

# BLM starts sagebrush treatments Sept. 15 south of Bloomfield

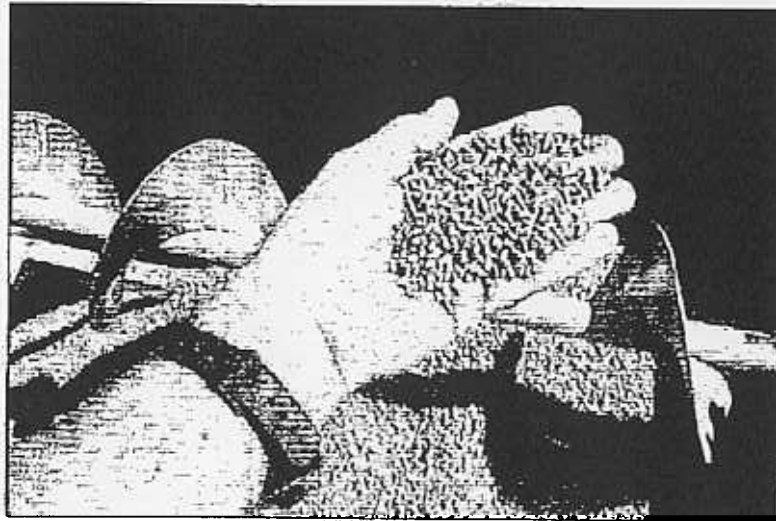
— The Daily Times —

FARMINGTON — Beginning Sept. 15 and continuing into the first week of October, the Bureau of Land Management plans to thin up to 31,000 acres of sagebrush in the checkerboard area south of Bloomfield. Treatments will occur on BLM public lands and Navajo tribal and Navajo Indian allotment lands where sagebrush densities have surpassed historic, naturally occurring levels.

"Reducing the density of sagebrush will result in an increase of native grasses, forbs and other herbaceous vegetation," said Jeff Tafoya, a rangeland management specialist for the Farmington Field Office. "Our goal is to improve species diversity which will benefit wildlife. Rangeland and the watershed also will benefit."

A yellow airplane will drop tebuthiuron pellets on sagebrush. Tebuthiuron is a soil-activated herbicide that inhibits photosynthesis. At the rate of application planned, the

For more information, call Bill Papich, BLM Farmington Field Office, (505) 599-6324.



Courtesy Bill Papich for The Daily Times

Beginning Sept. 15, the BLM will use tebuthiuron pellets, seen here, to thin 31,000 acres of sagebrush south of Bloomfield.

chemical will have no impact on grasses and forbs. Because the chemical is applied in pellet form, it will not drift from treated areas. When the pellets become moist they are absorbed into the ground and into the plants' roots, eventually killing the sagebrush. The pellets

will not be dropped near waterways.

Tebuthiuron has been used to control sagebrush since the 1980s and the benefits of its application are well documented. The BLM's goal is control of sagebrush, not eradication, Tafoya said. The exclusion of fire from sagebrush-grassland

ecosystems has resulted in the removal of a natural control system for sagebrush.

The BLM has conducted extensive consultation with Navajo Nation chapters in the treatment areas and with individual chapter members who graze livestock and reside in the areas. The chapters are Counselor, Nageezi, Huerfano and Pueblo Pintado.

These efforts are part of a larger effort to restore landscapes to healthy ecological conditions across New Mexico. The BLM passed the 750,000-acre mark this summer for acres restored since 2005 under its "Restore New Mexico" initiative and is nearing a once unheard-of goal to reclaim a million acres of land in the Land of Enchantment by 2010.

In the San Juan Basin, the BLM also is closing and rehabilitating unneeded or redundant roads to improve habitat for deer, elk, antelope and other wildlife, and decrease erosion and runoff from roads on public lands. Near Taos, the BLM is shaving patches of dense sagebrush on public lands each winter, creating rich grass-sage mosaics for wildlife.