

EMC0448
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The BLM's proposal to greatly expand its herbicide use is unacceptable. Herbicides are powerful poisons whose use is restricted because of a public outcry following the epidemic of serious health problems linked to herbicide spraying in the Coast Range in the 1970s. Private forestry practice, which the BLM now wishes to emulate, depends on the use of herbicides to create monoculture Douglas fir plantations. However, removing native vegetation and repeatedly applying herbicides is an invitation to invasive species. Herbicide dependent management policies decrease the earth's ability to absorb rainwater, increasing flood potential and the possibility of chemical contamination of groundwater and streams. Monoculture fir plantations provide shelter but little food. Herbicides are lethal to many species. The laws that have restricted the use of herbicides by the BLM have meant that their lands have become refugia of sorts, where a better balance of plant and animal species can thrive. The public lands belong to all of us Americans, and we have a right to demand healthy diverse habitats where we can fish, hunt, gather mushrooms or just enjoy a walk. The problem of invasive species is extremely serious, but with few exceptions, control by mechanical or biological means is possible [Look at the control of tansy ragwort by introduced cinnabar moths.]. Federal agencies need to prevent the further spread of unwanted exotic weeds or all their spraying will be in vain. Herbicides should be considered a last resort, not the prime tool in forest and rangeland management plans. Reida Kimmel