STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)

Remington Fire Sagebrush Restoration (Planting)

1.0 BACKGROUND

Project Overview

The Miles City Field Office of the Montana/Dakotas Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has a requirement to transport and plant approximately 14,000 containerized (0-1 year) Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) seedlings in fall 2026 on lands burned by the Remington wildfire in southeastern Montana. Manual methods of accomplishing planting will be required.

Background

The Remington wildfire scorched over 190,000 acres burning private, Forest Service, state, and BLM lands. It burned hot and fast, wiping out stands of ponderosa pine, juniper, and Wyoming big sagebrush. Portions of burned lands managed by BLM in Big Horn and Powder River counties lost many acres of old growth Wyoming big sagebrush stands. Post-fire field visits showed little to no surviving sagebrush and numerous widespread bare ground patches in burned areas where sagebrush once stood.

Many sagebrush-obligate species have historically utilized the project area, including BLM Sensitive Status Species such as greater sage-grouse, Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher, and sagebrush sparrow. Big game animals such as mule deer and pronghorn also heavily rely on healthy sagebrush ecosystems for food throughout the year.

Furthermore, sagebrush communities provide essential ecosystem services. Sagebrush have long taproots that bring water to the soil surface from depths unreachable by other plants, thereby releasing water for shallow-rooted plant species. Sagebrush also help trap and hold snow, increasing water retention.

Wyoming big sagebrush are non-sprouting shrubs easily killed by fire and the seedbank is easily damaged by fire as well; thus, natural establishment is typically very poor post-fire and can take over 50 years for sagebrush to regenerate. Restoring sagebrush is challenging, but success can be increased by planting seedlings rather than seeding; planting seedlings can have survival rates of almost double than direct seeding (Herriman et al., 2016). It is a common approach to plant seedlings in groups or islands, as it is expected that sagebrush will expand through self-seeding and is cost effective (Dunwiddie and Camp 2013).

2.0 SCOPE

Under this contract, the BLM needs 14,000 container Wyoming big sagebrush seedlings planted in late September through early November 2026. Sagebrush seedlings will be

furnished by the government; however, contractor-furnished equipment property will be needed to sufficiently meet the specifications of the contract, briefly summarized below for the acreage, location, and rate.

Project Areas

The planting areas are located in Big Horn and Powder River counties near the Wyoming border within the BLM Miles City Field Office administrative area. A map of the general location can be found in Appendix A. The nearest sizeable town to the project area is Sheridan, Wyoming and is approximately a 1.5-hour drive from the project area.

Project 1: "Bales" in Powder River County

Approximately 320 acres of burned BLM land was identified to be planted within the Bales area for 2026. The area is characterized by gentle rolling hills vegetated by perennial grasses and forbs. Soils here are clay-heavy, resulting in slow water permeability and experiences high runoff during large rain events. Travelling in wet conditions is difficult and digging may be difficult in very dry conditions.

Project 2: "Tidwell Draw" in Big Horn County

Approximately 95 acres of burned BLM land was identified to be planted within the Tidwell Draw area for 2026. The area is characterized by eroded terraces with breaks-type topography surrounded by standing-dead trees. Soils in this area are also clay-heavy and may be difficult to dig in dry conditions.

Access to Project Areas

Access by paved, graveled, and natural surface roads passable with 4-wheel drive vehicles. Foot travel up to ½ mile may be required as designated on individual project unit maps. Access to units will be provided primarily through federal lands and roads with access easements. Project areas that are not publicly accessible will require travel through privately owned lands. Permission to access and cross private landownership will be obtained by the Contractor with provided contact information by the Government. Contractors will give notice to private landowners at least one week in advance prior to accessing the unit.

Standard Access

Access is defined as (1) passable with a 2-wheel drive vehicle although a 4-wheel drive may sometimes be required or (2) foot travel to the closest project area boundary is up to ½-miles.

