

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT OR-030-2011-017
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BLM to Analyze Effects of Herbicide Use on Public Lands in the Vale District-Scoping Reopened

Vale, Oregon. 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 17 herbicides in Oregon. These herbicides can be applied aerially in eastern Oregon, but may not be used for commercial timber enhancement or livestock forage production. However, because the ROD was a programmatic decision, specific projects must still undergo site-specific analysis and decision-making at the field level. The Vale District, BLM is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the impacts of herbicide treatments that will be used to slow the spread of noxious weeds and other weeds and invasive plants.

Scoping for the EA was initiated in early June 2011 with public notices published in a number of papers distributed within the Vale District. In addition, letters were sent to a number of individuals and groups who are known to be interested in the Vale District projects of this nature. The mailing list used for the scoping letter for the Vale District may have under represented the diversity of the public who may be interested in the proposed BLM vegetation management actions. As a result, we have chosen to reopen the scoping period for Vale District's effort to complete this EA. The EA is titled, *Environmental Assessment for Vegetation Treatments using Herbicides on BLM Lands, Vale District, Oregon*, which will focus on the effects of using 17 herbicides authorized in the ROD.

The Vale District manages about 5.1 million acres of public lands in Oregon, of which about 2.7 million acres are infested with noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation including cheatgrass and invasive juniper. The District treats approximately 7,500 acres of noxious and other weeds and invasive vegetation each year. Of those, about 5,500 acres are treated with herbicides and the remaining 2,000 acres are treated using non-herbicide methods, including manual, mechanical, and biological (insects and livestock) control methods, and fire for resource objectives. Individual fuels and restoration treatments larger than 1000 acres such as projects involving the control and restoration of cheatgrass dominated lands and areas of juniper encroachment will not be covered under this EA, and will require separate site specific

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analysis.

Currently, the Vale District uses only four herbicides approved for use in Oregon. Being able to use 13 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.

The BLM will be seeking public comments on this planning effort throughout the scoping period, which begins on September 12, 2011 and runs through October 13, 2011. Environmental Assessments 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 Vale District EA can be submitted by mail to: Erin McConnell, District Weed/Invasive Plant Coordinator, Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon 97918;** by electronic mail (email) to OR_Vale_Mail@blm.gov; by facsimile to (541) 473-6213 or in person at the Vale District BLM office.

Written comments should be received by October 13, 2011, to ensure consideration. The public will also have the opportunity to comment on the proposal during the public comment period associated with the Draft EA, which should be available in early 2012.

Additional information about the BLM Vale District can be found by visiting the district website at www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale.

-BLM-

About the BLM: The BLM manages more land – more than 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface 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, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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