the shape of the original project boundaries as well as its original intensity. The affect on the project has been to reduce the original number of acres of juniper that could be removed as well as varied the level of cutting depending on site specific archeology and visibility of the project area from the byway.

The Stateline project would be the third known juniper removal project long the byway, and the fourth in the “general area”, (see map 2). The first, the “Barrel Springs” aspen project removed juniper from 40 acres of aspen stands along the byway. The second, the “Susila” project, is also a juniper removal project and is located primarily in sage-steppe habitat. This project began in the fall of 2002 and will be approximately 560 acres when completed. The fourth, “Washoe Pine” is also currently in progress and when completed will be about 5 acres in size. This project is located more than ½ mile from the byway. Because of its size, distance, and the aspect of the project location, this project will be for the most part invisible.

1.8 Summary:

This chapter has presented the Purpose and Need the proposed project, as well as the relevant issues, i.e., those elements that could be affected by the implementation of the proposed project. In order to meet the purpose and need of the proposed project in a way that resolves the issues, the BLM has developed a range of action alternatives. These alternatives, as well as a no action alternative, are presented in Chapter 2. The potential environmental impacts or consequences resulting from the implementation of each alternative are then analyzed in Chapter 4 for each of the identified issues.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Introduction:

A range of alternatives for this project was based on the possibility of an action having a beneficial effect, current literature as it relates to sage-grouse, and known issues in the area as they relate to sage-grouse and other wildlife species. Juniper encroachment into sage-steppe habitats is considered to be a serious factor leading to the local extirpation of sage-steppe species and in particular sage-grouse. Removal of juniper in occupied sage-grouse habitat is considered an important tool in helping to restore habitat for this species as well as other sage-steppe wildlife by reducing the negative effects of juniper on understory vegetation and to some degree reducing the number of raptor (potential predators to sage-grouse) perches near leks.

The Stateline lek is part of a complex of active and inactive leks in the general vicinity, Big Mud Lake and Cinder Pit being the other two. The Big Mud Lake lek, an adjacent lek to the southeast, recently became inactive with only two males having been found in its last active year in the late 1990's. The other, Cinder Pit, is active and generally has in excess of 80-100 males in attendance during the peak of mating season. The Stateline lek only has a peak of between 12-15 birds in any year. In addition this lek has three factors that have been identified in recent literature to negatively affect sage-grouse, fences, roads, and heavy juniper. The Nevada Cowhead/North Cowhead Allotment boundary fence runs down the middle of the historic location of the lek. Since surveying this lek became routine in the mid 1990's, birds have moved from one side of the lek to the other. The other negative factor is the Barrel Springs Byway, a scenic road that runs to the south of the lek and which could be responsible for negative effects to this lek. The last negative factor is juniper encroachment. Analysis of habitat in relation to sage-grouse identified juniper encroachment in the area around the Stateline lek. Juniper encroachment in and around leks is thought to degrade the habitats which these species require and may increase predation by increasing perch sites for raptor predators.

2.2 Alternative A – Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to remove encroaching juniper from an approximately one mile buffer around the Stateline sage-grouse strutting ground (lek). The one mile buffer around Stateline lek is broken up into two units, one north of the Barrel Spring road and the other south of it (see map 1). These two units encompass about 345 acres, 235 acres in the north unit and 110 acres in the south unit. Juniper in the north unit is scattered with a greater diversity of age classes. Juniper in the south unit is made up of predominantly older trees so it is expected that fewer trees will be removed.

All juniper removal would be by hand, cut at or near ground level with minimal ground disturbance using chain saws, with crew access to the entire project via existing roads and on foot. In order to satisfy wildlife, visual, and cultural needs, there will be tree prescriptions for this project.

For most of the project area trees would be felled and left in place. As is the current standard for the entire field office, trees that are culturally important or that appear to be greater than 200 years old; deeply furled bark, rounded tops, large diameter trunks etc.,

will not be cut. In areas of “ephemeral draws”, there will be no cutting within 50 feet of either side to reduce sedimentation into these draws the following spring.

