

Brian Amme  
EIS Project Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
Nevada State Office  
P. O. Box 12000  
Reno, Nevada 89520-0006

February 10, 2006

EMC0645

Re: Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Draft Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic EIS (DEIS) and Draft Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report (PER).

Dear Mr. Amme:

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I am hereby submitting comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Programmatic Environmental Report for 17 Western States (DEIS and PER) on my own behalf, and on behalf of Gaia Vision, and Canaries Who Sing.

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I would also like to incorporate by reference the following comments submitted by:

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Mark Salvo for Sagebrush Sea Campaign, Caroline Cox Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, Mary O'Brien, Lesley Adams for Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, Francis Eatherington for Umpqua Watershed, Inc., Pete Harrison for California for Alternatives to Toxics, Doug Heiken for Oregon Natural Resources Council, Sam Hitt for Wild Watershed, Andy Kerr for the Larch Company, Bill Marlett for Oregon Natural Desert Association, Michael J. Painter for Californians for Western Wilderness, Vivian Parker for California Indian Basketweavers Association, Lisa Rohde for Siskiyou Project, Nicole Rosmarino for Forest Guardians, Randi Spivak for American Lands Alliance: Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, Doug Troutman, Peter Richardson, Dave Robinson for Concerned Friends of Ferry County, Pat Rasmussen for World Temperate Rainforest Network, Dave Willis for Soda Mountain Wilderness Council; and Karen Coulter for Blue Mountain Biodiversity Project.

4

I was amazed to find that the comments I wrote to the BLM sixteen years ago regarding the proposed treatment of symptoms (invasive species) with herbicides on 13 Western States were still germane! Since that EIS, the BLM has done nothing in the "prevention" department, and has added more chemicals and more acreage to the proposal. This only proves BLM's utter failure to grasp what is important here: prevention, passive and active restoration, native plants and seeds are the keys to dealing with invasive plants - NOT HERBICIDE USE! Here are the comments I submitted in 1990:

\*\*\*\*\*RESUBMITTED\*\*\*\*\*

Wyoming State Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
c/o Jim Melton, Team Leader  
1701 East "E" Street  
Casper, WY 82601

May 22, 1990

**Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on  
Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States**

Submitted by Jan Wroncy  
On my own behalf and for  
Global Eyes, Oregon Tilth, and  
Residents of Oregon Against  
Deadly Sprays and Smoke

see comment #4

I am submitting the following comments in time to be considered in the written responses to specific comments in the Final EIS by the May 22 deadline which was extended for comments from Utah, as per the advise I received from the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP).

I would also like to include by reference the excellent comments submitted to the Bureau of Land Management by Norma Grier for NCAP, dated May 21, 1990. The issues addressed in the NCAP comments are germane to our concerns. I concur with NCAP's observation that risk assessment appears a lot like premeditated murder, that qualitative analysis would provide a better basis for decision making, and with NCAP's request that the BLM reexamine their process, offer an alternative that addresses the causes of vegetation problems, recirculate a Draft EIS that analyzes the suggested alternative, and take more seriously the concerns of the public.

Additionally, I would like to offer the following comments regarding many other issues:

As stated in the NCAP comments, there needs to be "an alternative that looks at how to prevent vegetation problems by looking at the causes of those problems (including management decisions)..." (perhaps this could be called Natural Prevention Alternative). There also needs to be an alternative that uses neither fire nor pesticides (the No Fire/No Pesticides Alternative) to provide a reasonable range of options. In fact if a No Fire/No Pesticide Alternative had been combined with a Natural Prevention Alternative the BLM would more easily gain approval from environmentally-conscious individuals and groups.

The Draft EIS does not consider obtaining informed consent from the members of the public who are assumed to be likely to receive some amount of exposure from pesticides, by-products, contaminants, pyrolytic or phytolytic products, petroleum distillates, inerts, surfactants, smoke, fire ignitors and/or fire retardants that may be used in the vegetation management program. First of all there is not complete information given as to the full formulations of the pesticides, what their inerts are, what their breakdown products are, their pyrolytic or phytolytic products, what surfactants, spreader-stickers, activators or contaminants are in them, much less any health, environmental fate or impact information about them. The full formulations of the pesticides are usually not even tested; only the inert ingredients. How can the BLM ever hope to get informed consent without providing the "information" to the public being asked to give their consent. To expose people to chemicals and/or smoke without their explicit prior informed consent is, many of us would argue, in fact a criminal act, not becoming of a public agency.

