



## Update: Government/Academic Officials Say Buckwheat Destruction Not Human-Caused

### *ioneer Continues to Collaborate in Joint Effort*

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**RENO, Nev. 18 September 2020** – As information concerning the recent destruction of the Tiehm’s buckwheat becomes available, ioneer is committed to ensuring the press and the public are made aware of such developments. This is particularly important given that Center for Biological Diversity and its collaborator, The California Botanical Gardens, have made irresponsible and outright false statements about the situation.

Earlier this month, University of Nevada, Reno (“UNR”) personnel conducted a survey of the Tiehm’s buckwheat at Rhyolite Ridge under the direction of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (“NDCNR”). UNR noted significant destruction of the buckwheat by herbivory in four of the known populations and found no evidence to suggest that the destruction was the result of human activity. All non-partisan field work to date made by expert botanists indicate that one or more rodent species has unfortunately been feeding on and destroying the buckwheat. Further, according to new information from EM Strategies’ Biology Program Manager Kris Kuyper, “Similar herbivory activity has been noted in other mat buckwheat in the area.”

Immediately upon learning about the herbivore damage, ioneer began working with the Nevada Division of Forestry (“NDF”) and other regulatory bodies to facilitate a thorough investigation. The Company is providing transect information, equipment, and access to the Company’s botanist and geologic experts to ensure the appropriate steps are taken to learn more about the nature of the event. With these findings, ioneer hopes to provide possible alternatives and effective measures to mitigate this latest threat from natural causes.

ioneer’s Executive Chairman, James Calaway, said:

*“We greatly appreciate all of the efforts made by trustworthy partners in working tirelessly to get to the bottom of the buckwheat destruction caused by animals that occurred earlier this month. From the moment we were notified of the attack, ioneer pledged its full and ongoing commitment to providing its resources and continued support.”*

*“As we stated from the outset, all credible evidence points to animals causing the destruction of the buckwheat. State officials and local academics with financial support of the federal government provided this information to the press this week. We are hopeful that additional information will be shared by this joint effort next week.*

*“What is clear one week later is that the Center for Biological Diversity (“CBD”) and its allies have some explaining to do. Rather than collaborating with involved parties to learn more about the destruction, the CBD, as is their pattern of irresponsible behavior, raced to the press to provide false accusations against the state and federal regulatory bodies and most aggressively towards our company. These kinds of baseless, outrageous political attacks do nothing but undermine the important task of getting to the actual problem and ensuring an appropriate resolution, and assisting finding common ground to both protect this highly*



vulnerable plant while ensuring America has the critical materials to address the existential threat of climate change.”

### **Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR)**

- *“Last week, the Nevada Division of Natural Heritage received reports of herbivore damage to the plant’s population in Esmeralda County’s Silver Peak Range, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources spokeswoman Samantha Thompson said in a statement. Based on photos, it appears to be the same damage reported by the Center for Biological Diversity, she said. State, federal, and consulting biologists started an investigation, she said. Thompson said her department is not aware of any evidence that ‘direct human activity’ caused the destruction.” ([Las Vegas Review Journal](#), 16 September 2020)*
- *“A spokesperson for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources said there is an investigation and the agency ‘will assess if more immediate action is required’ once it is over. But the department’s statement Wednesday morning said that ‘as of yet, we are not aware of any evidence that this damage was caused by direct human activity’. As evidence, the agency noted small rodent burrows and ‘unidentified mammals scattering’ on an access road.” ([Nevada Independent](#), 17 September 2020)*

### **University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)**

- *“In a [separate survey](#) a few days earlier on Sept. 8, conducted by University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) with funding provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a technician for the survey team similarly observed that around 25 to 50 percent of the plants had been severely damaged at four sites. That report, however, came to the conclusion that the large scale damage to the Tiehm’s buckwheat had likely been the work of small rodents, based on apparent gnawing on the plant’s roots.” ([Nevada Current](#), 17 September 2020)*
- *“Elizabeth Leger, a professor in the Department of Biology at UNR who leads the research team, said that while she was not at the site she agrees with her technician’s interpretation. ‘Based on these photos, descriptions, and our conversations, I fully agree with her observations and conclusions,’ said Ledger, who has conducted propagation and transplant trials for Tiehm’s buckwheat in an effort financed by Ioneer, an Australian lithium mining company hoping to develop a mine in the area. ‘When I look at these photos, I see evidence of industrious small animals, not humans. I believe the next step should be to get a small mammal expert out to the site to see what they think. The impact on the plants is very alarming, no matter what the cause.’” ([Nevada Current](#), 17 September 2020)*

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### **ABOUT IONEER**

ioneer Ltd is the 100% owner of the Rhyolite Ridge Lithium-Boron Project located in Nevada, USA, the only known lithium-boron deposit in North America and one of only two known such deposits in the world. The Definitive Feasibility Study (DFS) completed in April 2020 confirmed



Rhyolite Ridge as a world-class Lithium and Boron Project that is expected to become a globally significant, long-life, low-cost source of lithium and boron vital to a sustainable future. Rhyolite Ridge's unique mineralogy allow lithium and boron to be extracted in a low-cost and environmentally sustainable manner. The Project's commercial viability is made possible by having both lithium and boron revenue streams.