Western Juniper Harvest and Transport System Survey
Agency Contacts

Objective: Through a qualitative survey, evaluate systems being used by forest operators to harvest and transport western juniper material for utilization.

Format: The survey/interview questions are organized into the following five topics:

- General Information
- Project Information
- Operating Conditions
- Utilization
- Needs Assessment

Survey/Interview Questions:

I. General Information

Name of interviewee: ___Peter Hall__________________

Position: _______________________________________________

Organization: ____BLM – Alturas Field Office__________________

Address: _______________________________________________

E-mail: ___phall@ca.blm.gov___________________________

Phone: ____(530) 233-7928____________________________

II. Project Information: Forest Operations and External Factors that influence the loggers/contractor operations

(1) How many acres of juniper treatments is your unit implementing per year? Are you conducting projects that include utilization?

1000 to 1500 acres per year with utilization on most of those acres. But the Alturas Resource Area is currently working with the Modoc NF on a 6.5 million acre EIS that will allow juniper treatments to expand to 30-50,000 acres per year.
(2) What are the objectives of the projects?

- Wilfire hazard reduction  ___X____
- Watershed enhancement  ___X____
- Wildlife ecology  ___X____ Sage steppe enhancement
- Biomass utilization  ___X____
- Other  ___ pine forest restoration __________

(3) What type of operating constraints do you place on the operations?

- Season of year for harvesting  ____X____ no operations when wet
- Soil disturbance  
- Stream protection  ____X____ no skidding through perennial streams, avoidance of disturbance of intermittent stream areas
- Wildlife restrictions  ____X____ sensitive areas
- Protection of sensitive plants  
- Other  _ archaeological – flag and avoid _ violations result in fines

(4) How are the operator services being contracted?

- Service contracts  
- Stewardship contracts  ____X____
- Timber sales contracts  
- Combination of above  
- Other  

The Alturas BLM typically packages its stewardship contracts like this: The contractor is paid a certain amount per acre to perform the cutting treatment and then they are charged about 10 to 50 cents per ton for the material. Ultimately, the cost for the BLM typically ranges between $160 to $250 per acre.

The BLM might also split the project into two pieces, paying one contractor $160 to cut the trees and leave them in “doodle” bundles that are ready for utilization and then selling the bundles to another forest operator to chip and haul away.

III. Operating Conditions

(1) What is the average size of your operating units (acres)?

Range from 30 to 1000 acres. Bigger ones are more efficient in terms of move in costs.

(2) How far apart are your operating units on average (miles)?
Alturas BLM strives to lay them out contiguous to each other.

(3) Please describe the typical haul road conditions in your operating units:

Roads in place (yes or no) Yes

Construct new roads (length & road standards):

No, they might do a bit of new landing construction. Most are dirt roads. Operators need to stay off the roads when wet and might need to apply water when the roads are dry.

Upgrade existing roads (describe types of upgrades):

Other description of road conditions:

(4) What is the average transport distance from your operating units to the market (miles)?

Alturas BLM avoids placing units more than 80 to 100 miles from market. For operators, if 1 chip van can make 3 runs per day it pencils out. As gas prices increase, stewardship contractor payments need to increase or projects need to move in closer to markets. When the new Lakeview plant comes on line it will create a new, closer market.

IV. Utilization

(1) What markets do you have available for Juniper and other harvested tree species?

Biomass chips are the major one. There is also personal use firewood use.

(a) In what form will they accept their raw material (e.g. acceptable length and diameters, delimming standards, chip quality)?

Alturas BLM “sells” biomass in stewardship contracts or doodle bundles.

(b) What is the standard unit of measure that contractor are paid on?

(c) What are the consumers paying per unit?

Peter hears that the plants are buying chips for a minimum of $38 per bone dry ton. There are about 12.5 BDT per truck.

(2) What are the local community development and family-wage employment opportunities with juniper utilization?

(3) Is there an adequate workforce capacity in your working area to remove and
utilize junipers with available markets, or if markets were available in the future?

*No contracts that Peter has offered have gone unbid.*

(4) What workforce training initiatives are needed to prepare the local workforce for juniper utilization work (e.g. equipment operation & maintenance, use of chainsaws)?

*The contractors Peter works with appear to be well trained and well-equipped.*

V. Needs Assessment: Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of juniper harvesting operations at present and into the foreseeable future AND challenges

(1) What things do contractors do well in your operations?

*They are efficient and they take care of the ground. Peter thinks that it is important that stewardship contracts allow the BLM to select based on best value and not just look at price.*

(2) What are the challenges in your operations?

(a) What are the harvesting system limitations?

*The cost. Ideally, the price of chips would go up ...*

(b) What areas are presently in need of improvement?

(c) What opportunities do you see for equipment improvements?

*Peter would like to see operators develop systems to efficiently work on steeper slopes, up to 30 or 40%. Right now the BLM sends hand crews to work on the steeper slopes but that means that there are slash piles that need to be dealt with later.*

(d) Are there resource issues associated with the harvesting system (soils, vegetation, weeds, wildlife habitat, others)?

*Not much of a problem.*

(e) Other challenges:

(3) How could more stable markets affect your operations?

(4) For the challenges that you identified above, how would you like to see the problems resolved, or the challenges met?