The Bureau of Land Management may be unaware of how much pesticides drift, leach, vaporize, generally move about, and persist, but the BLM certainly can not deny that the smoke (and any additional chemicals in it) created by the intentionally set fires on BLM lands does in fact travel off the site to other properties not belonging to the BLM. The members of the public, individually, need to be asked whether they will give their informed consent to such exposure and to the trespass onto their land.

The public does not have to accept risk from pesticide and/or smoke exposure, on or near BLM lands. The public has the right to enjoy the use of public lands without being forced to accept unnatural risk from intentionally set fires and/or human-made chemicals. The land the BLM is managing does in fact belong to the public, the whole public, including people who choose not to breathe smoke or to ingest, absorb, or otherwise take into their bodies chemicals of known or suspected toxicity. One millimeter or less off the BLM lands, the BLM had no authority whatsoever to apply any chemical or smoke to the people or properties in the path of the smoke or chemicals. The BLM never has, in any case, permission to degrade, or pollute the lands, airsheds or watersheds of the United States. Such actions would not be in the best interest of the public or of the Earth.

Many people go to great lengths to protect their health and their land from exposure to chemicals and/or smoke. They have the right to choose to do so.

It is increasingly recognized by the medical community that there are a rapidly growing number of chemically and smoke sensitive people. Many people who have developed chemical and/or smoke sensitivities have developed them because of non-consensual exposure to chemicals and/or smoke. These sensitivities can have long lasting, and even life threatening consequences. They are often partially or completely debilitating. Sensitivities to chemicals and/or to smoke are also difficult and expensive to diagnose, for only a relatively few doctors know how to recognize the evidence of these types of sensitivities. A conservative estimate (recognizing that the known sensitive people probably represent only the tip of the iceberg) is 15% of all Americans. This percentage is rapidly growing at a pace understandably related to the increase in types of human-made chemicals, and the level of contamination of the these chemicals in the environment.

Some of the known, alarming responses of the human (and other non-human creatures) to chemicals in the environment entering their bodies is cancer, leukemia, heart disease, neurological damage, reproductive effects, mutations, sterility, and immune suppression to name but a few. One of the most obvious ways to avoid these effects is to avoid the chemicals. This is the standard medical advise given. Many people therefore do everything within their power to avoid chemicals and smoke. They try to breathe clean air, drink clean water and eat clean, non-chemically contaminated food. By making these types of choices for themselves and for their families, they also feel they are contributing to the well-being of the planet by not asking for contaminating processes to be used or allowed.

Great numbers of people have turned to organic non-chemical growing techniques in growing their own food. The number of organic growers producing clean food is on the rise and still not able to catch up with the demand for organically grown food. These organic farmers and gardeners work extremely hard to keep chemicals and smoke off their land, out of their water and air, and off their crops. No one, especially a public agency has the right to contaminate these peoples land, air, water or food. Their bodies are also to be kept sacred if they so choose. BLM can not legally or morally violate these peoples rights to choice to not use chemicals, or fire, and/or their choice to not be exposed to chemicals or smoke.

The omission of an alternative which would have avoided non-consensual exposure of people and properties to smoke and/or to chemicals was a serious flaw of the Draft EIS indeed.

To overgraze public lands in the name of private profit is an insult, but to then justify the use of toxic chemicals and fire to "correct" the poor condition of the land caused by overgrazing is outright assault on the owners of this land (the public) and on the environment itself as well. Therefore the omission of the alternative which would have examined the causes of the problem in the first place was a grave flaw of the Draft EIS for sure.

The two flaws together make the Draft EIS near terminal!

