

Kaibab Plateau Ecological Restoration Project Environmental Assessment



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**Cover photo by Lynette Myhre (2018):
Results of prescribed fire in ponderosa pine for Labor Fire holding line.**

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Forest Service Response: All these options are included in the proposed action.

Roadless Areas

2018 Letter-Comment #s: 7-42, 7-43

Concern about the extent of treatments in inventoried roadless areas; conflict in description of treatments as “strategic and localized” and amount of area proposed for treatment; only hand-thinning treatments are appropriate; avoid mechanical treatments with machinery; design treatments outside roadless areas to reduce the need for treatments inside roadless areas.

Forest Service Response: The proposed action was adjusted based on concerns expressed by the public. No mechanical treatments with machinery or hand tools would occur in inventoried roadless areas. Prescribed fire may be used in Willis Canyon, Burro Canyon, Big Ridge and Red Point Roadless Areas to promote desired conditions and maintain roadless area characteristics by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic, high-intensity wildfires. The objective is to modify vegetation and fuel loads to allow us to better manage wildfires and promote the historical role of fire on the landscape. No holding lines would be constructed in inventoried roadless areas. Over time, treatments implemented outside roadless areas would allow the use of prescribed fire or wildfire in the roadless areas without constructing holding lines.

Roads

2018 Letter-Comment #s: 2-2, 5-5, 15-63, 15-66

Opposition to constructing roads or improving roads that have revegetated; close and obliterate roads and primitive vehicle routes

Forest Service Response: No road construction would occur with this project. Existing roads may be used to facilitate treatment operations, and they would be closed again when operations are complete. Dozer lines for holding prescribed fires are not the same as roads, and dozer line construction would be limited to areas where no other holding features are available.

Sagebrush Treatment

2018 Letter-Comment #s: 10-12, 10-15

Prescribed or managed fire is appropriate treatment in sagebrush shrublands that are decadent with little or no sagebrush regeneration/recruitment and depleted herbaceous understories; mechanical treatments are appropriate where pinyon and juniper have encroached into sagebrush stands; in these areas thin/remove encroaching trees but retain pockets of persistent woodland interspersed on shallower/rocky soils

Forest Service Response: We scaled back the extent of proposed treatments in pinyon-juniper communities and in sagebrush shrublands to address these comments in addition to other concerns expressed regarding treatments in these vegetation types. We heard the concerns expressed and the suggestions given, and are limiting the scope of the proposed action to address concerns expressed. Mechanical treatments (with machinery or hand tools) are reduced, compared with the original proposed action.

Snags

2018 Letter-Comment #s: 7-38

Make it explicit that while some hazard trees may be cut, on the whole the NKRDC is committed to preserving the presence of snags.