

For Immediate Release

December 19, 2014

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Ely BLM Withdraws Decision to Poison, Crush and Chop Sage-grouse Habitat

White Pine County, Nev. - A Western Watersheds Project appeal forced the Ely BLM to [withdraw a recent decision](#) to destroy Wyoming big sagebrush, black sage, and pinyon-juniper communities across the Newark watershed and parts of the Huntington Valley in Nevada. The BLM planned to use the cheatgrass-causing herbicide Tebuthiuron, mowers, bulldozers and other heavy equipment to chop and smash sagebrush and trees. These practices routinely result in an explosion of cheatgrass in arid landscapes.

The Decision was withdrawn because the BLM planned so many treatment assaults on native vegetation in this area that the agency forgot to reveal them all in its shallow Environmental Assessment.

The Newark Valley is located between the Diamond and Egan Ranges, south of the Ruby Mountains. Highway 50, the Loneliest Highway, cuts across its southern area. It is very arid, with beautiful Basin and Range scenery. A map of the allotment and treatment areas can be found [here](#).

The landscape is under siege. Grazing herds of both cattle and sheep on the same site inflicts severe degradation. Ely BLM land health assessment findings pretend there are no harmful livestock impacts. Blind to current livestock impacts, the agency blames the sage and trees, grazing in bygone days, drought, and mysterious “unknown factors” for declines in land health and sage-grouse habitats.

Large allotments of the Newark landscape permitted to billion dollar foreign gold mines. Massive mine expansions are chewing away at sage-grouse and big game habitat, threatening scarce spring water flows, and imposing an expanding footprint of roads, noise, mine pits and other development.

Past treatments using the same scorched earth methods as proposed in Newark have fragmented crucial sage-grouse nesting habitats for the southern Great Basin sage-grouse population. Under the guise of habitat “restoration”, BLM mowed, crushed, roller beat and doused Tebuthiuron on sagebrush right by many of the remaining sage grouse leks in Lincoln County.

[These photos](#) are the result of hundreds of thousands of dollars of “treatments” – showing large areas of dead gray sage and proliferating cheatgrass.

The Nevada BLM would do well to investigate all vegetation treatment and grazing decisions in the Ely District. The District's management of 12 million acres of public

lands is crucial to the survival of southern Great Basin sage-grouse.

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Western Watersheds Project's [appeal of the Decision can be found here.](#)

WWP has challenged a similar Ely BLM sagebrush-killing project across Cave Valley and Lake Valley. See:

<http://www.westernwatersheds.org/2013/06/western-watersheds-project-litigates-to-protect-145000-acres-of-sage-grouse-habitat/>

Documentation of Ely BLM's treatment outcomes in central Nevada:

<http://www.thewildlifeneews.com/2011/12/14/the-cowboy-plan-to-save-sage-grouse-making-things-worse/>

<http://www.thewildlifeneews.com/2013/07/17/western-watersheds-project-litigates-145000-acre-vegetation-treatment-project/>

Colleagues are documenting juniper destruction in northern California and Nevada. They are exposing BLM treatment falsehoods in projects where old growth trees over 600 years old are being wantonly destroyed in the name of saving grouse:

<http://oldgrowthjuniper.com/index.html>

<http://oldgrowthjuniper.com/page49.html>

<http://oldgrowthjuniper.com/page18.html>