The prescription will be slightly different in cultural areas sensitive to project activities. These areas will be flagged before mechanical removal of trees begins. In order to lessen confusion, cultural areas will be flagged with a different color than the project’s boundary. In these areas, no tree larger than 6 inch DBH will be cut. These trees will not be scattered, limbed or “bucked up” into smaller pieces. Flagging will be removed at the end of the project in order not to draw attention to these smaller areas.

A third prescription will be in effect as a visual buffer along the Barrel Springs Byway and the eastern boundary road. This is required in order to reduce cumulative visual disturbances along this scenic thoroughfare from similar projects along its route. A buffer extending from the first tree along both roads and extending out 200 feet beyond them will be instituted. In this buffer, cut trees will be limbed and scattered and the boles “bucked up” into pieces.

Signs will be placed along the Barrel Springs Byway informing the public that the cutting and collecting of downed juniper for firewood is allowed but that travel off any road to collect this wood is strictly prohibited.

It is currently unknown how many juniper will reinvade or at what rate. On lands managed by the Surprise Field Office juniper retreatment is generally necessary within 3-5 years to cut any juniper sprouting from stumps or new juniper. This project will be monitored for reinvansion of juniper and additional cut treatments made if needed. While prescribed burning would be a quicker more efficient method for juniper removal, this method is generally not desirable within 2 miles of active sage-grouse leks.

It is expected that small population increases of sage-grouse should be seen within five years on this strutting ground and others within the complex. Along with leks within the California portion of the Surprise Field Office, the Stateline lek has been consecutively surveyed for population numbers since the mid 1990’s. This project will entail continued monitoring of these populations in order to assess the effectiveness of these projects for sage-grouse. Monitoring of population numbers for leks in the general area of the Stateline lek will be by the BLM, Surprise Field Office, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW).

2.3 Alternative B – No Action:

Under the No Action Alternative, no junipers would be cut in the project area and wildlife habitat would not be affected. No impacts to cultural resources or the scenic byway would occur.

2.4 Alternatives Considered, but Eliminated from Further Analysis:

While using prescribed fire to burn the 345 acres would meet some short term goals it was eliminated from further analysis. Prescribed fire is not consistent with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) guidelines or the Vya sage-grouse Conservation Strategy for treatment options within 2 miles of an active lek. In addition prescribed fire would have both short-term and long-term negative impacts to cultural resources.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment (i.e., the physical, biological, social, and economic values and resources) of the impact area as identified in the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist (found in Appendix A) and presented in Chapter 1 of this assessment. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

3.2 General Setting:

The project area is located approximately 10 miles northeast of Fort Bidwell, California, along the Barrel Springs Back Country Byway road. On the east side of the California and Nevada stateline The terrain varies from steep, rocky slopes on the east edge of the project area to a flat juniper dominated low sagebrush/grasslands. Vegetation is predominately a low sagebrush/sandberg's bluegrass site with inclusions of Mountain big sagebrush, and bitterbrush that has been invaded by Western juniper. No riparian areas or perennial and intermittent drainages are found within the proposed project area although they are found adjacent to the site. Elevation ranges from 5,400 feet to 5,700 feet and precipitation varies from 10 to 14 inches.

3.3 Resources/Issues Brought Forward for Analysis:

Broad scoping for this project took place during development of the sage-grouse Conservation Strategy for the Vya PMU. Several meetings between state, federal, and private entities took place in California and Nevada outlining mechanical removal of juniper as part of the conservation effort for the species with specific emphasis placed in the general area of this project. In addition grazing permittees who use the area and both state and federal wildlife agencies have been informally notified of this project. Formal scoping will take place during the public comment period phase of the EA.

3.3.1 Critical Elements of the Human Environment:

3.3.1.1 Cultural Resources:

The Barrel Springs area contains a number of important archaeological sites. This area was and is significant to both prehistoric people and current Native American tribes. A Class III cultural resource inventory using 15 meter wide transects was conducted throughout the project area. Nine prehistoric sites are located within the APE. The sites that are located within the Area of Project Effect have not been evaluated for National

Register Significance at this time. However, the potential for these sites to contribute to our understanding of prehistoric lifeways and the use of the environment in the past is significant. Due to the expedient nature of the project, the BLM Surprise Field office is assuming that all nine sites are eligible to the NRHP.

