LTDL FAQ

1) What is the difference between a Project and a Treatment within the LTDL?
What is a Project: A project is a single group of land management action or actions (Treatments) that manipulate vegetation or on-ground conditions and are designed to meet particular objectives in a given area. A project can incorporate a single or multiple "treatments". That is, several treatments can be applied to different locations in a project area or several treatments can be applied to a given area over a planned period of time.

What is a Treatment: A treatment is any land management action that manipulates vegetation or on-ground conditions in a given area within a given project.

Example: This is an example of a project with multiple treatments. Many of our projects are actually fire boundaries within which multiple treatments have been implemented. So the fire boundary becomes the project perimeter and the individual actions that were undertaken within the fire boundary are the treatments for the project. Another example of a project with multiple treatments is an area which was chained and then half of that area was seeded and the other half had an herbicide application. The project area is the entire chained area (the project boundary) and the treatments are the chaining, seeding, and herbicide application. These are included within the same project because they are all part of a single objective.

Second Example: This is an example of how a single treatment can also be considered a project. For example, an area may be chained to remove sagebrush and other woody vegetation in order to promote grazing. This was the only treatment done, no other actions were taken. In this case the project and the one treatment are identical and there are not multiple treatments within the chaining. This is entered as a project within the database and only one treatment is listed.

2) Why make the distinction between Projects and Treatments, why not list all treatments individually?
There are several reasons why we do not list every treatment from a project individually.
   a. This database was designed around Bureau of Land Management Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation projects. These projects are generally set up around fire boundaries and follow the project with multiple treatments format.
   b. The amount of data entered would be significantly increased and it would take much longer to enter all the information
   c. There would be much repetition. For example, if 4 treatments occurred within a single project, many fields are identical and a user would have to re-enter the information over and over again if the treatments were entered individually.
   d. Different treatments can be grouped together which demonstrates how they are related to one another or how they are a part of the same general objective.

3) If only one Treatment is entered, is this a Project or a Treatment?
It is a project which contains only a single treatment. In other words, the project and the treatment are identical and the project is not broken down into smaller parts. Information is entered into both project and treatment level fields within the database. Do not just enter project info or treatment info, treat this situation as if the project and treatment are different so all information is completed.

4) Can I enter data into the LTDL?
We are currently working on the best way for users to enter/edit data into the LTDL. More details will be coming as we continue to work this out.

5) How do I upload data to the master LTDL database?
As we continue to develop methods for users to enter/edit data we will work on the best ways to upload the data to a master database for processing. We are hoping a single button will export all data and associated documents to a zipped folder which can then be sent to the master database for upload. For now you can email or ftp Justin Welty with any new or updated data that needs to be entered.

6) Can I download data for analysis?
The BLM will eventually be able to download data through our website. In addition to the data you will need to download the associated files in order to view and analyze the data. As the site continues to develop we will include this function. For now, contact Justin Welty as he can download the data for you.

7) What is a project name and why is it so important?
A project name is a name given to a single project within the database. This name cannot be repeated within the LTDL and therefore is unique to a specific project. The project name is used to group all of the treatments within a single project together and is the main way to identify a project. Other than being unique there is no requirement for the name. However it is usually a combination of the original name given to the project and the original identification number of the project (e.g. a fire name and fire code).

8) How much time does it take to load a typical project into the LTDL?
Data entry time can be extremely variable and is based on (1) the amount of data to sort through, (2) the quality of the data, (3) the inconsistencies within the data and, (4) whether LTDL personnel need to draw GIS maps. To date minimum data entry time for a single project is 15 minutes while the maximum data entry time has been over half a day. Average time is around 1 hour per project.

9) Who will have access to data entered into the LTDL?
The general public will have no access to the LTDL. Specific data will be limited to authorize personnel only. Authorized users include select individuals working with the LTDL at the USGS, all BLM employees, and other users authenticated by the BLM. The public can only see a select few documents related to the LTDL itself and how it works.

10) Will GIS information be available for users to download?
All authorized users will be able to download project and treatment level GIS data. For more information on background GIS layers see 'Background GIS Layers' under 'Documents for Download'

11) Can livestock grazing be considered a treatment and, if so, under what circumstances?
Livestock restriction is considered a treatment if the BLM lists it as a treatment. Otherwise, individual treatments or an entire project can indicate if livestock were restricted on a site.

12) Our field office holds general, long-term monitoring information not related to a specific treatment. Can this data be entered into the LTDL?
Currently the LTDL is specifically designed to enter treatment data and has the potential to hold some associated monitoring data. Although technically possible, the LTDL is not designed to hold long-term monitoring data not related to a specific treatment. Long-term monitoring data can be stored in the Rangeland Database: http://usda-ars.nmsu.edu/monit_assess/monitoring.php. The LTDL eventually hopes to link to the Rangeland Database to facilitate treatment and monitoring links.

13) Will the LTDL be expanded so that other agencies or individuals not associated with the Department of Interior can enter data?
Currently the LTDL only has funding to enter BLM data with a cooperator entering some initial USFS data. While there is potential to enter data from other agencies and users, the funding and personnel must exist. If you would like to see if the LTDL is capable of storing your treatment data please contact David Pilliod (dpilliod@usgs.gov) for more information.

14) Can data from experimental research sites or other hypothesis based land treatment experiments be entered?
There is no cap or limit on the kind of treatment data that can be entered into the database. The only restriction must be that the data entered must match the current form of the LTDL. However, see #13 above for other agencies or individuals entering data.

15) Are there any plans to synthesize, analyze, and summarize the information and publish the information or provide this summarized information to the general public?
In the short-term we do not have any plans for this type of a summary, although at least one other project is using data in the LTDL to determine the success of previous land treatments. Long-term we hope to, at minimum, publish one paper related to the LTDL and data therein. However, the timescale for this has yet to be determined.

16) Our field office uses different treatment application methods and monitoring techniques on similar land treatments. Could the LTDL be seen as a tool that might lead to some treatment or monitoring protocol standardization?
The LTDL is designed primarily as a treatments database which can hold some basic monitoring information. If the LTDL is adopted as a standard data entry module for an agency it may help to standardize treatment methods and data entry. However, this is not the goal of the LTDL nor do we wish to try to promote this as such a tool. It may help with monitoring standardization but the most likely way to do this is through adoption of the Rangeland Database (#12 above) on which the monitoring tab of the LTDL is based.

17) Does the LTDL include wildfires, insect infestations, or exotic/invasive infestations as treatments and, if so, under what parameters?
The LTDL should be used only to enter intentional man-made land treatments. Responses to situations listed above can be considered land treatments (i.e. reseeding, insecticide spraying, or herbicide spraying). The initial event cannot be considered a treatment and will only be included in the LTDL if there is a treatment in response to the event.

18) Who provides technological/data support for data entry personnel and end-users?
For specific questions or comments please contact Justin Welty at 208-426-5212 or jwelty@usgs.gov. Justin will provide technical support for data entry and questions on how to interpret a specific field. For more general information or data requests please contact David Pilliod (dpilliod@usgs.gov).

19) What is the long-term vision for the LTDL? Will there be a single data entry hub located in Boise or will there be multiple hubs throughout the country?
Currently the LTDL has an agreement with the BLM which lasts for 5 years. Beyond this point it is unknown what will become of the LTDL. Because of this, until the funding situation changes, Boise will remain the only major hub for data entry.

20) Will a user be able to batch download multiple GIS project and treatment shapefiles related to a specific query (i.e. all GIS files within a single field office)?

Yes, the user will be able to batch download GIS polygons based on a specific query created by the user. We are still currently working on the best method to do this.