If an all-terrain vehicle is used, it shall be of such design that it will travel over rough, uneven terrain and not create wheel ruts and channels. Use of 2-wheel and 4-wheel drive vehicles on natural surface roads is permitted only with the Government's approval. Any ATV(s) or vehicles used will be cleaned of mud, dirt, seeds, sawdust, excess oil and grease, etc. that

could contain noxious or invasive weed seed prior to entry onto BLM lands. Cleaning includes pressure washing the vehicle and/or ATV undercarriages, tires, wheel wells, grille and inside bumpers to remove materials that could contain weed seed. In wet conditions, if ruts are created greater than 4 inches, work must be stopped until conditions improve and rutting is minimized.

Planting Stock

The Government will provide approximately 14,000 containerized (year 1-0) Wyoming big sagebrush seedlings for fall planting in 2026. Upon completion of the project, all seedlings should be planted on the two project sites.

Transport

The Contractor will pick up seedlings at the designated pick-up area, final location will be disclosed in the pre-work meeting. Pick-up area is approximately 10 miles west of Park City, Montana. The Contractor shall transport seedlings from the pick-up area to the project areas.

Planting

The Contractor will hand plant approximately 14,000 containerized Wyoming big sagebrush seedlings in groups across 415 acres on two planting sites. Hand tools will be used to accomplish the planting such as dibble bars, planting bars, shovels, or planting hoes. Clearing of vegetation immediately surrounding the seedling will be required, if vegetation is present.

Environmental Conditions

Weather conditions may include snow, rain, fire, or other adverse conditions which may lead to road closures. Additional Period of Performance time may be considered to cover these closures. A Contractor may start in one area and be moved to another area should a closure occur. The performance time is wide enough to cover these circumstances.

Camping

Camping on federal lands will only be allowed in approved sites and with the prior written authorization of the Government. Requests for camping authorization shall be made in writing. Special terms and conditions may be required. Campers must follow accordance with BLM rules and guidelines. This includes picking up litter, avoiding travel that could damage lands, observe signs and posted areas, leaving all gates as you find them, and asking permission to enter private lands.

Garbage

Any refuse, debris or garbage left by the Contractor Shall be cleaned up as each unit is completed. All such debris, garbage and refuse shall be removed from the project areas by

the Contractor and disposed of legally off site before final payment is made. No illegal dumping of any material on either BLM or private property is acceptable.

Quantity/Payment

The number of seedlings will be based on the number of seedlings calculated by the Government in each tray or box. If the Contractor does not agree with the count, seedlings will be re-counted by the Contractor, or a designated representative, with a Government representative present. This will be done at the Contractor's expense and shall not impede the planting operation.

Security of Materials

The Contractor may leave their equipment and Government-furnished material at the work site. However, the contractor is responsible for materials left at the site should they be lost, stolen, or damaged.

3.0 TASKS

Tasks Overview

All activities will be within the designated boundaries.

The Contractor must give the Government representative two (2) weeks advance notice of when planting will commence.

The normal operating season, period of performance, on this operation will be September 30, 2026 through November 15, 2026.

The Contractor must avoid any disturbance to adjacent private lands.

The COR or Government Representative shall have authority to temporarily close down all or any part of the operation during a period of high fire danger, wet ground conditions, or for any other reason deemed necessary. The Government may allow an extension of the contract term if it is determined that the contractor could not complete the contract within the normal contract period due to excessive inclement weather.

No collection of plants, animals, rocks, or artifacts are allowed.

The Contractor is responsible for daily cleanup of work area.

Shrub Planting

Plant seedlings on rangelands modified burned by wildfire. A pre-entry conference between the Government representative and the Contractor will be required before beginning operations to ensure understanding of the conditions and thus avoid conflicts.

Planting Stock: The age class and species of stock is 0-1 years-old, container, Wyoming big sagebrush stock.

