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## BLM BATTLE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT OFFICE RMP PLANNING FACT SHEET *Noxious Weeds, Invasive & Non-native species*

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The BLM Battle Mountain District Office (BMDO) is revising the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the BMDO planning area. The BMDO RMP will provide detailed information about the current state of resources on public lands within the planning area, and set forth a plan of action for managing those resources for the next twenty or so years under the BLM's dual mandate of *multiple use* and *sustained yield*.

### CONTROLLING NOXIOUS WEEDS, INVASIVE & NON-NATIVE SPECIES IN THE PLANNING AREA

The purpose of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) vegetation treatment program is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires by reducing hazardous fuels, to restore fire-damage lands, and to improve ecosystem health by controlling weeds and non-native species, manipulating vegetation to benefit fish and wildlife habitat, improve riparian and wetland areas and improve water quality for priority watersheds (USDI FES 2007).

Noxious weeds and invasive annual grass species out-compete native vegetation, primarily in disturbed areas, for resources through advantageous physiological characteristics. Weeds threaten to degrade public lands in Nevada by spreading into and infesting sensitive riparian ecosystems, important rangelands, wildfire scars and developed lands maintained as rights of way and recreational areas. Unbalanced biodiversity, a weakened ecosystem, a higher propensity for soil erosion, increased frequency



Tonopah Bootstraps crew controlling Scotch thistle infestation. Photo: M. Vermeys

of wildfires and limited food stuff resources for wildlife, both terrestrial and aquatic, are threats caused by noxious weed infestations on the BMDO. Weeds on private agricultural lands have the potential to spread onto federal lands and vice versa.

Preventing the introduction of noxious weeds and invasive species is the first line of defense against noxious weed establishment and spread, usually associated with cultural control practices. The BMDO applies Integrated Weed Management (IWM) principles and Early Detection/Rapid Response strategies to manage undesirable ecological conditions caused by noxious weed infestations.

IWM is the use of one, or a combination of, control methods to more effectively control noxious weeds.



IWM methods include the use of herbicide, cultural practices, physical control and biological agents. Following control work, post-treatment monitoring is conducted to determine which treatments are working on which species.

Dedicated and well defined Early Detection/Rapid Response survey efforts are cost effective and increase the likelihood that noxious weeds are controlled while populations are still manageable in size. Once infestations are widely established or left unchecked, treatments turn more to containment efforts as control costs increase.

The BMDO IWM Program concentrates noxious weed surveys in areas of known disturbance, areas most likely to be disturbed by human related factors or sensitive natural areas, high-risk areas (riparian/wetland), high-resource value habitat (sage grouse/sensitive species), disturbed areas (roadsides/range) and heavy public use areas (recreation sites). Healthy or undisturbed ecosystems, while extremely fragile, have a stronger natural resistance and better “built in mechanisms” to out-compete potential weed infestations.

Weed inventory, reporting and/or mapping is conducted by BMDO resource specialists in the course of the daily work, by community partners or by Bootstraps crew members, a University of Nevada Reno Cooperative Extension program developed specifically to conduct weed treatments and inventory throughout the BMDO.

**Indicators:** Of the approximately 10.5 million acres within the BMDO boundaries, noxious weed surveys have been conducted on 2 million acres. Of the 2 million acres surveyed, it is estimated that the BMDO has 246,000 acres of noxious weed infestation.

Cheatgrass is not normally surveyed for because it is so wide spread and established in the range. At this time, the best estimate is that cheatgrass infests 50%, or 5.2 million acres, of the BMDO.

**Current conditions:** Of the 10.5 million acres within the BMDO, control has been conducted on approximately 15,000 acres.

**Forecast:** Many variables influence the reduction or the increased rate of spread of noxious weeds and invasive, non-native species. Land management practices, including general soil disturbing activities, wildland fires, the use of community partners, public education, the use and availability of effective treatment methods and implementing the best science available, all influence noxious weed populations.

The use of newly approved chemical active ingredients specifically targeting non-native annual grasses could be effective in reducing large infestations. The use of biological control agents has the potential to have less environmental impacts and are cost effective control methods.

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**BMDO Planning Webpage:**

[www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle\\_mountain\\_field/blm\\_information/rmp.com](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field/blm_information/rmp.com)