3.3.1.2 Threatened and Endangered Species:

Two "T&E" species exist in the same watershed as the Stateline Juniper Reduction project, the Warner sucker (*Catostomus warnerensis*) a federally threatened fish and the Cowhead Lake tui chub (*Gila bicolor vaccaceps*) a proposed endangered fish. During the summer of 2001, the United States Geologic Service (USGS) conducted surveys for Cowhead Lake tui chub. Those surveys detected a single specimen of the Warner sucker approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the project boundary in the western portion of the "Barrel Springs system". Cowhead lake tui chub were also found approximately ¾ miles north of the project in a different drainage of the Barrel Springs system. These locations are at the upper end of "perennial" water in the system and the Stateline Juniper Reduction project is located "upstream" of Barrel Springs. The Barrel Springs system, which eventually feeds into Twelvemile Creek (critical habitat for Warner sucker), is a series of perennial pools and springs but is probably best described as intermittent. The pools can dry up in the summer depending on previous winter snow pack conditions and amount of output from springs in the system.

The distance of project boundaries combined with project mitigations will ensure that habitat for these two species will not be affected by this project. This project will therefore have *No Effect* on listed or proposed species.

3.3.2 Resource/Issue 1 - Wildlife:

The area of the Proposed Action is adjacent to the Stateline sage-grouse lek. Habitat within the project boundary is considered important spring through fall brood rearing habitat for sage-grouse. Other wildlife found in the vicinity of the project includes pronghorn antelope which use the project area yearlong. Other than the occasional mule deer, no other locally important or BLM listed species use the area within or around the project boundaries to any extent greater than normal for the field office.

3.3.3 Resource/Issue 2 - Recreation:

The Barrel Springs Back Country Byway intersects the boundaries of the Proposed Action for about 0.75 miles. The entire length of the byway is approximately 93 miles and traverses the northern half of the field office. In the vicinity of the project, the byway is not passable in very wet weather or after winter snows. In years with little snowfall the byway is passable until snowmelt in the spring makes the road too muddy to travel or ephemeral runoff across the byway becomes too great in certain sections. The Proposed Action would be the third juniper removals project long the byway since the fall of 1999. The closest of these projects to the boundary of the Proposed Action is the Susila Fuels Reduction project. This multi-year project is adjacent to the boundary of the Proposed Action, is currently in progress, and when completed will be approximately 550 acres in size. Trees that were cut as part of these previous projects have been left in place and present a visual intrusion for a few years as the needles turn brown. It is anticipated that

when the needles fall from the trees the appearance of the downed juniper will be more natural.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction:

This section will analyze resource issues outlined in chapters 1-3. These resources include cultural resources, wildlife, and recreation. Because all known mitigating measures have been included in the Descriptions of the Alternatives, the environmental consequences described below are unavoidable.

4.2 Direct/Indirect Impacts:

4.2.1 Alternative A – Proposed Action:

4.2.1.1 Resource: Cultural Resources

The proposed action could have impacts to archaeological resources containing features, such as rock rings and rock stacks, if large juniper is dropped onto the features. The scattering of limbs may reduce the trampling effects caused by cattle to both soil and artifacts. The gathering of firewood by the public may disturb cultural resource sites or artifacts that are encountered.

4.2.1.2 Resource: Wildlife

Direct impacts from this project include a change in habitat, and noise and traffic and their affects on wildlife. Indirect, long-term impacts are expected to fire intensity and pattern and wildlife numbers.

The Proposed Action will change the density of trees within the project boundaries and therefore affect habitat both within and adjacent to the project boundaries. Expected short-term vegetation changes would be an increase in grasses and forbs with long-term increases in shrub species expected. Juniper cutting would be expected to provide some fire protection in the long-term however in the short-term the area within the project boundaries would actually be more susceptible to fire as downed juniper cured. Over time fuel loads would decrease near boundary roads as woodcutters removed cut juniper thus providing some protection in these areas. Due to the differing juniper removal prescriptions, wildfires that did burn through the project would be expected to be of less intensity and should increase long-term “edge effect” and structural/age diversity within the project boundaries as opposed to areas without juniper removal. Over time this would lead to positive long-term changes in vegetation patterns for wildlife.

