



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# News Release

Great Basin Region

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## **BLM examining fuel projects to improve firefighting capabilities, protect rangelands in Great Basin**

**BOISE, ID** — The Bureau of Land Management is initiating environmental analyses of fuel breaks, fuels reduction and habitat restoration projects on sagebrush steppe rangelands in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Utah and California to ensure healthy, productive working landscapes and wildlife habitats.

Region-wide analysis of impacts and cumulative effects will help the BLM streamline authorization of projects aimed at reducing the threat of wildfires and restoring degraded habitats.

“Fire, invasive annual grasses and conifer encroachment are the most significant threats to sagebrush-steppe in the Great Basin,” said BLM Idaho State Director Tim Murphy. “Focusing on these threats is also going to help the BLM protect working landscapes that contribute to healthy local economies.”

Large-scale wildfires have become significantly more frequent throughout the western U.S. in recent years, particularly in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. Wildfires have begun to exceed 100,000 acres on a regular basis, and areas are re-burning more often. Large and frequent fires often result in conversion of sagebrush to annual grasses like cheatgrass, and native habitats cannot recover naturally.

Strategically sited fuel breaks can slow the progress of wildfires, allowing better firefighter safety and increased protection of human life and property, livestock forage and important ecological resources such as sage-grouse habitat. Treating invasive plants like cheatgrass and encroaching species like juniper further reduces the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

A notice published in today’s *Federal Register* details the BLM’s intent to prepare two programmatic environmental impact studies (PEISs), identifies some preliminary issues for analysis and begins a 60-day comment period. Public comments on issues to be analyzed in the PEISs and possible alternatives are welcome, and may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- e-mail: [GRSG\\_PEIS@blm.gov](mailto:GRSG_PEIS@blm.gov)
- Fax: (208) 373-3805
- Surface mail: Jonathan Beck, BLM Idaho State Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709

The BLM will host public scoping meetings, with specific dates and locations to be announced shortly through local media, newspapers, social media outlets, as well as the BLM website, at <https://go.usa.gov/xnQcG>. The website will also provide details and documents about fuels projects and the impact analysis process.

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*The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.*