

## *BLM Fuels Project to Improve Sagebrush Habitat in Rich County*

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**Contact:** Paul Corrigan, 801.231.7218

**Salt Lake City, Utah**— The BLM West Desert District is conducting a broad-scale project to reduce the accumulation of hazardous fuels while enhancing wildlife habitat on the Crawford Mountains in Rich County this winter. A mechanical shredder (Bullhog) will be used to thin trees within thick areas of juniper, leaving islands of mature trees and wildlife corridors remaining undisturbed. In addition some roadsides will be mowed to create firebreaks. The treatment area on the east slope of the Crawford Mountains is critical winter range for both mule deer and greater sage grouse.

“Our goal is to reduce fire risk and protect and enhance sagebrush habitat by reducing the expansion of young juniper trees into areas that used to be dominated by shrubs and grasses. Where junipers dominate they can degrade habitat by outcompeting other species for light, moisture, and nutrients eventually resulting in nearly complete removal of the understory,” said BLM Natural Resource Specialist Brad Jessop.

### **Crawford Mountain Project**

Location: 4 miles Northeast of Woodruff, UT

Size: 1,100 Acres

Duration: November 2011- Summer 2012

During the last eight years, the BLM has performed similar treatments with excellent results. Observations from prior treatments have shown that once junipers are thinned wildlife habitat improves and range productivity increases through an increase in herbaceous vegetation. By altering vegetation structure these types of projects also allow for safer and easier fire suppression.

The work will be by Snowy Range, Inc., based in Evanston, WY. The company was awarded a contract to complete 1,100 acres. A second phase of similar size is planned for next year. Funding for the project is coming through Utah’s Watershed Restoration Initiative, a partnership of private organizations and state and federal agencies. Partners contributing money include the Ruby Pipeline Mitigation Fund, the Healthy Lands Initiative, and BLM wildlife and fuels programs.

For more information on the projects, contact the West Desert District Fuels Program at 801-977-4300.

Website: [www.utahfireinfo.gov/fuel\\_projects.html](http://www.utahfireinfo.gov/fuel_projects.html)

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land – 245 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau carries out a multiple-use mission, one that is aimed at sustaining the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future.

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