

Ovine Browsing for Brush Control of Forested Environments

Final Report for FW03-307

Project Type: Professional + Producer

Funds awarded in 2003: \$7,500.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2006

Region: Western

State: Idaho

Principal Investigator:

[Jeff Nauman](#)

Idaho Department of Lands

Project Information

Abstract:

SUMMARY

The original project included three units and 125 acres of browsing. Unit one was a heavy shelter wood overstory of grand-fir-habitat forest land with a mature stand of brush understory. This unit was browsed in the spring and summer of 2003 and again in the summer of 2004. Unit two is a similar stand that had a prescribed under-burn in 2002. It was browsed three times following the unit one rotation. Unit three was to experiment with goat browsing within 5 acres of an established plantation. This unit was deleted, as considerable damage to sapling-sized trees was evident in units one and two. Most trees less than 4 inches in diameter at breast height were girdled. There are not many small trees in these units, and the loss within the plantation was anticipated to be unacceptable.

The initial findings point toward a definite reduction of brush volume and competition that remains visible into the 2005 summer season.

Future ramifications regarding natural regeneration of trees remains to be seen. Of course, a good cone season and favorable weather will be necessary for the long-term success of tree regeneration.

Other questions have surfaced because of this project, such as nutrient values of brush species, long-term livestock health, economic viability and the potential of plant species trend if grazing of goats continued at this intensity versus reduced levels.

We felt that this project was a success regarding its intended purpose. Our expenses were greater than expected due to fencing set-up costs and total number of grazing days necessary to achieve the desired effect.

RESULTS

The results from a silviculture perspective will be monitored in upcoming years. A good crop of conifer cones will augment results. Unit one results depict a heavily damaged brush stands with slight resprouting. An increase in grass and forbs is

quite evident, with an obvious fence-line transition adjacent to the control site. The third entry of goats in unit two was very short lived and less grass and forbs evident due to grazing and trampling. Unit two is almost void of any brush species. The browsing in combination with the prescribed burn has the appearance of a lethal herbicide application. This site should be very favorable to serial conifer regeneration.

Cooperators

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Producer

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Research

Participation Summary

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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