BLM Seeking Comments on Herbicide Use on Public Lands in the Coos Bay District

North Bend, Ore. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking comments on herbicide use on BLM lands in the Coos Bay District as one of several tools to control noxious weeds and invasive vegetation to achieve landscape health objectives. Comments will be accepted until July 11, 2011.

Seeking public comments is the first step in the District’s efforts to analyze the environmental effects of using 14 herbicides in an environmental assessment (EA) titled, Environmental Assessment for Vegetation Treatments using Herbicides on BLM Lands in the Coos Bay District. Used in combination with other management practices, herbicide treatments can slow the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants, which in turn helps to restore ecosystem health and watershed functions.

Currently, the Coos Bay District uses only four herbicides approved for use on BLM lands in Oregon. Being able to use 10 additional herbicides will give the District access to a broad array of herbicides that are more target-specific and effective than the four herbicides it is currently utilizing. For example, the District will be able use herbicides to reduce European beachgrass to maintain western snowy plover habitat and treat tanoak infected with the pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death.

Noxious and other weeds and invasive plants infest millions of acres in Oregon and are spreading at a rate of 10 to 15 percent per year. To address this issue, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently completed a Vegetation Treatment Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) that addressed the use of up to 14 herbicides in western Oregon. These herbicides cannot be applied aerially in western Oregon, and may not be used for timber or livestock forage production. However, because the ROD covered herbicide use on BLM lands throughout Oregon, specific projects must still undergo site-specific analysis and decision making at the district level.
The Coos Bay District manages about 320,000 acres of public lands in southwest Oregon, of which about 50,000 acres are infested with weeds and invasive vegetation. The District treats approximately 1,500 of these acres each year.

The BLM will be seeking public comments on this planning effort throughout the scoping period, which begins on June 9 and runs through July 11, 2011. EAs are also being prepared by the eight other BLM Districts in the state as part of their planning process for the use of herbicides. While these EAs will be done concurrently, each will be District-specific. Comments on the Coos Bay District EA can be submitted by mail to: Jeanne Standley, District Weed/Invasive Plant Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Coos Bay District Office, 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, Oregon, 97459; by email to OR_CoosBay_Mail@blm.gov; by facsimile to (541) 751-4303; or in person at the Coos Bay District BLM office.

About the BLM: The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about $1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.

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