

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Weed Prevention Practices and Analysis Guidelines

A. Prevention Strategies and Tactics from the Forest Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan (1992)

Project Planning

1. Noxious weed management is to be treated as a mandatory issue or concern within ALL NEPA planning activities where ground disturbance is likely. Prevention will be addressed as a part of the management constraints or requirements as well as being an evaluation criterion where appropriate.
2. NEPA analyses must consider the costs associated with preventing the occurrence or spread of noxious weeds
3. Project level personnel should be able to recognize noxious weeds occurring on or adjacent to their Districts and should be able to recognize potential invaders.

Vegetation Management

4. To the extent practical and feasible, with full consideration of other silvicultural and resource objectives, silvicultural prescriptions should strive to maintain as much shade as possible on site and to limit the amount of soil disturbance.
5. Logging systems should consider the objectives of maintaining ground cover, maintaining shade providing features, and minimizing ground disturbance when designing logging systems for a particular stand.
6. Stand exams, botanical inventories, range analyses, and other resource inventories will include a process for inventorying noxious weed occurrences by stand, species, size of infestation and location as a minimum.
7. Project or contract maps will show currently inventoried, high priority noxious weed infestations as a means of aiding in avoidance or monitoring.
8. Commensurate with anticipated risk of invasion or spread of noxious weeds, ground disturbing activities may need to include both a pre and one or more post project surveys to document pre-existing infestations and to evaluate the effects of the project on noxious weeds. The intensity and frequency of this survey should vary according to the risk/probability of the project affecting or being affected by noxious weed infestations. This risk should be evaluated during initial or periodic project planning and should be coordinated with the District noxious weed coordinator. Where monitoring is needed, it should be planned to continue for at least five years.

9. Where existing inventories or pre-project inventories indicate that an infestation occurs on or near a ground disturbing project, the project will be designed, in coordination with the District noxious weed coordinator, to plan for the long term management of the infestation and to prevent the spread of the infestation off site.

Depending on an assessment of the potential risk for introduction or spread of noxious weeds, this will often involve designing projects (including the implementing contracts, permits, etc.) so that the operator will not be working on high risk areas during the time when the weeds are capable of being spread by the operation. In the timber sale contract, C5.12 (Use of Roads by Purchaser), C5.4 (General and Special Maintenance Requirements, and C6.315 (Sale Operation Schedule) give the Districts the flexibility to keep contract vehicles out of high risk areas during the high risk times of the season. These type of requirements can also be incorporated in Federal Acquisition Regulation contracts in Section H – Special Contract Requirements.

10. Contract clause language will be developed along the following general lines. These clauses will be submitted to the Regional Office for review and final approval. Implementation will not occur until such time as the clauses have received Regional Office approval.

If an assessment of risk conducted by the Forest Officer in charge of a project, and in full coordination with the District noxious weed coordinator, indicates a high risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds through transport by logging, road construction, or other ground disturbing equipment, and unless otherwise agreed to in writing, all equipment to be operated on a project area will be cleaned in a manner sufficient to prevent noxious weeds from being carried on to the project area. This requirement does not apply to passenger vehicles or other equipment used exclusively on roads. Cleaning, if needed, will occur in a site to be established by the District Ranger, in coordination with the equipment owners or operators and the County Weed Board. Cleaning will be inspected and approved by the Forest Officer in charge of the specific project.

Where log trucks or other large equipment make delivery to or haul from purchaser's/contractor's yards infested by noxious weeds, the yard owner will be required to eradicate the noxious weeds from the yard/scaling site through an amendment to the yard scaling agreement or other contract provision as appropriate.

11. Where timber purchaser' log yards or other contractors equipment yards are known or suspected to be infested by noxious weeds, encourage their cleanup through working with the purchaser/contractor and the County Weed board.

