

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Ida Grassland Maintenance Project	Project No.
Region/GMU: Region II, GMU 7W	HPC: Williams-Flagstaff
Project Type: mechanical thinning	
<p>Project Description: Thin small-diameter conifers (junipers and pines) from historic grassland habitat on the Williams District of the Kaibab National Forest (NF). Agra axes and chainsaw hand-crews would be used to thin conifers from a total area of 12,640 acres that has been identified by AGFD and the Kaibab NF as a "high priority grassland restoration area." Archeology surveys and NEPA for this project are nearly complete and will be completed by end of September 2008.</p> <p>Wildlife Species to Benefit: Pronghorn antelope and elk will benefit in the short-term and long-term because the project will thin conifers from historic grassland habitats. Other nongame grassland species also will benefit (e.g., Gunnison's prairie dog, badger, northern harrier, barn owl, vesper sparrow). Mule deer also will benefit in the longer term because thinning conifers will maintain high herbaceous forage production. If these areas are not thinned, increasing conifer density will result in decreased forage production over time.</p>	
Possible Funding Partners:	

<p>Implementation Schedule: Beginning: Fall 2008 Completed: Winter 2010</p>	<p>NEPA Compliance: (if applicable) Completed: Yes <u>X</u> No <u> </u> Projected Completion Date: NEPA completion date - September 2008; Implementation completion date - Winter 2010</p>
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PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: \$225,000 total over 2 years (\$75,000 for year 1; \$150,000 for year 2)
<p>Cost Share Funds: \$75,000 AGFD Wildlife Conservation Funds - must be used by 6/30/09; \$15,000 U.S. Forest Service NEPA costs (already expended); \$24,000 U.S. Forest Service archeology survey and clearance costs (already expended)</p>
Total Project Costs: \$339,000

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<p>Applicant: Kaibab National Forest, Williams Ranger District, Jeff Waters - Kaibab National Forest South Zone Wildlife Biologist</p> <p>Telephone: (928) 635-5627</p>	<p>Address: Williams Ranger District 742 S Clover Road Williams, AZ 86046</p>
<p>AGFD Contact and Phone No. Larry Phoenix: (928) 774-5045; Carl Lutch: (928) 606-3093 (If applicant is not AGFD personnel)</p>	

Coordinated with: Carl Lutch and Larry Phoenix, AGFD	Date: August 18, 2008
Applicant's signature: /s/ Jeffrey R. Waters	Date: August 27, 2008

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE LOCAL HPC? YES ___ ___ NO ___X___

HAS PROJECT BEEN SUBMITTED IN PREVIOUS YEARS? No

NEED STATEMENT/PROBLEM ANALYSIS: Grasslands on the Williams Ranger District of Kaibab National Forest provide habitat for various wildlife species such as pronghorn antelope, Gunnison's prairie dog, badger, northern harrier, barn owl, vesper sparrow. Many of the grassland areas on the Williams District have declined during the past century due to increased density of conifers (primarily junipers and pines). Encroachment of junipers and pines into historic grasslands is at least partially due to reduced wildfire frequency caused by livestock grazing and fire suppression.

The proposed project area is located within an area identified as a "priority grassland restoration area" by AGFD and the Kaibab National Forest (see South Zone Grassland Restoration Assessment, 11/15/07, on the Kaibab NF's website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai/projects/plans.shtml>). Pronghorn antelope are regularly observed within the project area, as are mule deer and large herds of elk. Pronghorn prefer open grassland habitats with long sighting distances. Increased conifer density reduces sighting distances and thus degrades pronghorn habitat quality. In addition, once conifer density reaches a certain level, forage and browse production declines, which degrades habitat quality for pronghorn, elk, and mule deer.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: The primary objective of this project is to maintain and restore grassland habitat on the Williams Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest by preventing historic grasslands from becoming dominated by pinyon-juniper woodland.