Localized short-term increases in noise, ground disturbances, and crew presence will occur from manual removal of juniper. Additional impacts will occur during fuel wood removal by woodcutters and would occur over several years judging by observations of similar projects on the field office. Some wildlife will avoid the area during cutting operations however in the long-term the expected results are increases in wildlife use especially for local species heavily tied to forb abundance, sage-grouse and pronghorn

antelope. This project is not expected to last more than two months therefore short-term impacts from noise and crew presence will be relatively low.

Several fifty-foot no juniper removal buffers on either side of ephemeral draws will be in place. Therefore this project is not expected to affect either the Warner sucker or the Cowhead Lake tui chub. Only tui chub are known to exist near the project boundaries, about 0.3 miles upstream of the project.

Also the project is for the most part located on a gently sloping north to northwest facing slope. Major soils within the project boundary are classified as belonging to the Devada-Mitpac-Bidrim association. These soils fall into the well-drained soils class with surface textures ranging from very cobbly loam to extremely stony loam. The project will be implemented using only ground crews with chainsaws. No heavy equipment would be used and no vehicles would be driven within the project boundaries. Trees will be felled and no “skidding” will take place. The only surface disturbances will be from trees falling and foot traffic from the work crew.

Although only very small increases in sediment are expected from the project due to its size and placement on the landscape, any additional sediment should be trapped on the uplands and would be expected to be similar to those found from grazing.

The project is expected to benefit Greater sage-grouse by reducing invasive juniper impacts on sage-steppe habitat. An increase in the number of sage-grouse attending the Stateline lek and possibly nearby leks is the expected outcome of this action due to increases in forb, grass, and brush components from this treatment. Any increases in forbs would benefit pronghorn antelope as well by providing higher quality forage in the spring and early summer.

4.2.1.3 Resource: Recreation

Direct impacts from this project include a change in habitat, noise and traffic and their affects on people and increased impacts to visual resources. Indirect, long-term impacts are expected to fire intensity, vegetation patterns, and wildlife use.

In both the short and long term, the Proposed Action will change the density and pattern of trees however these changes will for the most part not be evident due to the 200 foot visual buffer described above. As is the practice throughout the field office, larger, older trees would be left throughout the project. Within the 200 foot buffer along the byway and eastern boundary road cut trees would be limbed and boles cut into pieces. This would reduce the amount of visual disturbance by making the project less evident and at the same time it would reduce fuel loads along the road contributing to the roads ability to act as a fire break in the event of a future fire. Because trees would be bucked up into smaller pieces this would speed up removal of fuel wood by woodcutters and recreational campers and hunters.

Localized short-term increases in noise, ground disturbances, and crew presence will occur from manual removal of juniper. Casual drivers along the byway and other

recreational users will also experience these impacts. In the short term, the visual quality of the area would be reduced somewhat due to downed juniper visible from the byway. Mule deer and pronghorn antelope hunters/scouts may actually experience more impacts due to the timing of the project in the fall however long-term benefits to hunting should increase slightly. Some wildlife will avoid the area during cutting operations however in the long-term the expected results are increases in wildlife use and therefore increase opportunities for scenic byway drivers. This project is not expected to last more than two months therefore short-term impacts from noise and crew presence will be relatively low.

4.2.1.4 Mitigation Measures:

Recommended Mitigation

It is recommended that any features found within the sites be flagged for avoidance during the project. After the project is complete all flagging should be removed to deter any site vandalism. It is also recommended that the area be closed to off road traveling for firewood procurement. All crews working on this project would be alerted to the potential existence of cultural resources within the project area. The inadvertent discovery of cultural resources during project preparation or implementation would be reported to the field office archeologist, and work on the project would be halted until the site is evaluated for NRHP eligibility.

Either the wildlife biologist or a wildlife crew member will periodically check the progress of the project and note any wildlife disturbances. No trees with nests of any kind will be cut.

The areas with downed juniper would look “disturbed” for a number of years. All efforts would be taken to minimize soil disturbance and to limit disturbance to the immediate area of the project. The following operating procedures would be followed to minimize impacts.