Care of seedlings: Protect seedlings against damage to tops and roots, including damage from freezing, heating, and drying. The following requirements shall be adhered to.

a. Transport seedlings from seedling storage to project areas in fully enclosed box trucks, trailers, or pickups with canopies. Seedlings shall not be transported in heated vehicles.
b. Upon arrival at the project area, store seedlings in a manner that protects them from direct sunlight, frost, and wind and provide for proper air circulation around bundles, boxes, or trays. Cover seedlings with a space blanket when necessary to provide protection.
c. Do not mishandle seedlings in any manner.
d. Restrict the number of seedlings placed in a planting bag to a number that allows removal of individual seedlings without damage to the seedling roots.
e. During the planting operation, remove only one (1) seedling at a time from the planting bag or other container and only after the planting hole has been prepared.
f. Do not perform root pruning, top pruning, or culling.
g. Notify the COR immediately if the seedlings and/or seedling roots are too large or small, dryness of roots, mold or other evidence of damage to the seedlings.
h. Return unused seedlings to pick-up site if inclement weather conditions occur during the planting operation which will damage seedlings, such as freezing or high temperature, drying winds, low humidity, or snow which prohibits the planting operation from continuing.

Where to Plant

Planting will occur at the project areas in designated units; maps will be provided to the Contractor. See attached maps, Map 3 and Map 4.

Approximately 10,000 seedlings will be planted at the Bales site and 4,000 seedlings will be planted at the Tidwell Draw site.

Sagebrush must be planted in groups of 30 plants evenly spaced across the planting unit.

Seedlings should be located in areas advantageous to seedlings, such as micro depressions, flat areas (avoiding shoulder slopes), bare ground areas where the previous sagebrush burned. Prior to planting seedlings, the area around each seedling must be free of vegetation, the vegetaiton-free area should be a 1-foot radius (2-foot diameter) around each plant.

Planting Groups

Sagebrush must be planted in groups of 30 seedlings evenly spaced across the planting unit, these will be called 'planting groups'. See Diagram 1.

Planting groups should be circular and have a diameter of 20 feet, or radius of 10 feet.

Seedlings within planting groups must be evenly distributed within the circle area.

Plantable Areas

a. Planters shall plant all areas, unless they meet one or more of the conditions defined under as unplantable.

Unplantable Areas

An unplantable area (spot) is characterized by one or more of the following conditions:

a. Soil covering slash or debris subject to rapid drying.
b. Rock outcrops, talus slopes and areas of stones, cobbles, or gravel over 12 inches deep.
c. Areas covered by compacted slash over 12 inches deep.
d. Roads and road prisms designated on project maps and/or COR on the project unit.
e. Other areas as designated by the COR.
f. Examples of unplantable and plantable areas will be indicated by the COR in the planting areas.

Planting Methods

a. Seedlings shall be planted in accordance with the following method: Standard.
b. Proper selection of planting site is important and clearing efforts shall be required to prepare the site for planting.

Planting Spot Preparation

a. The planting spot may be exposed mineral soil or covered with vegetation, gravel, or snow which shall require a clearing effort before planting. Clearing shall include removal of all debris, gravel, humus, ash, and living vegetation. In areas meeting the above conditions, cleared areas shall be no smaller than 2-foot in diameter.
b. Before planting a seedling, the Contractor shall uproot or sever all germinant and woody vegetation up to one (1) diameter at least 1.5 inches below the soil surface, using grubbing tools or by hand pulling. The scalped/grubbed areas shall encompass a 1-foot radius as measured from the center where the seedling will be planted, or a total diameter of 2-feet.
c. No cutting, damaging, or covering Wyoming big sagebrush by grubbed vegetation, slash, or debris.

Standard method of planting

a. Proper site selection of planting site is important and clearing efforts shall be required to prepare the site for planting and to maintain required spacing.
b. Seedlings shall be planted in spots distributed over the area at the spacing specified or on unit project maps. However, for the individual seedlings, the specified average spacing may be varied as much as 25 percent in any direction to find a suitable planting spot.
c. Where an unplantable spot is encountered, the planter shall plant the closest plantable spot; however, average spacing shall be maintained for the unit, and the number of seedlings planted per acre shall not be materially increased or decreased due to planter selection of planting spots.
d. No seedling shall be planted closer than half the specified average spacing distance from other shrubs.

