On January 20, 2006, an article in Science Magazine entitled “Post-Wildfire Logging Hinders Regeneration and Increases Fire Risk” by an Oregon State University Forestry School graduate was published.

The BLM Oregon State Office has a long established history of cooperative efforts with Oregon State University and many other universities which has resulted in a substantial body of credible, scientific information applicable to a wide variety of land management issues.

The study area that the article is based on is 2002’s half million acre Biscuit Fire which included both USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management-administered lands in southwestern Oregon. The study is in its second year of a three year timeline.

The study is a Task Order funded through the Joint Fire Science Program under a Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit (CESU) agreement. The BLM Oregon/Washington State Office, as it is required to do, reviewed the Assistance Agreement, gathered information as to what transpired and whether there were any violations to the Assistance Agreement, and determined what follow-up actions need to take place.

A letter suspending the Task Order was sent by BLM on February 1, 2006. Oregon State University responded to BLM’s concerns on February 8, 2006 and indicated “The University acknowledges and apologizes for its oversight in failing to include the disclaimer required by terms of the Task Order. We are confident this oversight will not be repeated.” BLM responded by lifting the suspension of the funding to the Task Order.

Originally, the CESU compliance concerns were:

- Prohibition on lobbying with appropriated moneys
- Requirement to consult before publication

And the Task Order compliance concerns were:

- Prohibition on lobbying (including by publication) with appropriated dollars.
- Requirement to include disclaimer.

In particular, the initial posting of the abstract for “Post-Wildfire Logging Hinders Regeneration and Increases Fire Risk” on the ScienceExpress website during January 2006 referenced proposed federal legislation. In addition, the BLM has asked OSU to address a provision in the Agreement that prohibits the use of Federal funds either directly or indirectly to influence a member of Congress or to promote public support or opposition to pending legislation.

Even though the Task Order temporarily suspended future payments, work continued under advanced payments made immediately prior to the suspension.
Background

On February 1, 2006 after a review of an existing Assistance Agreement and Task Order, BLM Oregon/Washington State Office Branch of Procurement sent a letter suspending the Task Order with Oregon State University until the BLM’s questions are answered, compliance issues resolved, and corrective actions taken, if necessary. This procedure is a normal business practice for BLM.

Specifically as a result of the Science Magazine article, the BLM requested that Oregon State University respond to stipulations in the Task Order that prohibits lobbying, requires consultation before publication, and requires a disclaimer to be included in all information submitted for publication. Oregon State University was requested to respond by February 8, 2006 to the concerns raised and that the Task Order was suspended until corrective actions were taken if necessary.

The BLM’s participation contributes to the overall agency mission of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands. We look forward to timely resolution of these concerns.

Joint Fire Science Program: The Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) was established in 1998 to provide scientific information and support for wildland fuel and fire management programs. The program is a partnership of six federal agencies; the Forest Service in the Agriculture Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey, all in the Department of the Interior.

JFSP received specific direction from Congress to address four areas: fuels inventory and mapping, evaluation of fuels treatments, scheduling of fuels treatments and development of protocols for monitoring and evaluation. In 2001, Congress further directed JFSP to expand its research efforts in post-fire rehabilitation and stabilization, local assistance, and aircraft-based remote sensing.

Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit (CESU):

CESU provides research, technical assistance and education to federal land management, environmental and research agencies and their partners. Their broad scope includes the biological, physical, social, and cultural sciences needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context. Each CESU is comprised of federal agencies, a host university, and partner institutions. Cooperative and Joint Venture agreements allow each of the participating federal agencies to efficiently transfer funds to university partners while maintaining responsibility for agency sponsored activities with CESUs. CESUs are organized around biogeographic areas. CESUs are linked together in a CESU Network.

Oregon State University Post-Fire Study Chronology

- **October 10, 2000:** Original Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit [Master Agreement]
- **September 9, 2003:** Task Order Issued to Oregon State University
- **August 9, 2005:** Extension of Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit
• **January 27, 2006**: BLM Medford District USDA Forest Service project inspector notified BLM Oregon/Washington Procurement Division

• **January 30, 2006**: BLM Oregon/Washington officials notified of possible violations of agreement

• **February 1, 2006**: Letter to Oregon State University requesting info about possible violations

• **February 8, 2006**: Response from Oregon State University received from by the BLM