- a. Treatment areas would be identified with boundary flagging and specific leave areas/trees would also be identified with flagging.
- b. In treatment areas, 2-3 large juniper or clumps of trees per acre would be left standing.
- c. All juniper with a basal diameter of 34” or more, and trees exhibiting “old growth” characteristics would not be cut. These characteristics include, large basal diameter, nonsymmetrical, spreading canopies (as opposed to the inverted cone shaped canopies of young trees), large irregularly tapering trunks, deeply furrowed and fibrous bark, and very large lower branches.
- d. Juniper trees with wood rat nests, cavities or other signs of wildlife use would not be cut.
- e. Maximum stump height would be ten inches.
- f. All live limbs would be removed from stumps.
- h. No work or vehicle access to the project area will be allowed until the soils are dry enough to support the weight of the vehicles used. No vehicles will be allowed travel off-road

4.2.1.5 Residual Impacts:

No residual impacts are expected with the above mitigation measures beyond impacts identified above.

4.2.1.6 Monitoring and/or Compliance:

Photo points measuring both species composition, cover, and trend would be placed randomly throughout the project area. Monitoring would be conducted twice a year in May and October. These photos would reflect changes in the project area, and give a representation of how well the management of these projects is being implemented.

4.2.2. Alternative B – No Action:

Under the No Action Alternative no juniper would be cut around the Stateline lek. Little short-term effects to sage-grouse or pronghorn would be evident however in the long-term these and other sage-steppe species would not realize the expected benefits of this project. No effects to recreation would occur except possibly direct and indirect impacts related to increased fire intensity on these resources from heavier fuel loads. There would be no impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts Analysis:

“Cumulative impacts” are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of agency or person undertaking such actions.

4.3.1 Reasonably Foreseeable Action Scenario (RFAS):

The following reasonably foreseeable action scenario (RFAS) identifies the cumulative actions that would cumulatively affect the same resources in the cumulative impact area as the proposed action and alternatives.

One additional project, the “Big Bally” project is planned for the near future, see map 2. The goal of this project is a juniper removal from aspen and is approximately 45 acres in size. It is located just north of the “Washoe Pine” project. Like “Washoe Pine”, “Big Bally” is not expected to be seen from the Barrel Springs Byway therefore would add no cumulative impacts to visual resources.

4.3.2 Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative impacts will occur to wildlife habitat from the reduction of juniper along the Barrel Springs Byway. Loss in thermal cover, nesting, and roosting habitats will occur however juniper is not limiting in the area and is being removed from several different habitat types. Since juniper being removed is considered invasive, and cuts have been spaced over several years, cumulative impacts from these projects to wildlife habitat are expected to be beneficial. Additional impacts from woodcutters driving off road and being present within the general area will occur but will be reduced due to restrictions placed on off-road travel.

Cumulative negative impacts to visual resources will occur from increased removal of juniper along the byway however the spacing over time and space of these project types has reduced these impacts. Overall visual impacts have probably benefited with these

projects by removing competing juniper from aspen stands as well as opening up small “vistas” along portions of the byway. It is estimated that with implementation of the Proposed Action, evidence of all four projects would be seen from a maximum of about 4.5 miles of road along the byway. Evidence of projects would decrease over time as woodcutters removed fuelwood, snow pack crushed slash, and buffer trees along the road filled in. The 345 acres to be treated in the Proposed Action takes into account visual disturbances to users of the byway by prescribing site specific cutting rules throughout the project boundaries. These site specific prescriptions will effectively reduce short-term visual impacts of the project.

After all juniper removal projects described above are complete, approximately 995 acres will have been treated in the general vicinity of the Barrel Springs Byway. Of these acres, about 945 are in projects adjacent to or within ¼ mile of the byway. Due to the generally flat topography of the area, most of the area within these projects is not visible from the byway.