Revegetation/Restoration

12. Ensure that all disturbed ground is revegetated as soon as possible after disturbance. Consider regeneration or other resource objective needs in planning for species to be seeded to be seeded, timing rates, etc. Rehabilitate bare ground unless it can be documented that natural or artificial regeneration can accomplish the same prevention objectives as seeding within a reasonable time frame.
13. Favor the use of native species (or domestic varieties of native species) in preference to introduced species for seeding for site protection when the native species can accomplish the site objectives in a reasonable timeframe and costs are not excessive.
14. Within the constraints of meeting other resource objectives, use the species and mixes that will most rapidly occupy a site. Consider seeding a fast germinating annual in the mix to provide a suitable ground cover as rapidly as possible.
15. Where there are no other multiple resource constraints, such as along road cuts and fills, consider use of sod-forming species as a major part of the mix.
16. All seed purchased or otherwise designated or accepted for use on National Forest System Lands will be required to be tested for “all states noxious weeds” according to AOSA (Association of Official Seed Analysts) standards and will be certified in writing a Registered Seed Technologist or Seed Analyst as meeting the requirements of the Federal Seed Act and the appropriate State Seed Law for the state in which application is planned to occur, regarding the testing, labeling, sale and transport of prohibited and restricted noxious weeds.

Prior to acceptance of purchased seed, or use of seed by a purchaser, contractor, subcontractor, cooperater, or by the Forest Service, a sample meeting the AOSA standards for sample size and method of acquisition (see Appendix O) will be submitted to either the Oregon State University Seed Testing Laboratory or another seed testing facility for testing by a Registered Seed Technologist or Seed Analyst (as certified through either the AOSA for State and Federal analysts/technologists of the Society of Commercial Seed Technologists) for “all states noxious weeds.” Only after a finding and documentation in writing of no weed seeds on the “all states noxious weeds” listing in excess of state limitations for prohibited and restricted weed seed will the seed be accepted and used.

17. When hay or straw is to be used for mulching, for erosion control, fire rehabilitation or other uses, it should be noxious weed free. Until a Regional or State process can be developed to ensure certification of hay or straw, the following process will be followed:

Contact the local County Extension Agent to determine which farmers in the area are participating in the certified grass seed or grain programs. The County Agent may also be able to aid in determining which of the certified growers may also be

baling the straw. To the extent possible, use only straw obtained from fields participating in the certification program.

Monitor the applications site on a scheduled basis for a minimum of five years after use of the straw. This program will not ensure that the straw is totally weed free but is the best option available at this time.

Range Management

18. In the development of Allotment Management Plans and Annual Operating Plans, consider the potential for introduction of noxious weed seed through animal transport. 19. Where the livestock are entering the Forest from a known noxious weed infested area, consider requiring the feeding of the animals (at permittee expense) weed free hay (or other weed free forage or feeds) for 9 to 10 days prior to permitting ingress on to the general area of the National Forest allotment. The feeding area will, if at all possible, be on non-National Forest System lands. If this is not practical, confine the animals in as small a pasture as feasible for the 9-10 day period. This pasture will then require annual monitoring for the occurrence of noxious weeds (and management as appropriate). Under no circumstances will this strategy be applied in a manner inconsistent with Forest Plan standards nor in a manner which will result in resource degradation.

19. Consider the exclusion of livestock (and wildlife where feasible) from high priority noxious weed sites where the animals are likely to cause a spread of the weed off site.

20. In the AMP's to the extent possible, provide for the use of livestock as a tool in preventing palatable, non-poisonous noxious weeds from setting seed (e.g.: sheep grazing of leafy spurge).

21. In the Annual Operating Plans, provide information to the permittees regarding noxious weed infestations. To the extent possible after seed set, encourage livestock to avoid sites where the seeds are likely to be transmitted by the livestock (i.e., either through ingestion and excretion or through attachment to the animal and then dropping off).

22. In the Annual Operating Plans, provide information to the permittees regarding noxious weed identification, methods of spread and prevention measures.

Mining

23. Review Mineral Operating Plans to ensure that proper actions are taken to prevent the establishment of new infestations or the spread of existing ones. Ensure that disturbed sites are rehabilitated and revegetated as soon after disturbance as possible. Consider the use of annual cover crops where an area will be left in a disturbed condition for period of time prior to being re-worked.