PROJECT STRATEGIES: Small-diameter (<12 inches dbh) junipers and pines would be thinned from a total area of approximately 12,640 acres using agra-axes. In a few areas where conifer density is greater, a chainsaw hand crew would be used to supplement thinning by agra-axe. In most areas, cut trees would be left in place on the ground. Cut juniper and pine trees resulting from agra-axe treatments provide favorable microsites for the growth of desirable herbaceous plants because the dead trees provide shade which helps to retain soil moisture and the dead trees help protect plants growing beneath them from livestock grazing. Cut trees located near roads would be available to be collected with a personal fuelwood permit according to Kaibab National Forest travel and fuelwood collection regulations and policy. Excess slash would be hand-piled and burned in certain areas to avoid high concentrations of slash.

PROJECT LOCATION: A 12,640-acre area on the north part of the Williams District of the Kaibab National Forest about 13 miles southeast of Valle off of Highway 180 (see attached map).

LAND OWNERSHIP AT PROJECT SITE (Please state specifically if PRIVATE PROPERTY and

provide landowner's name): U.S. Forest Service, Kaibab National Forest

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

HABITAT DESCRIPTION: Grassland and pinyon-juniper woodland/savanna. Elevation ranges from 6,500 to 7,000 feet.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS: The Williams Ranger District has two agra-axes. Total implementation cost (salary plus fleet costs) is approximately \$25/acre. Salary cost for the two agra-axe operators is \$1,840/week, and fleet cost for the two agra-axes and a pickup is \$2,280/week. We estimate two operators would treat an average of 45-50 acres/day, or 180-200 acres/week.

\$75,000 in Wildlife Conservation Funds from AGFD has already been set aside for implementation of this project (as per John Goodwin, Region II, AGFD). Those funds need to be used between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. At \$25/acre, the \$75,000 would fund treatment of approximately 3,000 of the 12,640 total acres.

To complete the project, we are seeking funding to cover costs for treating an additional 3,000 acres in 2009 (\$75,000) and 6,000 acres in 2010 (\$150,000).

In 2008, the Kaibab National Forest has funded the NEPA costs (~\$15,000) and archeology survey costs (~\$24,000).

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION: Kaibab National Forest and AGFD.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN: Project implementation would be regularly monitored by the Kaibab National Forest South Zone wildlife biologist, Jeff Waters, and AGFD GMU 7 Wildlife Manager, Carl Lutch.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE: Follow-up treatments are authorized under the project NEPA so that the area can be maintained as grassland habitat. Follow-up treatments would be funded through alternative funding sources.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY: A project completion report would be submitted by the Kaibab National Forest South Zone wildlife biologist at the end of the two-year funding period, or separate annual completion reports would be submitted if requested.

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (see attached worksheet): No