Habitat along the Barrel Springs Back Country Byway is varied. Large tracts of habitat however are being converted from a sagebrush steppe with inclusions of quaking aspen, true juniper, riparian, and antelope bitterbrush communities, to invasive western juniper woodland. When this invasive juniper becomes heavily stocked it precludes diverse understories with grasses and forbs. This conversion, if it is allowed to continue, will ultimately result in reduced productivity of soils and therefore reduced diversity of both vegetation and wildlife within the project boundaries and along the entire byway. In addition, the conversion may contribute to the size and the intensity of wildfires, further reducing the ability of the area to support native species and increasing the danger to fire suppression crews. Other juniper reduction projects as well as the Proposed Action will slow the conversion of desired sagebrush-steppe to heavily stocked western juniper woodland. With appropriate juniper and livestock management, suppressed plant and animal life can be released. Implementing the No Action Alternative would allow western juniper to continue invading habitat throughout the project area, similar to the untreated surrounding areas.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

5.1 Introduction:

The issue identification section of Chapter 1 identifies those issues analyzed in detail in Chapter 4. Appendix A provides the rationale for issues that were considered but not analyzed further. The issues were identified through the public and agency involvement process described in sections 5.2 and 5.3 below.

5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted:

Table 5-1:

List of all Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted for Purposes of this EA.

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (US FWS)	Information on Consultation, under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531)	Concurrence on No Effect with mitigations outlined above.
Pat Fitzgerald	Nevada Cowhead Allotment Permittee	No comment at this time
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Consultation for undertakings, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 USC 470)	No comments at this time
Washoe/Modoc Sage-Grouse Local Area Planning Group (Massacre/Vya PMU's)	Sage-grouse interests	In full support of project.
Northeastern California Sage-Grouse Working Group (Vya PMU)	Sage-grouse interests	In full support of project.
Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Program	General interest in range and sage-grouse projects	No comments made during general discussion of project
Local Game Departments	Sage-grouse interests	In full support of project.

5.3 Summary of Public Participation:

This and similar projects have been under consideration since the first local sage-grouse working groups began considering threats to sage-grouse. This project has been discussed with the California Department of Fish and Game, The Nevada Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, several permittees, members of the Experimental Stewardship Program, and members of various sage-grouse working groups. One field trip has taken place showing the general area of the project.

5.4 List of Preparers: see Table 5.4:

Table 5.4.1 BLM:

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Penni Borghi	Archeologist	ACEC's, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Native American Religious Concerns, WSA/Wilderness, Recreation, Visual Resources and Paleontology.
Elias Flores	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Species (fauna), Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Fish and Wildlife including Special Status Species, EA preparation
Leisyka Parrott	Biological Technician	EA preparation

6.0 REFERENCES, GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

6.1 References Used:

Connelly, John W., Michael L. Schroeder, Alan R. Sands, and Clait E. Braun. 2000. Guidelines to Manage Sage-Grouse Populations and Their Habitats. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 28:967-985.

Sage-grouse Habitat Management Risks, Conservation Measures, and Monitoring Actions, Vya Population Management Unit (California and Nevada), Surprise Field Office BLM. Available at <http://www.ndow.org/wild/conservation/sg/plan/index.shtm>.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1975. Cowhead-Massacre Management Framework Plan. Approved April 2001. Susanville, California

6.2 Glossary of Terms:

6.3 List of Acronyms Used in this EA:

APE – Area of Project Effect
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
CDFG- California Department of Fish and Game
DBH – Diameter at Breast Height
DR - Decision Record
EA - Environmental Assessment
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
FONSI – Finding of No Significant Impact
MFP – Management Framework Plan
NDOW- Nevada Department of Wildlife
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA - National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP - National Register of Historic Places
PMU – Population Management Unit
RFAS - Reasonably Foreseeable Action Scenario
SHPO - State Historic Preservation Office
T&E – Threatened and Endangered
USC – United States Code
USGS - United States Geologic Service
USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

APPENDICES:

