



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Deschutes National Forest
1001 S.W. Emkay
Bend, OR 97702

Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

File Code: 1950-1/2080

Date: August 19, 2005

Dear Interested Citizen:

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS
Invasive Plant Treatment Environmental Impact Statement
Initial Scoping for Proposed Action
Please respond by September 16, 2005

The Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests, and Crooked River National Grassland managers have identified a serious problem with invasive plants, including plants listed by the State of Oregon as Noxious Weeds and other introduced invasive plant species. Your participation is needed to help us address this problem.

Previous Proposal

In February of 2004, we requested public comments for an Invasive Plant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Since that date, we have gathered more information about our invasive plant infestations and have identified new infestation sites that we plan to include in this analysis. Due to the amount of time that has elapsed since our last public scoping efforts and the new inventory information, **we are again inviting public comment.**

Purpose and Need

In recent years, increasing invasive plant populations are compromising our ability to manage the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland for healthy native ecosystems. Approximately 12,000 acres of the total 3 million acres of forests and grassland are degraded by infestations of invasive, non-native plants. These infestations have been identified on approximately 2,000 individual locations or sites. These infestations have a high potential to expand and further degrade forests and grasslands. Infested areas represent potential seed sources that spread across landscapes, unimpeded by ownership boundaries.

Invasive plants create a host of adverse environmental effects that are harmful to native ecosystem processes. Examples of these effects include: displacement of native plants; reduction in functionality of habitat and forage for wildlife and livestock; loss of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; increased soil erosion; reduced water quality; alteration of physical and biological properties of soil, including soil productivity; changes to the intensity and frequency of wildfires; budget impacts that limit or reduce land management opportunities due to high costs or dollars spent for controlling invasive plants; and loss of recreational opportunities.

We need to:

1. Reduce the extent of specific invasive plants at identified sites
2. Provide timely treatments for expanded and newly identified invasive plant sites



Without action, invasive plant populations will continue to grow, compromising our ability to manage for healthy functioning ecosystems.

Proposed Action

The Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland managers propose treating our invasive plant populations in order to reduce their impacts and protect the health of our ecosystems. These treatments will be applied within the context of our on-going Integrated Weed Management (IWM) programs and will follow the direction provided by the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans, and the Pacific Northwest Region Invasive Plant Program, Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants, Final Environmental Impact Statement (2005). The Integrated Weed Management program emphasizes the management and control of invasive plants through prevention, education, inventory, early detection, control, monitoring, site rehabilitation/restoration (where needed) and partnerships.

Site-specific treatments will be analyzed on approximately 12,000 acres that are known to be infested by invasive plants. The Proposed Action will also analyze treatments of new or expanding invasive plant populations. Based upon currently known sites with weed infestations, the Proposed Action includes approximately 100 acres of biological control (releasing insect or plant pathogens) treatment, approximately 500 acres of herbicide only treatment, approximately 6,000 acres of herbicide plus manual (hand pulling, using hand tools) treatment, approximately 1,000 acres of manual only treatment, approximately 500 acres of cultural (grazing animals, local remedies) plus herbicide treatment, approximately 700 acres of manual plus mechanical (mowing, root tilling) treatments, approximately 100 acres of mechanical plus herbicide treatment and approximately 2,500 acres of prescribed fire treatments.

Selection of treatment methods would be based upon information about specific invasive plant species, invasive plant site location, site type, and size of the infestation. Long term site goals would be established for each infested area. Prescriptions developed to meet those long-term site goals would follow Integrated Weed Management (IWM) principles. IWM is a process by which one selects and applies a combination of management techniques (example: prevention of invasive plant spread followed by manual (hand pulling) or mechanical (mowing) treatments. These may then be followed by biological (insect release) control treatments). IWM seeks to combine two or more management techniques which interact to provide better control than any one of the actions might provide alone. It is typically species-specific, site-specific and designed to be practical with a minimum of risk to non-target species or the surrounding environment.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action will be developed in response to key issues identified by the public.

Public Involvement

We are seeking your input to help us develop alternatives, analyze the effects of the alternatives, and select a preferred alternative. We welcome your comments anytime during the project, however, **your comments would be most helpful if received by August 19, 2005**. A comment form is attached for your use. We plan to release a Draft EIS in January, 2006. Following the

release of the Draft EIS, we will have a 45-Day Public Comment Period for your review and comment. This will be followed by the release of the Final EIS and a Record of Decision in April, 2005.

Maps of identified sites with invasive plant infestations and proposed treatment areas are available at the Forest Service Headquarters in Bend and in Prineville. **If you would like more information or to discuss the project, please contact Lorri Heath, Invasive Plant EIS Team Leader for the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland at (541) 383-5738.** Her office is located at 1001 SW Emkay Drive, Bend, Oregon.

How To Provide Comments:

You can provide comments by filling out the attached Comments Form, writing a letter, or by sending an email or fax.

Please send written comments to:


Lorri Heath, Team Leader
Deschutes/Ochoco/Crooked River National Grassland Invasive Plant EIS
1001 SW Emkay Drive
Bend, Oregon 97702

FAX Number = 541-383-5531

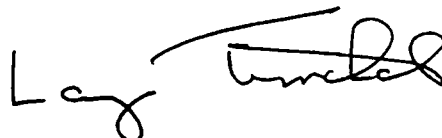
Or, you can send comments via email to: comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes@fs.fed.us. Electronic comments must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in plain text (.txt), Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (.pdf). E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, or in formats other than those listed or containing viruses, will be rejected.

We look forward to your participation in this important project.

Sincerely,



for LESLIE A.C. WELDON
Forest Supervisor, Deschutes NF



LARRY TIMCHAK
Forest Supervisor, Ochoco NF

Enclosure – Comment Form