



File Code: 1950 – Route 113 Herbicide Use

Date: April 12, 2003

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is conducting an environmental analysis and invites your comments on the following proposal. The State of Maine, Department of Transportation (MDOT) proposes to use an herbicide to control woody tree species along State Route 113 in the Maine section of the White Mountain National Forest. (See enclosed map.)

Background

MDOT has been applying herbicides to Maine roadsides for over forty years using a system of integrated vegetation management (IVM) to manage its roadsides. IVM calls for use of the correct tool for the site and species. Tools MDOT uses include cultural, mechanical, and chemical controls. Currently the MDOT is only using mechanical controls along route 113. Using herbicides would provide another tool to control brush, and allow lower growing shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers to establish and thrive.

The Maine Board of Pesticide Control licenses all MDOT applicators. This requires the applicator to pass a minimum of two tests on knowledge of pesticides, plant material, and safety. Additionally, MDOT provides yearly training for all the Department's applicators.

Purpose and Need for Action

Maine legislation requires that MDOT ensure protection, operation, and safety of roads. To achieve these goals MDOT cuts brush along the roadside to maintain sight distances of 800 feet along the travel way, around corners, at guardrails, and at signs. Brush is also cut to maintain the travel width of the road, allow for safe off-the-road vehicle recovery, allow for inspection and repair of roadside structures and ditches, allow for sighting of large mammals before they enter the road, provide for sun to reach the road surface to dry the surface quickly after precipitation, and to maintain views of scenery.

MDOT currently uses mowers, chainsaws, and mechanical brush cutters to control vegetation along Route 113. The cutting is done in late fall between when the plants start to drop their leaves and snow cover, and early spring after snowmelt and before leafout. This cutting does not eliminate the woody brush. In fact it results in the cut brush resprouting as the season matures. This results in multiple stems where once there was one. Depending on the species and size of the brush cut, some of these resprouts can grow six to eight feet in a season. This requires MDOT to cut the same brush every year.

Forest Plan Direction

Most of the National Forest area through which Route 113 traverses is being managed with direction for Management Area 2.1 with a shorter section within Management Area 3.1. Direction for these areas is described in the Forest Plan on pages III-30 thru III-41. Standards and guidelines specific to road maintenance are described in the Forest-wide standards on page III- 23. Route 113 is a State of Maine highway and is expected to be maintained at the higher maintenance levels for all forest roads.



Proposed Action

MDOT would use Garlon 4 (61.6% triclopyr) from Dow Agro Science mixed with Hy-Grade oil, 20% / 80% in either a cut stump or a dormant basal stem application. The mixture will be applied using a hand-held spray bottle or backpack sprayer. This allows the applicator to use a low pressure of less than 40 psi, reducing the potential for off-target drift. Garlon 4 is a selective herbicide that controls only broadleaf plant species and does not affect grasses or sedges (monocots). It is specifically manufactured for use along roadsides and for forestry applications. The Department applies it directly only to target species and does not use a broadcast technique. The herbicide is not applied to water and is not used when snow is present on the ground or during precipitation events (rain or snow).

The herbicide would be applied as a cut stump treatment only to hardwood tree species that have been cut, as softwoods do not resprout. The woody materials cut are hardwood and softwood tree species within ten feet of the edge of the road and less than 4 inches in diameter. Cut stump treatments consist of applying the herbicide to the root collar, side of stump, and cambium layer until thoroughly wet but not to runoff. The herbicide would also be applied as a dormant basal stem treatment to hardwoods under six feet in height and softwoods under three feet in height. Dormant basal stem applications consist of spraying the entire stem of the plant to 12 –15 inches above the ground until the entire area is wet but not to runoff. Dormant basal stem applications would eliminate the need to cut the treated brush. Basal stem applications of herbicide cost \$100.00 - \$300.00 per mile vs. \$1500.00 - \$4500.00 per mile for hand cutting. By reducing the amount of cutting, MDOT would reduce emissions from engines particularly high output 2-cycle engines, and reduce exposure of personnel to potentially harmful situations of using a chainsaw or brushcutter on slopes.

Environmental Analysis

We will examine any of the following resource conditions present in the project area to determine if extraordinary circumstances exist that warrant further analysis:

- Federally-listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species;
- Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds;
- Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas;
- Inventoried roadless areas;
- Research Natural Areas;
- American Indian religious or cultural sites;
- Archeological sites or historic properties or areas.

Our analysis will examine any potential effects on these resources. I will use your comments and reports from natural resource professionals to determine if there is a potential for significant environmental effects resulting from this trail work.

When this phase of the environmental analysis is complete, I will decide whether to continue with further analysis or proceed with implementing the proposed action. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215, my decision to implement the project would not be appealable so it is important that I hear from you soon.

Comment Period –Ends May 12, 2003

I will accept your comments throughout the environmental analysis process, however to ensure that I have an opportunity to consider your comments before I make my decision about this project, I need to hear from you by May 12, 2003. Please be sure to include the following information:

- (1) Your name, address, telephone number, organization represented, and title if applicable
- (2) Project you are commenting on: *Route 113 Herbicide Use*
- (3) Specific environmental concerns you may have related to the proposed action described above.
- (4) Indicate if you wish to remain informed about this project by returning the attached form. If we do not hear from you, you will receive no further mailings about this particular project.

I will accept comments via phone, fax, email (gpozzuto@fs.fed.us), or letter.

I encourage you to review this proposal and share your concerns and suggestions with me. Please be aware that your name, address, and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection. If this is a concern to you please contact us as soon as possible. For information, questions, and comments, contact Pat Nasta, U.S. Forest Service, at (603) 466-2713 ext. 222, TTY 603-466-2856. I realize your time is valuable and want you to know I appreciate the time you spend reviewing and commenting on our project proposals.

Sincerely,

GEORGE R. POZZUTO
District Ranger

enclosures