

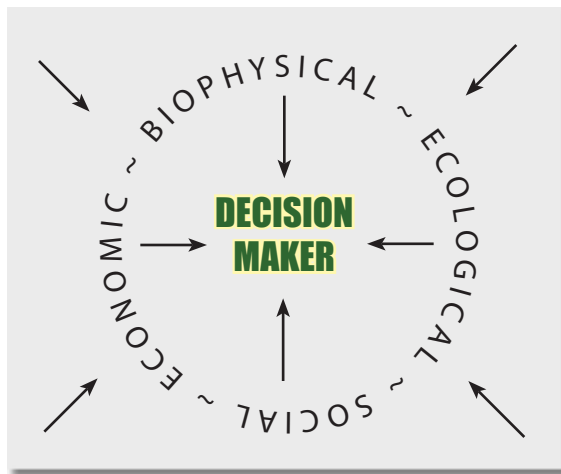
Assessing Trade-offs and Decision Processes By Agency Professionals and Key Stakeholder Groups in the Great Basin

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Background

The Great Basin Ecosystem encompasses nearly 57 million acres of native sagebrush and perennial grasses in the western United States. Although not apparent to the casual observer speeding along Interstate 80 past miles and miles of desert shrubland, the ecosystem is fast becoming one of the most imperiled in North America. Healthy sage-steppe communities are vanishing as a result of the invasion of exotic species such as cheatgrass, the encroachment of juniper and pinyon pine, and the occurrence of catastrophic wildfires. Restoration and fuel reduction treatments have been proposed as viable means of sustaining the ecological health of this region. However, proposed treatments including the use of

herbicides mechanical methods, and prescribed fire are often met with harsh criticism from stakeholder groups in the region. Agency professionals are challenged in their decision processes to try and balance the use of promising restoration activities with stakeholder concerns and interests. Often times, decisions are halted as a result of legal gridlock. In addition, restoration treatments are often implemented on public lands where grazing permittees utilize forage for their livestock. Because treatments may reduce the amount of available forage, permittees must assess various trade-offs and decision preferences concerning treatment implementation on their grazing lands.



Methods

Literature Review and Information Gathering

Obtain relevant research from previous studies
Identify key stakeholder groups and agency professionals

Key Informant and Focus Group Interviews

Land management agencies
Environmental interest groups
Community stakeholders

Survey of Grazing Permit Holders

Stratified random sampling
BLM and USFS permit holders in:
Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon

Objectives

- 1) Identify factors specific to individual restoration and fuel-reduction treatments, and the conditions that the treatments produce, that can act as barriers or catalysts for treatment implementation.
- 2) Compare and contrast key stakeholder groups with agency professionals in terms of environmental values, decision preferences for treatment alternatives, agreement with public land management goals and approaches, and trust in science and government.
- 3) Identify factors among members of interest groups across the Great Basin that are associated with decisions to engage in administrative appeals or lawsuits as a response to proposed restoration activities.
- 4) How do Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management grazing permittees assess trade-offs associated with alternative restoration and fuel reduction treatments?

Analysis

Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded to organize themes and ideas.

Survey results will be analyzed using quantitative methods to discern differences between and among permittee responses.