Seedling Placement

Containerized seedlings: Plant seedlings in the center of the prepared hole, at a depth at which after firming and levelling the soil comes to a point with the lowest leaves.

If seedlings are in containers, containers should be removed at the time of planting.

Each seedling shall be set firmly in the ground with friable soil filled in and well firmed around the roots with no air pockets, foreign material or snow around or adjacent to the roots. After firming around the seedling, soil shall be at the ground level with no deep depression or high mound at the stem.

Plants must be planted deep as the container in order to have enough room for the extent of the root system. No “J” roots are allowed.

Each plant should be transplanted so that the surface of the root ball is level with the grade of the soil at each respective hole. No more than 1/2 inch of soil should cover the upper surface of the root ball and should not be planted more than one inch below grade. All container plants should be transplanted so that the main stem(s) are vertical.

Each planted seedling shall stand in a vertical position, perpendicular to the ground surface with allowance for slope, and shall be placed in the center of the cleared spot.

(See Diagrams 2 and 3)

Planting Hole

Plant seedling with hand tools up to a depth of 12 inches for all stock. The planting hole must be wide enough to ensure full suspension of root system.

Width of the planting hole to accommodate the root system is typically achieved by a width of 1.5 times the diameter of the container and the depth of the hole 1.5 times the depth of the container.

Empty containers must be collected, stacked neatly, and boxed to be returned back to the BLM.

Recording Geospatial Data

Spatial data must be recorded for each group of sagebrush seedlings planted.

Point Values

The center of each sagebrush seedling planting group must be collected.

GPS Positional Accuracy

Space Based Augmentation System (SBAS) should be used whenever possible. The removes the greatest source of errors remaining in the GPS error budget. Pot-process differential GPS can be obtained from the Cors base stations available from the web or local community Cors base stations.

Real-time differential corrections and post land tied differential corrections should be used at all times.

Attribute Data

Required fields for each individual record in your data: Project Name (Planting area name), Project Unit Name, Unique Number (assigned for each planting group), Name of Crew, date, and time.

Projection and Coordinate System

All digital geospatial data should reference the coordinate system appropriate for its use and it should be documented in the metadata. Digital geospatial data should be referenced to the following coordinate system: WGS 1984, decimal degrees. The steps used to get the data into the proper projections or exported from the GPS unit must be documented in the metadata. The Contractor must specify and document any deviation from these projection standards.

Coordinates of the center of each island must be taken with a GPS unit. This location data must be provided to the BLM in the form of a points shapefile or featureclass. Each island must have a unique number attached.

4.0 DELIVERY

Submit a General Work Plan within three days of contract award. A General Work Plan shall contain the following:

a. Schedule for starting and completing work.
b. General description of operating procedures.
c. Methods to ensure thorough coverage of the planting units.

The Contractor shall give weekly updates on progress to both the COR and CO.

Upon completion of field work, returned plastic seedling tubes (if supplied), and submission of all required data/planting record, Contractor shall give written notice to both the COR and CO via email. GIS data (metadata) should be accurate and include all required information. Failure to give written notice of completion to both the COR and the CO may result in delay of inspection.

The COR will complete a field inspection two (2) weeks after written notification that the work has been completed and all deliverables have been submitted.

The Contractor shall submit an invoice electronically in IPP only upon notification that inspection has been completed and the work has been accepted. Invoices submitted prior to inspection shall be rejected.

GIS/GPS Deliverables

1. Data collected by GPS, digitized by tablet or hands on, must be:
    a. ESRI shapefile, or ESRI geodatabase feature class
        i. Datum: WGS 1984
        ii. Have a defined projection
    b. Digital data will be delivered electronically, email preferred.
    c. Metadata will be attached as a text or XML, to follow meta data standards as defined in link: https://www.fgdc.gov/metadata/csdgm-standard. Metadata should be clear and concise only describing details about the data as defined by the FGDC standards. All steps described in the above link are mandatory and should be completed prior to submission.

