

# NEWS Release BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

28910 Hwy 20 West • Hines, Oregon 97738 • <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns>

Contact: Tara Martinak (541) 573-4400 • Release No. OR-BU-12-14 • June 14, 2012

## Claw Creek Project to maintain jobs, protect resources

*Hines, Ore.* – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Burns District and partners announce full funding to implement the Claw Creek Stewardship Project within the Three Rivers Resource Area in Harney County. The project intends to restore about 900 acres of forest and sagebrush communities in the Dry Mountain area north of the town of Riley and west of U.S. Forest Service Road 41. The restoration work will be offered through a stewardship contract to local businesses for bidding later this summer.

This project is the result of a collaborative effort led by the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and Oregon Solutions to increase employment opportunities in eastern Oregon – especially those related to utilization of juniper by-products from treatments on federal lands. In response to an AOC inquiry, Harney County suggested expanding the use of stewardship contracts as a tool to help local businesses acquire juniper cuts as a part of rangeland restoration on Public Land.

Harney County Judge Steve Grasty said, “Stewardship contracting is a win-win situation. Finding a use for all the wood fibers means jobs are provided in the local community, the amount of wood burned in the forest is reduced, and treatment costs to the taxpayer are less.”

“The suppression of fire over the last hundred years contributed to the development of dense forests,” said BLM Burns District Manager Brendan Cain. “We have to reduce the number of trees across the forests so the threat of catastrophic fire will be minimized.” In addition, pine trees and western juniper have expanded into adjacent grassland and sagebrush communities, impacting big game winter range and Sage Grouse habitat.

With help from the Harney Soil and Water Conservation District and Business Oregon, who provided design and project layout assistance, the Claw Creek Stewardship Project is now shovel ready and work should begin this fall and could last through 2015.

“One of the main benefits of a stewardship contract is that it allows for the costs of removal of small trees and slash and the cost of building fences or other service work to be exchanged for the merchantable trees on a value to value basis,” said Cain. “The Claw Creek project is a great example of partners working together to do the best thing for the community and the land we live on.”

To implement more projects like Claw Creek on a larger scale, Federal, State, local, private and non-profit parties need to work together to agree on restoration practices, standards, and monitoring. The BLM Burns District is currently collaborating with a number of local partners, to move ahead with additional stewardship projects. For more information on the Claw Creek Project or stewardship contracting, please contact the Burns District Office at (541) 573-4400.

- MORE -

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