

## Completed Project Report

# MIDDLE BLACK SHRUB CUTTING (UNIT 72)

**RAC PROJECT NO:** 04-020

### **RAC FUNDS**

**BUDGETED:** \$22,500

**EXPENDED:** \$ 9,313

**BALANCE:** \$ 13,187 \*

\* Suggest applying the balance of these funds to the Middle Black Stewardship Project. For further information, please see 'related projects' below.

### **PROJECT PLAN**

The project goal was to provide a disturbance in decadent shrub fields that would not impact soils that are still recovering from early 20<sup>th</sup> century fires. And in providing this disturbance, not lose the few conifers that are present. This would be accomplished by cutting large shrubs to reduce competition and provide growing space for the conifers. An additional goal was to create winter range forage for big game which will happen as new sprouts emerge from the base of the large woody stems that were cut.

### **PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

Forest Service funds and personnel were used to lay out the unit, and prepare and administer the contract. A service contract was advertised for shrub cutting in late spring, 2005. Several contractors toured the site with FS representatives prior to bidding. Three bids were received ranging from \$9450 (acreage reduction brought the low bid total to \$7513) to \$28,224. The contract was awarded to Peneda Post and Pole out of Grangeville.

Work started and was completed in August 2005. Shrubs were hand cut by a crew of 8-10 sawyers. The contract required that all brush  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch or more at the stump was to be cut, except for birch which were not cut. Previous experience with this work has shown that winter snows will compact the cut shrubs and they begin to decay quickly.

The contract bid equates to approximately \$119 per acre over the 63 acre unit. This was a comparatively low unit price compared to previous units that had been accomplished with Idaho Department of Corrections crews. But, it appears that this was not a profitable venture for the contractor and that future bids for similar work may be higher.



Unit 72 Location Near Cold Springs



Cut and Uncut Shrubs

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Conifers Retained



Typical Stem Sizes Cut



Shrub Cutting Work in Progress

### ***RELATED PROJECTS***

This was the first shrub cutting project funded by the RAC. Since then, the RAC has authorized \$37,000 for other shrub cutting in the Middle Black project. Middle Black was originally intended to be a stewardship contract but limited proceeds from the timber harvest coupled with a need to keep the project on schedule led us to offer it as a conventional timber sale contract. Other work, like shrub cutting, that may have been funded from the stewardship contract had proceeds been sufficient, is now proposed for completion via separate service contracts. The Forest Service is proposing that the RAC funding approved for stewardship shrub cutting and weed control be directed to these service contracts to accomplish the same work. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is also contributing substantially to this shrub cutting service contract.

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