

Brian Amme
Project Manager, National Vegetation EIS
BLM Nevada State Office
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, NV 89520-0006

Dear Brian Amme,

The following comments are provided for the Draft Programmatic EIS Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands In 17 Western States and Draft Programmatic ER Vegetation Treatments on BLM Lands In 17 Western States <http://www.blm.gov/nhp/spotlight/VegEIS/>

Our background

1 The Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters is a multicultural membership organization in CA, OR, and WA. We are governed by a board of directors and have a large membership, which consists of mainly forest workers and NTFP harvesters.

Our Mission Statement

The Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters is a multicultural organization promoting social, environmental, and economic justice. We exist to:

- share and provide information and education;
- encourage participation in decision-making processes that affect our lives;
- be mutually supportive and respectful of forest workers' and harvesters' cultures, communities, and individuals, and foster communication among all;
- promote the understanding of each others' struggles and issues throughout the Pacific West.

Comments:

2 1) The Draft PEIS and PER inadequately address impacts to thousands of tribal and nontribal people who gather nontimber forest products (NTFP) (aka Special Forest Products) in the region for commercial, subsistence, and recreational purposes. This is true for both Native American tribal users and nontribal rural and urban users. Nontimber forest products occurring in these areas include hundreds of species (processed into thousands of products), including native seeds, edible foods, medicinal plants, decorative products and plants harvested for saps, resins, and fragrances. Both the cultural and economic value of these products in the areas covered by the Draft PEIS is known to be highly significant to individuals and communities. They are significant culturally and economically for Native American or cultural harvesters, subsistence harvesters, full-time harvesters and businesses, as well as for the occasional harvester. However, the Draft PEIS does not adequately discuss these values, nor does it include a sufficient discussion of the impacts of the proposed

vegetation treatment policy on either the economic or cultural values of NTFP harvesting.

3) It is unclear to what extent the Bureau of Land Management has met National Environmental Policy Act scoping requirements for soliciting input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including multicultural nontimber forest product harvesters and buyers. As we have witnessed before, failure to include NTFP harvesters and buyers is likely to result in forest management decisions that are socially inequitable, difficult and costly to enforce, and undermine stewardship practices.

4) The lack of participation in public comment by NTFP harvesters and forest workers should not be construed as their lack of existence or concern over the impacts of management activities, such as herbicide spraying, on their livelihoods and health. The spirit of NEPA scoping and other government requirements for public participation demands that the agency use the appropriate methods for ensuring broad-based participation. This process must include NTFP harvesters and forest workers.

5) Herbicide spraying will likely have an adverse impact on minorities and economically disadvantaged populations and thus is subject to Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice. The current Draft PEIS does not include an environmental justice analysis, and such an analysis needs to be included in the final PEIS. That environmental justice analysis must include a discussion of the mitigation measures that will need to be implemented to address any adverse impacts on minorities or economically disadvantaged populations.

6) The ecological and biological assessments for the Draft PEIS do not include a discussion of the impacts of spraying herbicides on nontimber forest product productivity. Such a discussion requires developing adequate inventories of species being harvested. The agency must consider management alternatives that could be taken to simultaneously achieve the goals for vegetation management with herbicides and the sustainability of harvesting cultures, traditions, and economies.

7) The current Draft PEIS does not include an assessment of whether the proposed actions comply with the Small Business Regulatory Fairness Act, including such provisions as informing the Chief Counsel for the Small Business Administration of the potential impacts of the decision on existing and future nontimber forest product small businesses. Such an assessment needs to be included in the final PEIS.

8) In reviewing the reference section, only two references for nontimber forest products are listed, neither of which pertain specifically to public lands in the western United States. This suggests the agency has neglected to review the current and historical scholarly literature regarding nontimber forest products.

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7) Forest workers and NTFP harvesters work and harvest in forests where herbicides will be applied. These workers/harvesters will be affected by direct exposure or by entering sprayed areas after applications. We have witnessed in the case of Basket Weavers who process their materials by hand and through their mouths that these chemicals contribute to a high rate of cancer. What protections are you going to put in place for these harvesters and workers? Again we refer to Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. This environmental justice analysis must be included in the final EIS.

Please keep us informed of the steps that you will take to incorporate these issues into the final DPEIS and of any opportunities to participate further in the process.

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