

## Fighting weeds on public lands

By Larry Hyslop



Matthew Patrick, BLM weed management crew, spraying hoary cress

The public land off Sundance Road does not look like much. Off-road vehicles have left many roads and trails. People have dumped their yard refuse on it. However, since I often walk my dogs on this land, I have come to feel some ownership of it.

A couple of years ago, a narrow band of an invasive weed called hoary cress, also called whitetop, lined the side of one road. Each year, this patch grew and this year I decided to do something about it. I reported the stand of hoary cress to Terri Barton, the Bureau of Land Management's Elko District Weed Specialist.

I met Terri and Matthew Patrick at the spot. As Matthew filled two backpacks with water and chemical, Terri described to me her program. Our mild winter and recent spring moisture has been good for grass but also good for invasive weeds. A sign of the abundant spring moisture is cheatgrass already standing 12-24" tall. Around our feet, burr buttercup covered the ground. Terri told me this small weed is actually quite toxic to cattle but they usually ignore it to eat taller vegetation.

Hoary cress is especially bad this year and one particularly bad spot is a 1 ½ mile stretch of the Lower Lamoille Road. Terri also reports finding it where none grew in past years. By far, the worst weed news is the spread of medusahead, including 150 acres of this nasty weed near Wilson Reservoir.

Terri has seven people on this year's spraying crews, up considerably from last year. The BLM weed program has an assistance agreement with the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition to provide qualified weed certified crew members. Most of these crew members are college graduates with degrees in botany and plant ecology programs.

So far, the team has sprayed 300 acres of weeds this spring, including the Snobowl area and Kittredge Canyon. Two crews are currently spraying along Susie Creek in a partnership with the Maggie Creek Ranch and Newmont Mining. The next big project she wants to start on is Carlin Canyon.

Matthew has filled the backpack tanks, using Escort, Weedar 64 for a quick wilt, and a blue dye to see where they have sprayed. Terri and Matthew put on their heavy backpacks and begin moving among the hoary cress, spraying this weed infestation. They face a busy summer trying to keep up with invasive weeds in Elko County.

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