



U.S. Department of the Interior
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News Release

West Desert District Office

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BLM Fuels Project to Improve Sagebrush Habitat in Rich County

West Valley City, UT- The BLM West Desert District, in partnership with Utah State University, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, is conducting a broad-scale wildlife habitat enhancement project on the Crawford Mountains in Rich County. The Crawford Mountain project, located four miles northeast of Woodruff, UT, will run October 2016 through March 2017.

The Crawford Mountain project, through collaboration with federal, state, and local community partners, promotes the restoration and maintenance of landscapes resilient to fire-related disturbances, and the protection of critical mule deer, greater sage-grouse and other sage brush dependent wildlife.

“Our goal is to preserve and enhance sagebrush habitat by reducing the growth of young juniper trees in areas dominated by shrubs and grasses,” said BLM Natural Resource Specialist Brad Jessop. ‘Junipers can degrade habitat by outcompeting the other species for light, moisture, and nutrients; resulting in nearly complete removal of the understory vegetation.’”

The project treatment actions include reducing juniper density and cover to preserve and expand sagebrush habitat. Additional benefits include increased forage for wildlife and livestock, and a change in fuel type allowing safer and easier fire suppression. The treatment area on the east slope of the Crawford Mountains is critical winter range for both mule deer and greater sage-grouse. A total for 2,406 acres will be treated.

During the last 10 years, the BLM has performed similar treatments with excellent results. Previous projects have shown that once junipers are thinned, wildlife habitat improves and range productivity increases through an increase in herbaceous vegetation.

The Bullhog work will be done by Giles Construction based in Tooele, Utah. The hand thinning will be done by Summit Forests, Inc., based in Ashland, Oregon.

Utah-BLM has a strong history of investing in sage-grouse habitat improvement. Since 2003, the agency has invested almost \$40 million and treated more than 402,641 acres through its fuels management program. Partner contributions have added an additional \$6.4 million to the effort.

For more information on the projects, contact the West Desert District Fuels Program at 801-977-4300, or check www.utahfireinfo.gov/fuel_projects.html

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 sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.

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