Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/14/2025 7:59:12 PM
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Comments: IDFG has reviewed the scoping information document Lava Restoration Project. The document describes a suite of actions to be taken by the Forest to address and mitigate the impacts to the landscape from the 2024 fire. The Lava Project document mentioned the need for infrastructure repair including range fencing repair and/or replacement. IDFG recommends that the Forest utilize BMPs to create wildlife friendly fencing in those areas where fences will be repaired/replaced. Specifically, if the sections to be repaired/replaced are wire strand fences, they should follow these guidelines (see page 10 and/or page 14 of the attached document):

-Top wire preferably 40" high or less, but no more that 42" high. Smooth wire is preferred.
-Top 2 wires should be at least 12" apart (ungulates can easily tangle back legs if top wires are closer together)
-Bottom wire should be smooth and should be at least 16" off the ground, and preferably 18" off the ground. Many cattle ranchers have found that although a small calf may slip under the higher bottom wire, it can also easily slip back again to its mom and not be stranded on the wrong side of the fence.
-Preferably, no vertical stays. If used, consider plastic or composite stays instead of wire stays, which are easily bent (see page 10 for more details)
-Posts at 16.5 foot intervals

The following recommendations should be considered by the Forest for the Lava project, and future restoration efforts on other areas, in planning and implementation efforts.

-It is important for the Forest to consider post-fire restoration efforts that include timber stands occurring in higher elevation basins. Those areas allow for slower snow melt and water infiltration that can be used by plants later into the growing season leading to better forage quality later in the summer. Healthy timbered stands at higher elevations can also provide important thermal refuge areas for wildlife, particularly big game species.
-When at all possible, road work/repairs should be performed outside of the big game hunting seasons, which generally occur from Aug. 30 through Oct. 31. Road closures and road work should be avoided to allow sportsmen and recreation access during that time period.
-In the non-forested revegetation areas, the Forest should consider site preparation including herbicide treatments of areas dominated by invasive weed species such as rush skeletonweed, cheatgrass, and cereal rye which tend to occur over many of the lower elevation areas. Consider reseeding herbicide-treated areas with native or desirable grasses. Also, consider using plastic tube protectors on shrub plantings due to the heavy browsing pressure from big game animals wintering over the mapped area.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide scoping comments on the Lava project. Please let us know if you need additional information. I know our agencies work together on some restoration activities and we are certainly grateful for those collaborations.