TREE SHEARING (AGRA-AXE, PUSH) PROJECTS (see attached worksheet): Yes

TREE SHEARING WORKSHEET

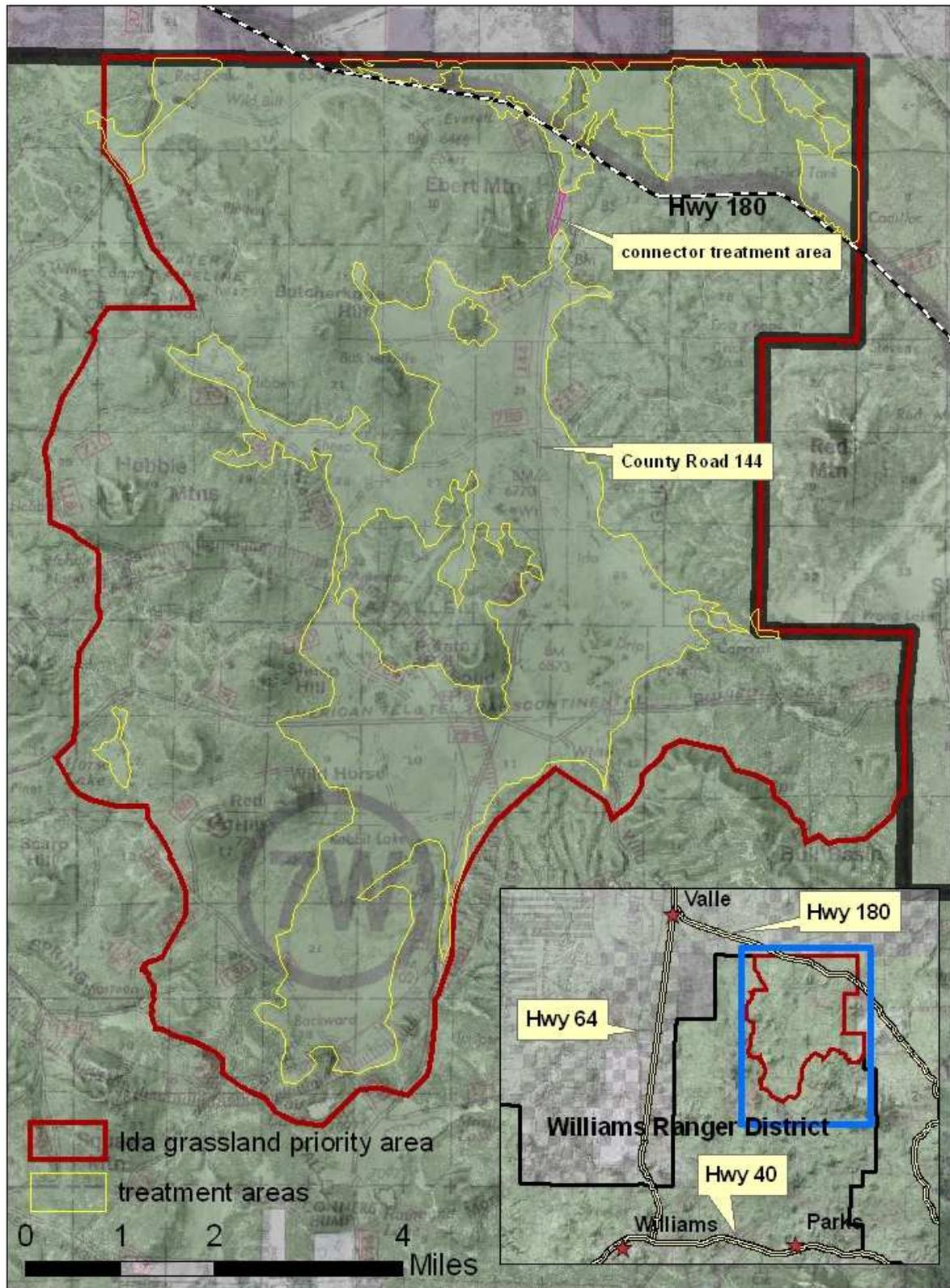
PROJECT NAME: Ida Grassland Maintenance Project

- 1) **What is the estimated acreage of the project?** 12,640 acres
- 2) **How are the trees going to be cleared? (agra axe, chain saw, push):** agra axe and chainsaw hand crew
- 3) **What is the estimated number of trees per acre?** 100 - 300 trees/acre throughout most of areas proposed for treatment.
- 4) **Describe trees to be cleared (species, estimated diameter, single stem, multi-stem):** Mostly one-seed juniper, with scattered Utah juniper and pinyon pine. One-seed junipers are multi-stemmed. Trees up to 12 inches diameter at breast height would be cut.
- 5) **Describe terrain (slope, soil type, rocks, etc.):** Gentle slopes. Primarily grassland mollisols. Rocky areas would be avoided.
- 6) **Please list any special land management status for the project site (i.e. Wilderness, National Park, National Monument, etc). If private land, list landowner.** Kaibab National Forest lands with no special designation. Project area overlaps Smoot Lake Allotment (cattle), Dog Knobs Allotment (cattle), Moritz Lake Allotment (cattle), and Squaw Mountain Allotment (sheep).
- 7) **Please provide the following information about access to the proposed site:**
Type of access (mark one): 2x4 vehicles 4x4 only foot only**
**If foot access only: Distance in miles: Approx. hiking time:

Does access to this site require crossing private or tribal lands? YES NO

Is the site relatively accessible for tree shearing equipment? YES NO

Please describe any restrictions to public access: None



Ida Grassland Maintenance Project Area



Example of project area



Agra axe clipping one-seed juniper tree