Map 1- Showing project boundary

Map 2- Showing project in relation to surrounding area and other projects

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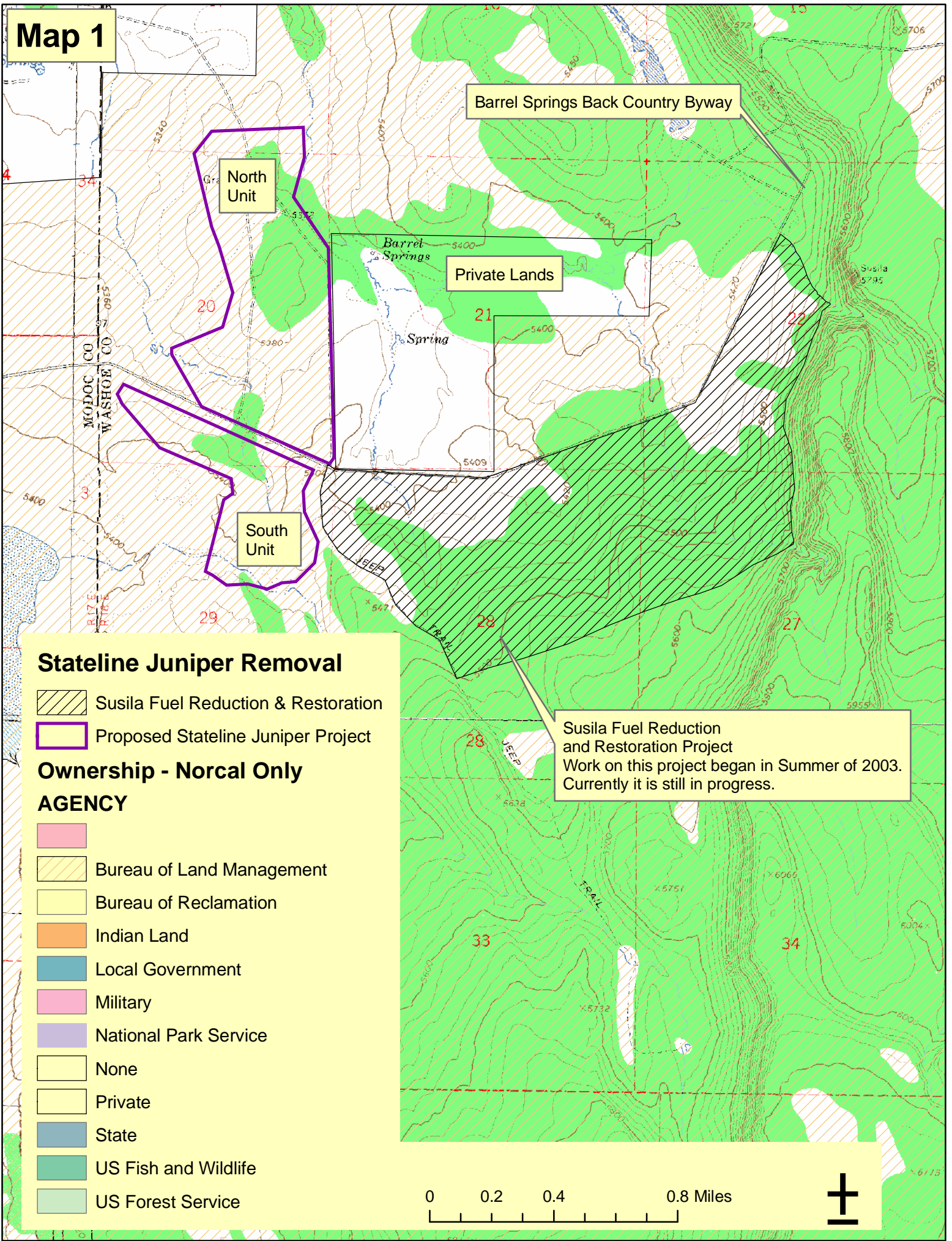
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Patrick Fitzgerald
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Map 1













Stateline Juniper Removal

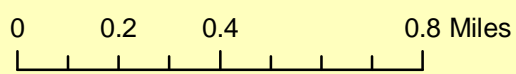
-  Susila Fuel Reduction & Restoration
-  Proposed Stateline Juniper Project