So far I have addressed human health and rights mostly, however, the standing of the Earth, and all its creatures and forms needs also to be considered. For many of us, our position on Earth is perceived to be as a part of Earth, not apart from Earth. We do not feel it is necessary to manipulate the environment or ecosystems to sustain meaningful human life on this planet. In fact we feel the opposite it not only desirable but also necessary. We feel the Earth will survive human life only if humans stop manipulating and contaminating the Earth. When humans consciously decide to or recklessly cause damage to the environment, the Earth's creatures or ecosystems, great, long lasting harm is done. Sometimes this harm is irreversible. When a species is forced to extinction, there will never be, so far as we know, another appearance of that species. When humans have caused that species to go extinct, we have done harm to the Earth and to ourselves. Manipulating or contaminating the environment are acts which easily can carry just such consequences.

Biodiversity is one of the Earth's greatest resources, not to be altered or destroyed by humankind. Even if humans can find no more noble reason to protect biodiversity than that it is necessary for human life also, then the Earth can still survive our presence. But if humans do not protect biodiversity from human alteration or destruction, humans too will be in danger of perishing.

Another consequence of manipulating or contaminating the environment is that we humans can never restore it perfectly to its pristine condition. We can never know all the infinite pieces or the infinite relationships involved in an ecosystem, therefore we can never re-create that which we can easily destroy. And we can not afford to pay for our feeble attempts to re-create an ecosystem, much less a whole Earth. Therefore we must exercise great care and great restraint when caring for a portion of the Earth. To steward the Earth is to protect it from harm, and in recent times the greatest harm comes from humans, therefore stewards of the Earth (or portion thereof, such as the Bureau of Land Management has managership of) must protect the Earth from human harm.

We humans have no right to pollute or destroy the Earth or any part thereof (air, water, land, biodiversity), we only have the responsibility to protect the Earth and all its resources which belong to all its creature, only one of which is the human race.

When I read on page Exec-7 that "Alternative 5 has the lowest cost per acre of any alternative, but it also offers no new employment opportunities" (couched in tones of remorse), I became justifiably nervous about the possibility that there are hidden goals involved in this BLM Vegetation Treatment program. Is the unstated goal of this program to create new jobs? If the program will cause environmental damage and then has to "mitigate" the damages, it will also create new jobs. If the program can also cause human health effects, the medical community will flourish too. If a good proportion of the medical effects are fatal, the morticians will thrive nicely too. If species can be forced into extinction, the scientists will surely have to study the problem. If the water is contaminated, someone will have to devise a way to decontaminate it. Is the hidden goal to increase jobs and economic prosperity? If it is, no wonder it is not stated. To propose activities that would cause suffering to the Earth's creatures, human or non-human, to cause the destruction of the Earth's forms, to cause permanent, irreversible damage all in the name of short term (human) economic gain would surely appear suspect, if not criminal, in the light of day.

I would suggest that the BLM's line of thinking needs to be reveal, and if that seems to incriminating, perhaps the BLM's line of thinking needs to be changed. Much improvement would be gained if the name of the Bureau of Land Management were to be changed to the Bureau of Land Stewardship - for management implies manipulation more than protection and carries with it the attitude of right to manipulate rather than responsibility to protect.

In friendship with the Earth,

Jan Wroncy,  
Global Eyes, Oregon Tilth,  
and ROADS2  
Post Office Box 1101  
Eugene, Oregon 97440

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In response to an article in Audubon regarding weeds (invasive species) in which Ted Williams belittled my efforts to oppose use of herbicides in treating invasive species on public land, I wrote a letter to the editor which was never published. I present it here because it contains important cautions regarding herbicides and their potential to harm animals (including humans) as well as plants:

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Letter to the Editor, Audubon

March 13, 1997

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In Ted Williams article "Killer Weeds" April 1997, Williams says "Meanwhile, the environmental community needs to get practical, do its homework, learn what's really at stake, weigh the trade-offs."

I submit it is Williams who needs to follow his own advice.

Here is just one reason why herbicides should not be used to solve the weed problem on public lands.

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I mentioned to Mr. Williams that I have an inherited disorder called porphyria which has both severe acute and chronic symptoms brought on by exposure to toxic chemicals such as herbicides. I also mentioned that animals can have porphyria too.