5.0 GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED PROPERTY

The government will provide the following items:

1. Vicinity map
2. Project area maps (Georeferenced PDF Avenza Maps)
3. Shrub seedlings

Distribution and Care of Government-Furnished Item

Seedlings and materials will be issued Monday through Friday under arrangements made with the COR. Issues will not occur on Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holidays unless authorized by the COR. The distribution sites will be identified in the pre-work meeting. The Contractor is responsible for the loading and loading of seedlings and materials. A receipt shall be signed by the Contractor and COR each time seedlings and/or material are issued or returned. Delivery of all Government-furnished material to the project area is the responsibility of the contractor.

Shrub Seedlings furnished by the Government

Seedlings will not be issued if inclement weather condition indicate planting cannot be performed on the project site. If inclement weather conditions, which could damage seedlings or interfere with proper planting, occur during the planting until conditions improve. Inclement weather conditions include but are not limited to air temperatures below 25 degrees F. or above 80 degrees Fahrenheit, wind-speeds greater than 20 miles/hour, more than one inch of snow on the ground, and soil frozen over one inch deep. When planting is suspended, any unused seedlings shall be returned to the storage point as directed by the COR or project inspector.

The amount of seedlings issued will be limited to the estimated quantity that will be planted in three (3) days. The amount of materials issued will be limited to estimated quantity to be installed on a unit.

The Contractor shall transport seedlings directly to the unit with no intermediate storage points in fully enclosed pickups with canopies, trailers, or box trucks capable of keeping the internal bag or box less for ten (10) hours. Shrubs shall not be transported inside heated vehicles.

The Contractor shall be responsible for the care, security, and maintenance of all Government-provided material. Contractor shall protect seedlings from loss, destruction, or damage of any kind, including physical injury, freezing, heating, and drying, from the time they are issued until they are properly planted. The Government may charge the Contractor for all the seedlings lost, wasted, or damaged while in the Contractor's care. Return all damaged seedlings and materials unsuitable for its intended use to the location approved by the CO and place in an orderly manner. The Contractor will be charged for all lost damaged, wasted, or stolen seedlings and materials.

Remove from the site any individual(s) involved in the improper care and/or disposal of Government-provided material. The Government may also, by issuance of a written order, suspend the Contractor's right to proceed for improper care and disposal of Government-provided material.

Count and re-bundle/pack all unused and surplus materials and seedlings in a manner in which the count is obviously displayed. Return unused/surplus supplies to the pick-up area where the property was issued during regular business hours. Any unit containing unused materials will not be considered complete.

Dispose of empty seedling boxes/bags/tubes as directed by the COR. This may include flattening the boxes and returning the boxes/bags/tubes to the distribution point.

Return all unused seedlings to the pick-up location. Non-return or late return of unused seedlings may be treated as improper disposal.

Seedlings may be stored overnight on the project area at the discretion of the COR or project inspector. Seedlings shall be stored in a manner that protects them from direct sunlight, frost, and wind and provides for proper air circulation. A Contractor furnished space blanket shall be used to completely cover the stored seedlings.

Materials to be furnished by the Government

The Contractor shall treat the boxes, containers, bags, tubes, and trays with care to prevent the tearing, opening, or breaking containers prematurely. The number of open containers should be minimized as possible upon completion of a unit so materials can be transported efficiently to the next unit, or when left over materials are returned to the pick-up location.

Security of Materials

At its own risk, the Contractor may leave its equipment and Government furnished material at the work site. The Government will not be responsible for the Contractor's equipment and the Government-furnished material if it should be lost, stolen, or damaged. The Contractor will reimburse the Government for all lost, stolen, or damaged Government-furnished material. Seedlings, tubes, bags, and trays that are intentionally hidden, removed or destroyed, may result in termination of this contract.

Upon completion of a unit, all unused Government-furnished material shall be removed from that unit and transported to the next unit or returned to the designated location before payment can be processed for the completed unit. Upon completion of the contract, all government-furnished material shall be returned to the designated location before final payment.