Ownership - Norcal Only

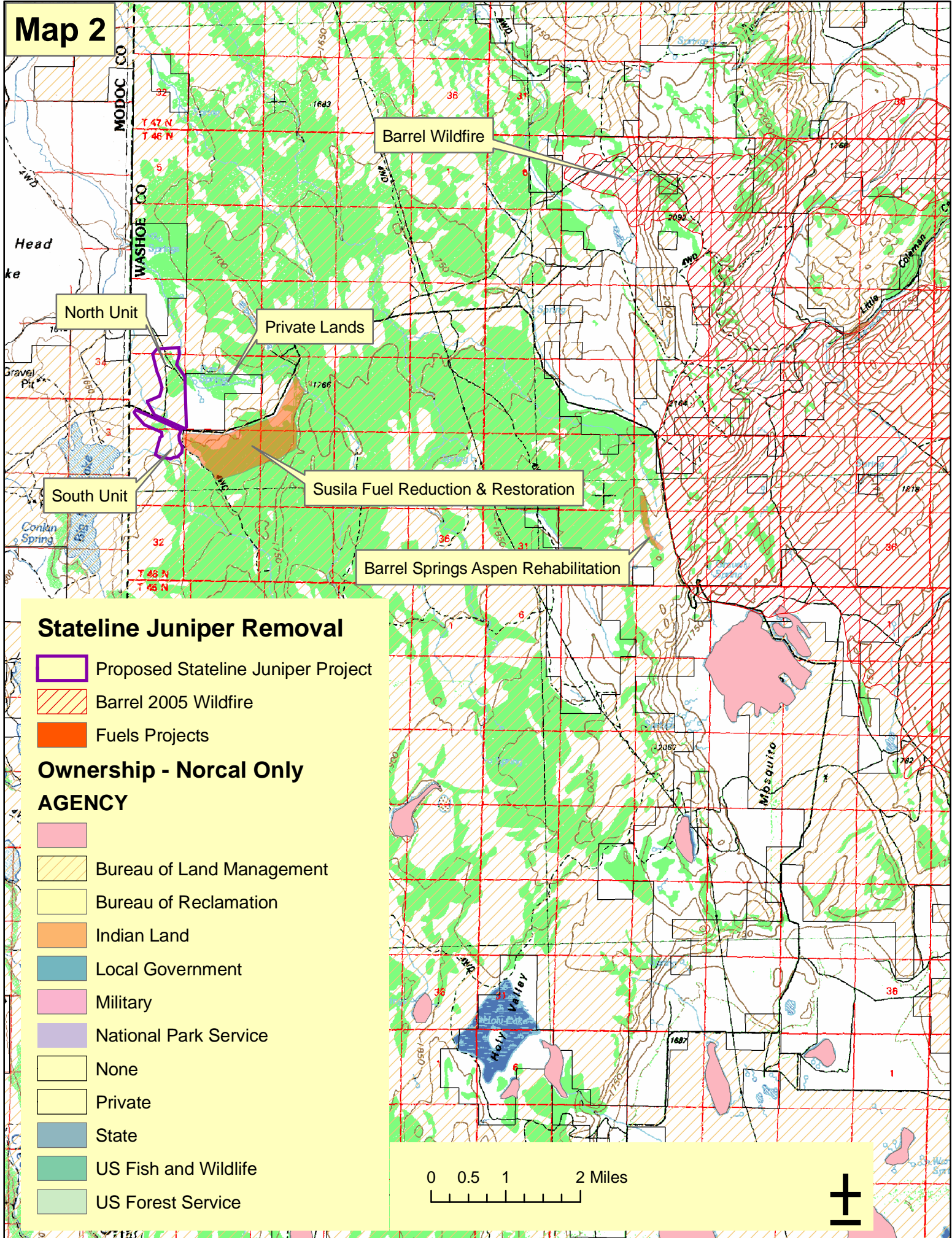
AGENCY

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Bureau of Reclamation
-  Indian Land
-  Local Government
-  Military
-  National Park Service
-  None
-  Private
-  State
-  US Fish and Wildlife
-  US Forest Service

Susila Fuel Reduction and Restoration Project
 Work on this project began in Summer of 2003.
 Currently it is still in progress.



Map 2



Barrel Wildfire

North Unit




Private Lands

South Unit

Susila Fuel Reduction & Restoration




Barrel Springs Aspen Rehabilitation

Stateline Juniper Removal

-  Proposed Stateline Juniper Project
-  Barrel 2005 Wildfire
-  Fuels Projects

Ownership - Norcal Only

AGENCY

-  Military
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Bureau of Reclamation
-  Indian Land
-  Local Government
-  Military
-  National Park Service
-  None
-  Private
-  State
-  US Fish and Wildlife
-  US Forest Service

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