

BLM plan for sage-grouse habitat in NV challenged

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A conservation group is asking a federal judge to set aside federal land managers' plans to eradicate sagebrush, pinion pine and juniper across a large swath of public lands in eastern Nevada.

The Western Watersheds Project, in a filing in Boise, Idaho, federal court last month, contends the Bureau of Land Management's plans to mow, chop, burn and poison sagebrush in Cave and Lake valleys south of Ely will harm habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife.

The Idaho-based group says the plan would cause an infestation of cheat grass and fragment the range in what Nevada wildlife officials call "essential and irreplaceable Greater sage-grouse habitat."

BLM spokeswoman JoLynn Worley says the agency has a policy of not commenting on lawsuits.

BLM officials have said their watershed restoration plan for the two valleys is designed to reduce the potential for major wildfires and to improve habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife species over the long term.