

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Burns District is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the impacts of herbicide treatments that will be used to slow the spread of noxious and other weeds and invasive plants. Herbicides are one of several tools used by the District to control noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation to achieve landscape health objectives. The EA will update and replace the District's 1998 vegetation management EA, and will allow the District to use 17 herbicides in its vegetation treatment programs. The EA is scheduled to be completed in spring 2012.

The EA will tier to the recently completed *Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* and Record of Decision (ROD), which addressed the use of up to 17 herbicides in Oregon. Under the ROD, these herbicides can be applied aerially, but may not be used for commercial timber enhancement or livestock forage production. Because the ROD was a programmatic decision, however, specific projects must still undergo site-specific analysis and decision-making at the field level.

The EA will identify and analyze the site-specific effects of alternative actions for treating noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation to restore ecosystem health in the Burns District. In addition to evaluating the site-specific effects of using herbicides, the EA will also evaluate the site-specific effects of other methods of land rehabilitation, including use of prescribed fire, mechanical, manual, and biological weed and invasive plant treatments to meet resource objectives.

The Burns District manages approximately 3.7 million acres of public lands in Oregon, of which about 30,000 acres are infested with noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation. The District treats approximately 17,000 acres of noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation each year. Of those, about 2,000 acres are treated with herbicides and the remaining 15,000 acres are treated using non-herbicide methods, including manual, mechanical, and biological (insects and livestock) control methods, and fire for resource objectives.

Currently, the Burns District uses only four herbicides approved for use in Oregon. Being able to use 13 new, 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. Used in combination with other management practices, herbicide treatments can slow the spread of noxious and other weeds and invasive plants, which in turn helps to restore ecosystem health and watershed functions.



In addition to using the 17 herbicides evaluated in the EA, the District may be allowed to use new chemicals that are developed in the future. These herbicides could only be used if they are: (1) registered for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; (2) used for and at application rates specified on the label directions; and (3) determined to be safe to humans and the environment based on a toxicological and environmental impacts analysis of the herbicides by the BLM.

Public scoping for the EA planning process will occur from July 15 to August 15, 2011. During this time, a news release will be distributed to the media notifying the general public of the planning and scoping process. Environmental Assessments are also being prepared by the eight other BLM Districts in the state as part of their planning processes for the use of herbicides. While these EAs will be done concurrently, each will be District-specific.

The BLM is seeking public scoping comments on this planning effort throughout the scoping period that begins on July 15 and runs through August 15, 2011. Comments can be submitted by mail to: Lesley Richman, District Weed/Invasive Plant Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 99738; by electronic mail (email) to OR_Burns_Mail@blm.gov; by facsimile to (541) 573-4411; or in person at the Burns District BLM office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 99738.

A summary of the proposal and comment forms will be provided if requested (via mail or email) and is available at the BLM Burns District office for the public to learn more about the proposal and to submit written comments.

Written comments should be received by August 15, 2011, to ensure consideration. The public will also have the opportunity to comment on the proposal during public comment periods associated with the Draft EA, which should be available in spring 2012. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