6.0 CONTRACTOR-FURNISHED MATERIAL

The contractor shall furnish all labor, equipment, supervision, transportation, tools, and materials (unless otherwise listed under 5.0 Government-furnished property). This includes, but is not limited to, tools to perform the work, dibble bars, planting spades, shovels, hoes, space blankets, clean water, and incidentals necessary to perform duties.

Addition equipment stipulations

Planting site preparation: The Contractor shall furnish all labor and materials necessary to perform these duties, including but no limited to shovels, hoes, Polaski, McCloud, and other hand tools.

Shrub planting: Planting tools, materials, and containers for carrying shrubs during planting operations shall be of a design normally used in shrub planting work. Planting bags shall prevent seedling roots from drying out. Planting hoes, dibble bars, or shovels shall be capable of opening a hole at least 1.5 times the diameter of a containerized seedling and 1.5 times its length deep, perpendicular to the ground surface, and broken on three (3) sides. Other tools may be needed to

perform work that includes, but is not limited to, containers for carrying shrubs during planting, space blankets, clean water, water containers for dipping seedlings, and incidentals to perform tree planting.

Crew Requirements

The Contractor shall maintain an adequate work force at all times to ensure timely completion of the work. Prior to or at the pre-work conference, the Contractor shall provide a work schedule including the proposed work force, which must be acceptable to the Government.

The Contractor is responsible for the crew(s) knowing the requirement of the contract including, but not limited to, job specifications, and unit location. The Government COR will not act as a supervisor to the crews.

A supervisor shall be provided for each crew and is required to stay with the crew while work activities are in progress. Crews must be kept together at all times working as a unit under control of the supervisor rather than as individuals in separate areas. The supervisor shall be capable of speaking English in a manner to assure good communications with the COR and must be capable of communicating instructions to the crew.

Persons designated by the Contractor as supervisor must actually perform in their capacity. The supervisor must, therefore, effectively direct the crew by:

a. Making periodic inspections of the crew's work.
b. Advising them on proper job specifications.
c. Providing instructions to the crew for correcting such deficiencies.

No more than 12 working crew members are to be supervised by one supervisor and no more than two crews will be permitted to work simultaneously unless authorized by the COR. Working crew members are individuals and do not include those who are doing support functions (e.g. drivers, material-packers).

Crews must be kept together at all times working as a crew under control of a supervisor rather than as individuals in separate areas. Twenty-four hours prior notice must be given to the COR if there is to be a significant change in crew composition or productivity.

REFERENCES

Herriman, Kayla R.; Davis, Anthony S. 2016. Do container volume, site preparation, and field fertilization affect restoration potential of Wyoming big sagebrush? Natural Areas Journal. 36: 194-201

Dunwiddie, Peter; Camp, Pam. 2013. Enhancement of degraded shrub-steppe habitat with an emphasis on potential applicability in eastern Washington. Tech. Note 443. Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District, Spokane, WA.

DEFINITIONS

Accessible - Road access to a unit. Unit will be considered accessible when Government-provided road access is within 1/2 mile of the unit boundary.

CO – Contracting Officer

Containerized Seedlings – Shrub seedlings grown in plastic or Sytrofoam containers in nursery greenhouses. The rooting medium (soil) is planted with shrubs.

COR – Contracting Officers Representative

Crew Supervisor – A person who provides direction and supervisor to crew members. He/she is responsible for work accomplishment and performance in accordance with the requirements of the contract.

Cultural, Special Status, Survey & Manage and/or Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Sites – Locations where special protection measures are required to preserve and protect cultural values or species of plants or animals in designated categories.

Groups – Shrub seedling planting design strategy where seedlings are planted in groups across the planting unit.

Project Area – The area being treated as identified by the Task Order.

Seedling – a young (less than or equal to three-years old) shrub.

Seedling (Stock) Type – The identifying characteristics of a seedling lot including species, seed zone, elevation, whether the seedlings are containerized or bare root, and the type of bare root seedling.

Unit – Refers to discrete areas to be treated within planting areas designated on project maps.

Vegetation – All grasses, forbs, brush, ferns, and other herbaceous (non-woody) plants.

Woody Vegetation – All brush species.