

## **COPWRR Project-Level Ecosystem Monitoring Report – Summary**

Project Evaluated: Westside Stewardship Project

Field Visit Date: May 21, 2008

Units Visited: Unit D and, informally, Units A and E

### **1) Summary Comments on Implementation and Effectiveness**

The focus of this field review was Unit D, where mechanized juniper treatments were being implemented. Implementation was not yet complete on the day of the field visit, but thus far it appears that :

- the work has been implemented as planned and described in the Categorical Exclusion and Decision Notice;
- implementation has adhered to the Management Measures specified in the CE except for one large old juniper that was removed; and
- the project is addressing the Purpose and Need specified in the CE.

In the area where work has been completed, historic vegetation is being released from juniper competition/dominance, creating opportunities for quality sage-steppe habitat to develop. The mechanical treatment does not appear to be having any significant adverse impacts on the site.

### **2) Considerations for Future Project Planning**

Conducting a field review early in the overall implementation of the Westside Stewardship project provides the opportunity to discuss ideas that might help the Grasslands to continue to innovate on this and future projects and to do even better at achieving the Purpose and Need for projects like the Westside project. The results of the work look good so far, but there may be some opportunities for refinement. The COPWRR Ecosystem Monitoring Committee respectfully submits the following comments for agency consideration:

- A. Consider whether lopping and scattering is necessary on all juniper treatment sites. If this technique is necessary for reducing fuel heights or for effective sage-steppe restoration in sensitive sites then it should be done. But if it is not always necessary, reducing the use of this expensive treatment technique can allow agency dollars to treat more acres.
- B. Consider whether whole-tree yarding juniper out of dry draws such as the one in Unit D with a wheeled skidder might cause less disturbance than winching the junipers out. There are currently Forest Plan standards and guidelines that prohibit this technique, but it is valuable to consider what the lightest possible techniques are for juniper removal.
- C. Consider leaving some higher stumps in drainages to help prevent or reverse erosion. Consider leaving some higher stumps out on the rest of the landscape can visually deter in-appropriate OHV use.