Recreation

24. For recreational livestock use authorized under permit (such as outfitter-guide permits), permit only the use of feeds with a high probability of being free of noxious weeds (such as heat treated and pressurized pelletized feed).
25. For recreational and other livestock use not required to be under a permit, develop a process to prohibit the use of feeds on National Forest System lands unless they are accompanied a certification insuring their weed free status or are such that they have a high probability of being free of noxious weeds (such as heat treated and pressurized pellitized feed).
26. Where feasible, cooperate with the County Weed Boards and other cooperators to provide a hay exchange program during hunting seasons (e.g., Wallowa County).
27. Where recreational vehicle activity such as off road vehicle (ORV) use is occurring in an area where noxious weeds are present or are resulting in a ground disturbing activity such that potential invasion sites are available for noxious weeds, consider closing the area to motorized vehicle use and/or conducting revegetation efforts to minimize sites available for weed spread or invasion.

Where ORV use is restricted to a specified area, that area, because of the extensive disturbance to the soil and vegetative cover, will need to be closely monitored for noxious weeds. Planning for the ORV area must consider prevention as a high priority.
28. By District or Zone, conduct a Forest-wide inventory for noxious weeds. Concentrate on high priority species (e.g., potential and new invaders) and on areas where gorund disturbing activities are common.

Travel and Access Management

29. Road management objectives should consider the benefits and costs associated with allowing or encouraging desirable herbaceous vegetation growth on shoulders, cuts and fills versus the potential for invasion by noxious weeds and the long term costs associated with treatments and off site effects.
30. Road maintenance planning will address practices to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.
31. Where shoulders or drainage ditches are covered by desirable herbaceous cover, consider leaving it in place rather than blading it off if such a practice can be done without causing excessive damage to the road surface or significant public safety hazards.
32. When blading, brushing, rock raking, or otherwise maintaining a road surface where a noxious weed infestation is located the COR/ER (or road maintenance foreman) will

work with the District noxious weed coordinator to ensure that appropriate inventory and treatment measures are applied. The following are suggested practices:

Ensure that the contractor notifies the COR/ER in a timely enough manner so that the road can be checked for the current status of noxious weeds prior to any work occurring. Weed sites should be managed as follows:

- if the weed is not in flower, or will not reproduce through damaged plant parts (e.g., vegetatively) proceed with maintenance,
- if the weed has flowered, either hand pull or cut all tops, bag in a plastic bag, then proceed with maintenance; or flag the site for avoidance by the contractor until the District can properly treat the infestation (dispose of weed seed heads by burning),
- if the weed is known or suspected to sprout vegetatively from cut parts, flag the site to ensure avoidance by the contractor until the weed can be treated by proper means.

To the extent possible, in full consideration of road maintenance and public safety objectives as well as silvicultural needs, do not remove trees or brush from adjacent to the road. The objective is to provide as much shade as possible on the unvegetated or sparsely vegetated road surface, cuts and fills.

33. Pit/Quarry plans will consider noxious weeds in the development of long-term plans and will develop plans to prevent introduction or to prevent the spread of existing infestations. Minerals materials procured from non-Forest Service pits will also be checked to be sure the material is not infested with noxious weed seed.

34. In planning for Access and Travel management ensure that management of noxious weeds will be a consideration. If a road is to be closed, coordination with the District noxious weed coordinator should occur to ensure that if noxious weeds exist within the closed portion of the road, the sites are inventoried, IWM decisions are made regarding their management, and provisions are made for access as needed to implement the IWM treatments and monitoring. Roads to be closed should be seeded (with tested and certified weed free seed) to minimize potential invasion sites.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

35. Each District/Zone will coordinate closely with the associated County Weed Board to ensure sharing of information regarding infestations, treatments, etc.

36. Coordinate with adjacent Districts, Forests and BLM Areas to ensure that animals or equipment moving from the adjacent lands onto the District are either moving from weed free areas or are treated/Quarantined as appropriate. Encourage coordinated policies between adjacent lands.

