

# Burning Man celebrants warned about drug laws

By Martin Griffith  
The Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Burning Man celebrants will be allowed to return to the same site in the northern Nevada desert this summer after leaving it clean last year, federal land managers decided.

But Bureau of Land Management officials are warning participants that drug laws again will be enforced at the counterculture festival in the Black Rock Desert 120 miles north of Reno.

Billed as a celebration of art and radical self-expression, the event is expected to draw about 25,000 people from 45 states and 20 countries to the desert over the Labor Day weekend.

"We beefed up law enforcement last year ... and we'll take the same approach this year that we took last year," said Les Boni, assistant field manager of the BLM's Winnemucca office.

"Personal drug use isn't permitted. Even though they come here for the festival, they're part of society and accountable under the same rules. We're required to enforce state and federal law."

Some participants complained about an excessive law enforcement presence at last year's festival. More than 125 celebrants were cited or arrested, many on drug-related charges. Some charges were later dismissed.

Organizers said it was the most citations and arrests for drugs at the festival since it began in San Francisco in 1986. It moved to the Nevada desert in 1990.

To avoid a repeat, organizers are including information on drug laws in this year's "Survival Guide" mailed to all ticketholders.

Their Web site says Burning Man does not promote or condone drug use, but supports the First Amendment and participants' right to privacy.

"We are committed to following all state and federal laws," said Burning Man spokeswoman Marian Goodell. "This year, we're also committed to better informing our

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**Les Boni**  
assistant field manager,  
Bureau of Land Management

participants as to what their rights are and what the penalties are for breaking any law.

"There has been an over-exaggeration of drug use at Burning Man. As a result, law enforcement officers stepped up their enforcement

out there. This year you'll see the (arrest) numbers go down because we'll better inform people about their rights and penalties."

Organizers have held two meetings on the issue with Pershing County Sheriff Ron Skinner, whose county is home to the festival.

Skinner is urging participants to refrain from drug use, saying his agency also plans to enforce drug laws again.

"I think in past years it was sort of promoted by some participants as a drug fest. But I don't think that participants at Burning Man should be treated any differently when it comes to drug laws."

Most of last year's drug-related citations and arrests involved blatant drug use, Skinner added.

But some arrests and citations stemmed from officers who observed drug activity in camp areas from a distance, prompting complaints from some participants.

"We want to make sure their rights are protected too," Skinner said. "We brief our officers very well on aspects of search and seizure. I don't think they overstepped their bounds."

Skinner and Boni praised organizers' efforts to inform participants about drug laws, saying they hope it curbs drug activity at the event.

"They felt the (tougher enforcement) caught some of the participants by surprise last year," Boni said. "This year, they're promoting that fact. So hopefully that won't be an issue."

In allowing the event to be held at the same site this year, BLM officials rejected organizers' proposal to move it to a new site 1,800 feet to the northeast.

"We didn't see any advantage to moving it," Boni said, adding the public also favored keeping the event at the 2000 site. The site straddles a new National Conservation Area in the Black Rock Desert.

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## Country Fair

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the dirt paths that trailed through the wooded area in Veneta. The crowd was so dense that people didn't walk but rather surged like blood through veins.

When the eye did focus, it was typically on something bizarre:

A man lying blindfolded on his back while another man scanned over his body with a didgeridoo.

Dancers wearing everything from their birthday suits to a blocky costume resembling Optimus Prime from the Transformers.

Mass juggling in an area dubbed the "Monkey Palace."

Topless yoga.

A man peddling a bike-powered blender, banging a tambourine and tooting a kazoo.

Vendors standing in a trail offering free flower sniffing, just as Hickory Farms employees offer cheese and meat during the holiday season.

People lining up to listen to "Nirvana Tubes," which were six-foot pipes tied to trees that offer an effect similar to listening to a seashell.

If these people were on a street corner, passersby would either donate spare change or call the police, but at the Country Fair, spectators are more likely to join.

Still, most people said they went to the fair just to watch, shop or listen to music. Art booths sold goods ranging from \$10 finger puppets to \$200 didgeridoos. The food court, which represented dozens of cultures, smelled like some sort of world casserole. Music was everywhere and included a massive drum circle, pre-registered folk, rock and jazz acts and impromptu musical gatherings at the sides of paths.

The echo of the 1960s hippie movement that can be heard at the Country Fair was best summed up by a conversation barely discernible over the ambient noise:

"Where's the drum circle?"  
"Everywhere."

## Broadcasters

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ing news broadcasts would receive 30 seconds of each.

The Athletic Department held a public hearing last week and is still talking to broadcasters statewide before making a final draft of the policy, which is projected to be ready by August.

But Sen. Rick Metsger, D-Welches, a former Portland sportscaster, has already threatened legislative action if the University's final draft isn't in stark contrast to the current proposed limits.

Bill Johnstone, the president of the Oregon Association of Broadcasters, said his organization may also seek legal action if the proposal goes through.

Contention over who has dibs on Duck highlights started last fall. ESPN Regional Sports, in the middle of a five-year exclusive contract with Duck sports, allows footage to be aired on KEZI, Eugene's ABC affiliate.

Both ESPN and ABC are owned by the Disney Corporation.

But CBS affiliate KVAL, which had the University sports contract until the 1999-2000 school year, continued to show Duck football game footage on its "Inside the PAC" show, which highlights all teams in the Pacific-10 Conference.

Assistant Athletic Director Dave Heeke said ESPN complained that KVAL's show infringed on the national network's rights.

"We have a disgruntled rights holder in this market," Heeke said. "We have a responsibility to protect the rights they hold."

But KVAL General Manager Dave Weinkauf said that during the last two years of its contract, KEZI aired a Duck football show after Monday Night Football. Weinkauf said KVAL asked the University to examine whether the show violated the contract, but never asked the school to adopt restrictions for other stations.

The proposal has also sparked a philosophical debate between the University and broadcasters over whether it violates First Amendment rights or simply protects the rights of the school's primary contract holder.

Susan Kelley, the general manager and vice president of KTVL in Medford, said the proposal will likely keep the station's sportscasters from coming to Eugene at all. She said a seven-hour round trip and another three or four hours filming wouldn't be worth the drive.

"The likelihood and reality is that the Beavers will get more TV time by virtue of the University's actions," Kelley said.

She added that the proposal would violate broadcasters' First Amendment rights against prior restraint by restricting the free ability to air footage.

"This is over the line as far as we're concerned. You just can't go there," she said. "This really isn't about the video."

But University General Counsel Melinda Grier said that as long as the school only restricts access

## Proposed sports broadcast restrictions:

Broadcasts get 20 seconds of game highlights and 20 seconds of interviews during the 48 hours after any Duck game

Special shows outside a daily sports report during the news would get 30 seconds of each

After the two-day period, a show would have to apply each time for more footage use

Source: University Athletic Department

and not the content of the footage sportscasters choose to run, Kelley, Weinkauf and other TV journalists' First Amendment arguments don't hold water.

"This is a venue where access can be and is restricted," Grier said. "What we're saying is you can choose what to show, but there's a limit on how much."

Heeke agreed that the University can and must honor ESPN's contracted status to carry the games and keep other outlets from having the same level of access.

"I do think [broadcasters] have confused the general public to the issues," he said. "But this wouldn't be a problem if KVAL stopped doing special programming."

Weinkauf said he thinks the University, not his station, needs to make the next step to resolve the issue.

"The next move is in the University of Oregon's court, and we'll see what they have to say," he said.

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