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In the American Chemical Society Symposium Series titled Porphyric Pesticides: Chemistry, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutical Applications published in 1994 the following information was provided in Chapter 1: Porphyrin Biosynthesis as a Tool in Pest Management by Stephen O. Duke and Constantin A. Rebeiz:

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The authors explain that the synthesis of heme in animals is basically the same as the synthesis of chlorophyll in plants through the beginning steps in the pathways. Furthermore, "[T]he discovery of porphyric insecticides was built upon the discovery and development of photodynamic herbicides..." and that the "structure-function photodynamic herbicidal studies have led to the assembly of two databases of commercially available compounds with potential photodynamic herbicidal properties." The article goes on to say that "322 putative photodynamic herbicide modulators" were found, and of them 154 had "excellent photodynamic herbicidal properties". Of the 154 herbicides "[T]hirty-six compounds belonging to ten different chemical families were effective (> 70% mortality) against at least one insect species". And how do the insects die? The authors of this scientific article describe it like this...the herbicide-treated larvae upon exposure to light, "underwent violent convulsions and vomiting, followed by death within 20-40 s [seconds]".

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The scientific community designing these herbicides and other pesticides have known since the 1940's that pesticides affect the porphyrin pathway. Yet they go on to make and promote their widespread use, knowing full well that the consequence to humans, to animals, plants and ecosystems is grave.

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The appeals I have filed on my own behalf and on behalf of various groups such as Gaia Vision, and Canaries Who Sing were filed in order to prevent such harm to wildlife, ecosystems, and people. I do not need to apologize for attempting to stop public land managers from releasing potent biocides into the environment.

Jan Wroncy

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I fullheartedly agree with the Citizens' Prevention and Restoration Alternative/Limited Herbicides section of Wild Watershed's comments, that if herbicides were going to be used,

*Herbicides could be considered for use only under the following conditions:*

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1. *When all ingredients in the formulation (including inert ingredients) are publicly disclosed and analyzed for their impacts to human health, wildlife and water quality;*
2. *There is notification to the public through signs, newspaper announcements and other means;*
3. *When surface and ground water samples are collected and analyzed for herbicides and their breakdown products;*
4. *When an up-to-date publicly accessible database is kept to record the formulation of herbicide, amount applied, date, time and weather conditions during application;*
5. *Vegetation cannot be burned the same year it was treated with herbicides; and*
6. *Herbicide treatments are not permitted during the bird nesting season of bird species found through site-specific surveys of the application area.*

as a bare-minimum starting point for consideration of use of herbicides. There are many reasons why the "inert" ingredients (or other ingredients in the formulations) need to be disclosed.

13 Here is just one important reason why: The biosynthesis of Heme in animals is basically the same as the biosynthesis of chlorophyll in plants through the first 6 enzymatic steps up to the Protoporphyrin IX step. Heme undergoes another process which inserts an iron ion in the Protoporphyrin IX to make heme, while magnesium is inserted in the Protoporphyrin IX to make a Chlorophyll molecule.. Many herbicidal active ingredients and many "inert" ingredients interfere with the enzyme function in the of one or more of the enzyme processes in the production of Protoporphyrin IX which is common to both plants and to animals. Therefore herbicides and their formulations can, and do cause harm to animals and humans.

14 The photo-bleaching or peroxidizing herbicides, including the diphenyl ethers, uracils, bromacil, diuron, and others can interfere with heme biosynthesis as well as chlorophyll biosynthesis. See Peroxidizing Herbicides Edited by P. Böger and K. Wakabayashi published by Springer in 1999.

15 See also Porphyric Pesticides: Chemistry, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutical Applications Edited by Stephen O. Duke and Constantin A. Rebeiz, an American Chemical Society 1994 Symposium.

16 For all the above stated reasons and for all the reasons given in the comments that are herein incorporated by reference, the BLM needs to reconsider the Restore Native Ecosystems Alternative, re-issue a draft EIS and make the PER subject to the NEPA process.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jan Wroncy, individually, and on behalf of  
Gaia Vision, and Canaries Who Sing  
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