Wildfire Suppression

37. To the extent possible, do not use noxious weed infested sites for fire crew bases. Where emergency situations dictate that the base must be located on a site infested by noxious weeds, ensure that noxious weeds on the site are prevented from going to seed and that appropriate short and long term inventory, mitigation and management measures are applied to rehabilitate the site and to manage the infestation. Do not use noxious weed infested sites as heli-bases unless appropriate long-term actions are taken to prevent seed production and to ensure eradication of the weeds and rehabilitation of the site.

B. Objectives, Standards and Guidelines from the Hells Canyon Comprehensive Management Plan (2003)

Nox-O1: Manage noxious weeds to reduce negative impacts to native plants, wildlife, and other resources. Use all reasonable and feasible integrated weed management processes available under existing decisions and direction to prevent, restore, eradicate, control, contain, or otherwise reduce negative impacts of noxious weeds. (New)

Nox-O2: Evaluate extent of nonnative invasive plants, their relative impacts and potential for restoration. (New)

Nox-O3: Evaluate the factors contributing toward the spread of nonnative invasive plants and implement appropriate prevention strategies. (New)

Nox-G1: Conduct restoration activities on grassland sites in mid-seral or earlier status to improve the ability of native vegetation on site to resist invasion and occupancy by noxious weeds. (New)

Nox-G2: Develop a public information and education program on preventing the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Provide a reporting method for and encourage the public to report new weed sites. (New)

Nox-G3: Provide for natural restoration of degraded sites by modifying management activities as necessary. (New)

Nox-G3: Consider quarantine or closure of some areas, trails, and/or roads to prevent the spread of noxious weeds to adjacent areas. (New)

Nox-G6: When planning PF projects, identify sites of known noxious weeds and/or invasive species of concern. Avoid burning through identified weed sites and/or prescribe management actions that will minimize the potential for creation of site conditions favorable to the spread of invasive weeds. (New)

Nox-G7: Contain and/or control aggressive noxious weeds and other nonnative plants that reduce ground cover, reduce perennial plant cover, and accelerate erosion. (New)

Rec-S7: All users of pack and saddle stock must carry and use pelletized, or other certified weed-free feed. (New)

TES-O4: Conduct habitat improvement projects for federally listed species. These may include fencing, burning, closing roads, treatment of noxious weeds, plant propagation, or other actions. (New)

Fire-G4: After fire, use an interdisciplinary team to determine when activities may resume in burned areas. Consider rest from domestic livestock grazing after burning. Coordinate with partners and permittees when setting up guidelines for management of burned areas.

Use management strategies that will minimize the potential for introduction and/or spread of noxious weeds and other undesirable nonnative plants. Protect areas of active restoration from management impacts. (New)

Wil-S4: Noxious weeds would be managed within the Wilderness using the minimum management tool to insure the most compatible, but effective means of meeting objectives. (INWMP Plan)

Acc-G8: Manage roads and trails in coordination with the *Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan*. Where roads or trails are to be maintained, ensure an up to date inventory of all noxious weed sites within the right-of-way and plan for appropriate treatment to prevent the spread of weeds during maintenance activities. Strive to maintain an effective ground cover on all adjacent disturbed surfaces, consistent with safety, to provide a degree of protection against the spread or invasion of noxious weeds. Where roads or trails are to be closed, ensure that pre-planning provides for an inventory of noxious weeds sites and for continued treatment of those sites. During closure activities, ensure that on-site or seeded native plant species are considered with the focus on minimizing bare ground. (INWMP Plan)

Veg-S2: Harvest of any parts of nonconiferous plant, lichen, or fungal species shall be limited to incidental use only. Incidental use is defined as possession of one gallon of any part of any species of plant, lichen, or fungal material. In some cases, commercial permits may be issued outside Wilderness after appropriate NEPA analysis. **Any legally designated noxious weed would be exempt from this standard;** they may be harvested in unlimited quantities without a permit. In addition, American Indians collecting plant, lichen, or fungal materials under treaty rights would be exempt from this limitation. (New) (bold emphasis added)