
*Final
Environmental Impact Statement*

**Salmon-Challis National Forest
Noxious Weed
Management Program**

Prepared for
U.S. Forest Service

September 2003

CH2MHILL



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Salmon-Challis
National Forest
Supervisor's Office

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Salmon, ID 83467
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File Code: 1950-3

Date: September 15, 2003

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Salmon-Challis National Forest Noxious Weed Management Program. The FEIS describes and analyzes four alternatives for the treatment of noxious and non-native invasive weeds throughout the Salmon-Challis National Forest excluding the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

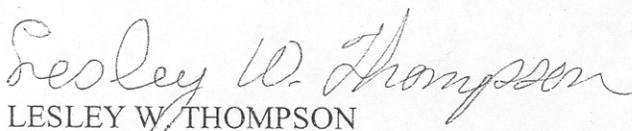
Public scoping for this project was initiated in the winter of 2001. The issues identified through scoping included the potential effects of herbicide application on human health, water quality, fisheries, native plant communities, sensitive plants, wildlife habitat, soil productivity, recreation, scenery, heritage resources, and cultural resources. Four alternatives were developed following the concept of Integrated Weed Management (IWM). Three alternatives include the use of herbicides, one of which includes the use of aerial herbicide application. The fourth alternative considers no herbicide use. The maximum annual treatment evaluated in the alternatives is 18,000 acres including application of herbicide on up to 15,000 acres.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was developed and distributed to agencies, governments, and the public in November 2002, for a 60 day comment period. This FEIS considers and incorporates comments received on the DEIS. No further public review or comment opportunities are provided.

The Selected Alternative is currently being consulted on with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA-Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service). Once consultation is complete, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed by the Forest Supervisor and made available to the public.

Any immediate questions may be directed to Bill Diage at (208) 756-5562 or e-mail wdiage@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,


LESLEY W. THOMPSON
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



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Salmon-Challis National Forest Noxious Weed Management Program

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Salmon, Idaho

Responsible Agency:

USDA FOREST SERVICE

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Salmon, Idaho 83467

Cover Sheet

Salmon-Challis National Forest Noxious Weed Management Program

() Draft (X) Final

Responsible Agency

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

Cooperating Agencies

Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs)

 Custer County CWMA

 Lemhi County CWMA

 Lost Rivers CWMA (Butte and Custer Counties)

 Continental Divide CWMA (Lemhi, Butte, Jefferson, and Clark Counties)

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

 Challis Field Office

 Salmon Field Office

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

Counties that Could be Affected

Custer, Lemhi, Butte, and Blaine, Idaho

Abstract

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) covers the proposed Noxious Weed Management Program for the Salmon-Challis National Forest (S-CNF). The project area covers more than three million acres of the S-CNF, excluding the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness (FCRONRW), and includes existing as well as future potential weed infestation sites. There is a need to implement an integrated series of weed treatment and non-treatment practices that would eradicate, reduce, and/or slow the spread of noxious and invasive non-native populations of weeds on the S-CNF. Inventoried weed infestations on the S-CNF now exceed 66,000 acres at more than 2,500 sites. Extensive populations of spotted knapweed are present on the northern part of the S-CNF. Weed management alternatives evaluated in this Final EIS include the following:

No Action Alternative— (No Change from Current Management)

Proposed Action—Aerial and Ground-Based Herbicide Applications Plus Mechanical, Biological, Controlled Grazing, and Combinations of Treatments

Alternative 1—Ground-Based Herbicide Application Plus Mechanical, Biological, Controlled Grazing, and Combinations of Treatments (No Aerial Herbicide Application)

Alternative 2—Mechanical, Biological, Controlled Grazing, and Combinations of Treatments (No Herbicide Application)

The Forest Service has selected the Proposed Action as the Preferred Alternative based on analyses presented in this Final EIS. The Proposed Action, followed by Alternative 1, would be the most effective of the alternatives evaluated in eradicating, controlling, and containing noxious weeds on the S-CNF and in benefiting a broad range of S-CNF resources. The No Action Alternative would be less effective and Alternative 2 would be the least effective of the alternatives evaluated in treating weeds and in benefiting S-CNF resources because of the comparatively few acres of weeds that would be treated each year (No Action Alternative) and the absence of herbicides as a weed treatment option (Alternative 2). The Proposed Action best meets all of the project purposes and needs, contains the most aggressive and flexible treatment practices for achieving noxious weed management goals, and would provide the greatest weed treatment benefits at the lowest cost per acre.

Environmental issues evaluated in this Final EIS involve the following topics: vegetation resources and noxious weeds; aquatic resources; wildlife resources; ecosystem function; surface water; groundwater; soils, geology, and minerals; land uses and designations; visual resources; air quality and noise; human health and safety; Indian Trust Assets; environmental justice; socioeconomic resources; cultural and historical resources and Native American religious concerns; and paleontological resources.

Other Requirements Served

This Final EIS is intended to serve other environmental review and consultation requirements pursuant to 40 CFR 1502.25(a).

Date Draft EIS Made Available to EPA and the Public:

November 15, 2002

Date Final EIS Made Available to EPA and the Public:

September 24, 2003

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