

Project Objective and Narrative:

funding priorities

The Seminoe Mountains Conifer Encroachment Habitat Treatment project is needed to increase and improve bighorn sheep habitat in the Seminoe Mountains through the use of mechanical/manual methods. Habitat treatments including vegetation treatments have been taking place in these mountains and surrounding areas for the last 10 years in the form of broadcast prescribed fire, associated mechanical preparatory treatments, and management of invasive species such as cheatgrass and noxious weeds. To date, investment by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Hazardous Fuels program, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), WWSF, and various other NGO partners has exceeded \$500,000 to treat, prepare units for treatment, and mitigate impacts from treatments and wildfire events in the Seminoe Mountains. Treatments in proximity to structures and other infrastructure require a high degree of control, necessitating a higher reliance on mechanical methods. In order to address conifer encroachment in mixed mountain shrub stands, aspen stands, and riparian corridors, the proposed projects would continue to treat vegetation with an emphasis on mechanical methods.

The project treatments would remove conifers from riparian corridors and aspen stands through cut and pile manual operations followed by slash pile burning to remove the resulting material, as well as limited mastication with mechanized equipment where possible and practical. Treatments would remove a portion of conifers from upland mountain shrub stands through lop and scatter operations, with limited mechanized mastication operations utilized where practical. Mechanized treatments are the most efficient and cost-effective means of treating encroaching conifers, but are limited by the extremely steep slopes found in the treatment areas.

WWSF Grant-in-aid funds requested in this application would be utilized to fund manual thin/pile and lop/scatter operations via the use of the High Desert District hazardous fuels mitigation crew, comprised of summer seasonal employees from the wildland fire program to conduct operations during the 2021 field season. Operational costs include labor, operations (vehicle, equipment, materials), and travel costs for the crew. Grant-in-aid funds could also be utilized to fund subcontracts to conduct mechanical operations.

The project area encompasses BLM and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) public lands, Wyoming State Trust lands, and deeded lands. BOR lands associated with the project located within the Morgan Creek drainage are managed by the Wyoming Game and Fish (WGFD) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a Habitat Management Area. All federal lands associated designated for treatment are subject to NEPA analysis which is underway, expected to be completed and authorized by the end of 2021. Treatment on State Trust lands are subject to approval by the Office of State Lands and Investments and the lessee. The State Trust lessee has offered verbal agreement with and support of the project, and the formal approval is underway. The majority of deeded landowners have expressed support for the project and are eager to see work begin during summer 2021. No work would be done on deeded lands where landowners do not support the project. Due to NEPA requirements, including the requirement for cultural surveys to be conducted prior to approval, treatment of federal lands may not occur until late 2021 or the 2022 season, but treatment of State Trust and deeded lands can begin immediately.

Miles/Acres Affected (if applicable): Miles Acres

Describe Any Current or Future Monitoring/Management (if applicable):

Monitoring will include photopoints of treatment units pre- and post-treatment. BLM utilizes the AIM (Assessment, Inventory, Monitoring) monitoring protocol which ensures consistency across landscapes. The AIM protocol establishes condition and trend to inform adaptive management decisions.

Describe how you will share your learned info with us

Treatment units proposed and prioritized for implementation will be submitted annually, and following treatment, completed polygons will be submitted with annual reports.

All condition and trend monitoring data will be shared with WWSF upon request.

Additional Budget or Project Information for Consideration (if applicable):

Estimated cost for treatments:

Conifer Encroachment: Aspen Enhancement (thin/pile): \$1,000-\$1,500/acre

Conifer Encroachment: Mixed Mountain Shrubs (lop/scatter): \$350-\$500/acre

Anticipate between WWSF grant-in-aid and matching funds availability for 2021, \$50,000 to begin work on this project during summer 2021:

Upland Mixed Mountain Shrub treatments (lop and scatter)

\$25,000 @ \$500/acre = 50 acres

\$25,000 @ \$350/acre = 71 acres

Aspen treatments (thin/pile)

\$25,000 @ \$1,500/acre = 17 acres

\$25,000 @ \$1,000/acre = 25 acres

Between 15 and 25 acres aspen treatments would be targetted 2021

Between 50 and 75 acres upland mixed mountain shrub treatments would be targetted 2021.

Attachments and Supporting Documentation:

Please select the types of attachments included:

- Map(s) *required* Letter(s) of Support
 Project Design Photos
 Monitoring/Management Plan Permit(s) / NEPA Compliance
 Other:

Please submit applications and attachments via email to: Info@wyomingwildsheep.org

Subject Line: " Name of Project - Organization Name"