



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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APR 15 2008

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION ON PUBLIC LANDS DESIGNATED PART OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM

To Whom It May Concern:

In the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) efforts to inform affected or interested public about proposed actions, specific emergencies, or unauthorized activities occurring within BLM Wilderness areas, the following information is provided about an emergency invasive weed issue which occurred on public lands administered by the Needles Field Office (NFO). If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Mona Daniels at 760-326-7066.

WILDERNESS AREA: Kelso Dunes National Wilderness Area

In January 2008, while the National Park Service (NPS) was mapping Sahara Mustard, an invasive weed and catalyst for desert wild fire, a dense population of plants were discovered. This population is located on the east side of the Bristol Mountains, south of the Union Pacific railroad track, near the BLM and NPS boundary and within the Kelso Dunes Wilderness. In an effort to stop the spread of the Sahara Mustard, inside the NPS Mojave National Preserve, nine volunteers and Preserve staff on March 11, 2008 harvested and bagged several thousand mature plants within the Kelso Dunes Wilderness.

During the service project within wilderness, approximately 80 bags were left behind due to their weight and distance (500 m) from a non-wilderness road-access point. It is vital that retrieval of the bags occur before the plastic deteriorates in the sun; damage to the plastic could ultimately release an estimated 25 million viable seeds into the environment. The NPS proposes to retrieve the bags in the most environmentally benign manner.

Proposed Action:

After the completion of the Minimum Tool analysis, it was determined that the NPS will utilize the following measures and constraints:

A single stake-bed truck fitted with sidewalls truck will access the Kelso Dunes Wilderness by following the Union Pacific (UP) access road to a break in the line of Athol trees near the bag site. From there it is about 50 m across NPS-managed wilderness to reach the (accessible) Kelso Wash at the BLM-NPS boundary. The truck will then drive down the Kelso Wash about 600 m through BLM-managed wilderness to reach the confluence with the Devils Playground Wash. At that point, the truck will turn south, driving through the Devils Playground Wash, to the bag-site, a distance of about 500 m.

For clarification within the remainder of the document:

The “bag site” will refer to a radius of 30 meters surrounding the trash bags, and the “work site” will refer to a 30 meter perimeter around the vehicle, the bag site and the route between each site.

Special Provisions

The bags are outside the limits of the wash, therefore, 2-3 NPS staff on no more than two trips will carry the bags from the collection point to the truck, which will remain in the wash.

- Any ripped or damaged bag will be immediately re-bagged on site before movement to the vehicle.
- The vehicle bed will be lined with plastic sheeting to prevent the escape of “alien seed” into the environment.
- The bags will be tarped and tied to prevent any bag from falling off the vehicle during transportation.

The NPS immediately after exiting the Wilderness will perform trail restoration consisting of raking and minimal vertical mulching from the edge of wilderness to the distance of “line-of-sight” or not less than ¼ mile

Monitoring and reporting requirements:

- During the project, a NPS employee qualified in tortoise monitoring will accompany the driver of the vehicle on the trip. The monitor, on foot, will be responsible for leading the vehicle into the bag site observing for tortoise movement within the wash zone. The monitor will also be responsible for checking around the vehicle prior to departing the area.
- Throughout the next five years, the NPS will be responsible for monitoring the bag site monthly over multiple germination cycles.
- Each germination season, the NPS will monitor and hand harvest any germination of Sahara Mustard, which occurs within the bag site, and work site prior to bloom-set. **No bags** are to be left behind during this procedure.

In addition:

- National Park Service will adhere to the requirements of the Wilderness Act, and management guidelines for wilderness preservation and management within all National Wilderness Areas.
- All personnel involved in this project will receive a briefing prior to undertaking the project.

- All management activities within wilderness will employ minimum impact tactics.

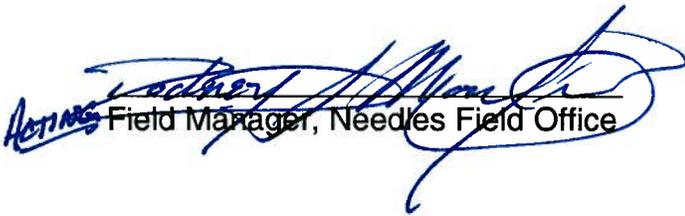
Once the project is completed, the Needles Field Office will consider if any further reclamation efforts are required. If the determination that further actions are required then the NFO will disclose any such planning through a future Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA).

NPS will be held responsible for obtaining formal BLM approval by the authorized officer prior to any future projects.

ADVISORY:

This notice is for disclosure purposes. Specific comments are not required; should the NFO propose further action your comments are required.

Your questions are welcome concerning this or any other actions reviewed by the NFO. Should you have any questions regarding this NOA please contact the Needles Field Office at 760-326-7000 (email: ca690@ca.blm.gov).


Dennis A. Johnson
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Date

RETRIEVAL OF SAHARA MUSTARD

