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January 9, 2006

Mr. Brian Amme, Project Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
P.O. Box 12000  
Reno, NV 89520-0006

Dear Mr. Amme,

1 I have recently become aware of your Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement regarding pesticide application in 17 western states. I am writing to state my strong opposition to this plan and to urge you, beg you, and plead with you to instead select the much safer Alternative C. While I realize that cheat grass is a major problem throughout the west and a major reason for wildfires we experience, particularly in drought years, this does not in any way justify the widespread use of herbicides, which can only be viewed as dangerous chemicals. Instead of enriching the chemical manufacturers and poisoning our air, water, soil, wildlife, children, and ourselves, please use the safer non-herbicide alternatives that already exist, and use the money you aren't paying to the chemical manufacturers to fund research into safer alternatives and then implement them.

2 Mr. Amme, I have been terribly sick for the last three years as a result of a toxic exposure that damaged my immune system. My T-cell helpers are too high, my T-cell suppressors are too low, and my immunoglobulin E numbers are off the charts. I am allergic to almost every food there is and have been on strict rotation diet of approximately 24 foods for almost two years. I have physical reactions (such as headaches, nausea, numbness, confusion, blurred vision, and heart palpitations) upon exposure to everyday things like petrochemicals, cleaners, laundry soap, deodorant, perfume, vinyl, air fresheners, plastic, chlorine, formaldehyde, and yes, to pesticides and herbicides. While I have made substantial progress, my only hope for regaining any normal sort of life is to avoid toxins and toxic places. In fact, I often go to the vast open desert and forest lands of the west to have a respite from the toxins that accompany modern life in America and give my body a chance to heal.

3 My opportunity to heal is going to be greatly diminished if you are spraying toxic chemicals in my state and surrounding states, because no matter how you slice it or dice it, some of those chemicals, particularly the ones you dispense via aerial means, will end up in the air that I breathe due to wind patterns. Some will land on one or more of the organic and natural food farms and ranches where 100% of my food comes from or in the water used on them or the water that I drink. If you doubt this, please check the studies on the mercury pollution entering our country from China, a half planet away. Please check the studies on the Sahara dust that blankets much of the southern part of our country

3 cont. during certain seasons, causing severe allergic reactions for some. Please check where the ash fell when Mount Saint Helens erupted in May of 1980. While much was around Washington, there was a large accumulation in the Midwest and varying amounts in between. According to Doris Rapp, M.D. (1996<sup>1</sup>), there are many areas of the Midwest where most of the wells and groundwater are badly contaminated from farm applications and lawn and aerial herbicide sprays. The chemicals from these products have eventually made their way into the groundwater, wells, cisterns, and reservoirs. One preliminary report found that lawn sprays (which are mostly herbicides) can cause a four-fold increase in cancer in children<sup>2</sup>. We share one planet and what you do in California, Nebraska, or my own state of Utah affects us all.

4 Lest you think that I am only one person with some strange affliction, you should know that the problem I have is becoming more and more widespread in our country due to our wanton use of toxins, chemicals, and increasingly damaged soils that yield far less nutritious foods than even someone like our parents ate. The doctor I see has treated more than 30,000 patients for this illness. We each have a different story about how we got to where we are, but in the end, we all have damaged immune systems due to exposure to toxins. One woman I met was permanently sickened by some pesticides sprayed in the school cafeteria where she was a cashier. Another lived in a home that had herbicides sprayed around it 20 years earlier. Another lived on a farm in Washington as a child. She is now 60 years old and they have found metabolites of DDT in her blood (it's called DDE). We once thought in this country that DDT was safe and it was a miracle product. We later found out this was wrong, horribly wrong, and our citizens are still paying the price.

5 Most of the chemicals you are planning to use do not have very thorough safety testing. I don't know of any that have long records of completely safe use, and some are already known to cause reproductive and developmental harm. In fact, I think I even read that you are reserving the right to add more herbicides on later, without going through the EIS process again. Any or all of these herbicides could be the next DDT that causes untold harm and diminishes our quality of life. Even if none prove to be as damaging as DDT, there is so much potential for harm (for example, look at Daconil 2787 (chlorothalonil), a lawn-care chemical that was once thought to be safe but has killed people who walked on the ground where it had been applied). By our thoughtless loss of priorities in this country, we are threatening our food, our water, our air, and in doing so, children's future as well as our own.

7 I also want to point out that what safety testing has been done has most likely been on health adult males. What about our children, with their smaller bodies and less developed immune systems? What about those among us who have a genetic weakness that makes them susceptible to severe health problems upon exposure to minute amounts of the these toxic products? There is increasing evidence that the high degree of asthma, ADHD,

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<sup>1</sup> Rapp, Doris, J., M.D. *Is this Your Child's World? Is Your Child Allergic to Schools? How the School Environment may be making your child: Hyperactive, Asthmatic, Disruptive, Prone to Colds and Learning Disabilities and What You Can Do to Help.* Bantam Books, New York.

<sup>2</sup> See "Study Cites Child Risk of Cancer," Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 27, 1995.

learning disabilities, cancer and other problems we see in our school children and our adult population is the result of exposure to more and more toxic chemicals.

8 When you decide on the final alternative, please keep in your mind that you are making a personal health decision for me, for my children, for the children of our country, and the citizens of our nation and this planet. If you chose the alternative you have currently identified, you will have chosen to reduce the quality and length of my life. You will have chosen to reduce the quality and length of my son's life (who is also sick). You will have chosen to reduce the quality and length of people's lives who, for genetic or other reasons, are more prone to damage by these insidious products. I have worked very hard to get where I am health-wise and to be able to enjoy being with my children, ages 5 and 7 again. Please don't jeopardize that for me and thousands of others in my situation by poisoning our air, soil, water, food chain, and ultimately ourselves, to avoid some range fires or property damage throughout the west. That would be the worst case of missed priorities there is.

9 Thank you for accepting my comments. Please send me a copy of all pertinent documents and notify me when the decision is reached.

Sincerely,



Marilyn D. Damus