



File Code: 1950/2080

Date: May 14, 2009

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

Enclosed is a copy of the Huron-Manistee National Forests Invasive Plant Control Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The Forest Service is proposing to conduct Non-native Invasive Plant (NNIP) Control. The Huron-Manistee National Forests (HMNF) Non-native Invasive Plant Control Project is a Forest-wide proposal on National Forest System Lands across the Huron-Manistee National Forests.

The EA describes four alternatives that I will be considering for Forest-wide Non-native invasive plant control. Each alternative provides a different level of treatment on National Forest System lands. The alternatives include the following:

**ALTERNATIVE 1** – is the **NO ACTION** alternative. This alternative provides a baseline from which to compare the effects of the action alternatives and an opportunity to analyze the environmental and social effects of not implementing proposed management activities on the Forests. Under the No Action Alternative, the Forest Service would not implement an integrated program of treatments to control NNIP infestations on the HMNF. Limited herbicide, mechanical, manual treatment and biological control of small infestations of NNIP species may occur in special areas or administrative sites through separate decisions, but most NNIP infestations would persist and spread.

**ALTERNATIVE 2** – is the **PROPOSED ACTION**, under which the Forests would implement an integrated program for the control of non-native invasive (NNIP) infestations. Control efforts focus on treating priority habitats such as: established and candidate Research Natural Areas, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and corridors, and areas of special interest. Control efforts are primarily directed toward sources of spread: managed wildlife openings, trailheads, parking lots, campgrounds, developed recreation areas, accesses to dispersed recreation areas, and gravel pits. The total acreage of these areas is approximately 40,000 acres. Treatments on up to 2,000 acres typically would occur annually across the Forest over the next decade (as funding allows). Treatment may include any combination of the following methods of control:

- 1) Manual treatments (such as hand-pulling, hand-cutting, and digging);
- 2) Mechanical treatments (such as cutting or mowing);
- 3) Spot treatments with a propane weed torch;
- 4) Licensed herbicide spot treatments (such as spraying foliage using hand-held or backpack sprayers, hand wicking, cutting woody stems and applying herbicide to the cuts, or injecting herbicide into woody stems);
- 5) Application of licensed aquatic herbicides;
- 6) Release of USDA-approved biological control organisms.



Forest staff would determine which NNIP infestations would be treated, and methods to be used, following the treatment protocol set forth in this EA (see the description of the proposed action in Chapter 2). Efforts would be focused on early detection and rapid responses to control small NNIP infestations. Larger infestations would be contained and prioritized for treatment. Management would support the USDA National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management (USDA Forest Service 2004f).

Management activities would occur annually over the next ten years, including follow-up monitoring to evaluate success of control activities. NNIP control actions could occur across the HMNF wherever priority invasive plant infestations are identified. Some treatment would occur in forested stands, lakes, wetlands and adjacent to rivers and streams. Treatments most typically would occur along roads and trails, in gravel pits, recreational sites, administrative sites, utility corridors, and special use areas.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – is similar to Alternative 2 except treatment limits are reduced. Alternative 3 was developed in response to public scoping comments that expressed concern over the size and extent of the Proposed Action. Under Alternative 3, the Forests would implement an integrated program to control NNIP infestations on the HMNF as described for Alternative 2, but the acreage treated annually would be decreased to a maximum of 1,000 acres per year. Proposed treatments and protocols would otherwise be as described for Alternative 2.

ALTERNATIVE 4 – is similar to Alternative 2 except with two additional treatment options. The use of broadcast herbicide application using a tractor or 4 wheeler with a boom spray arm, would be permitted in existing meadows or open fields with large infestations of knapweed, St. John's wort, leafy spurge, hoary alyssum, smooth brome grass, reed canary grass, or sweet clovers, when attempting to restore the site to Karner blue butterfly (KBB) habitat. There are also 5 additional herbicides available to use. The use of manual, mechanical, biological, and spot chemical control treatments would be as described for Alternative 2.

Although a final determination has not been made, Alternative 4 has been identified as the preferred alternative.

Public participation is an important part of the analysis and you are encouraged to look at the enclosed document. To ensure that your comments are considered before I make a final decision, they must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of the legal notice in the Cadillac News. When the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, comments will be accepted until the end of the next Federal working day. In order to have standing to appeal this decision comments must be submitted during the 30-day comment period.

Please address your comments to:

USDA Forest Service, Huron-Manistee National Forests,  
Attn: Lee Evison,  
1755 S. Mitchell Street,  
Cadillac, MI 49601

Office hours, for those who wish to hand deliver or provide verbal comments, are:  
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday (except Federal holidays).

Verbal comments must be provided at the above listed office, or by telephone at:  
(231) 775-5023, ext. 1+8737; TTY/TTD (231) 775-3183 (hearing impaired), during the hours  
listed above. Alternatively, comments may be submitted by: facsimile at (231) 775-5551. Or by  
email at:

[comments-eastern-huron-manistee at fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-huron-manistee@fs.fed.us)

(Please put HMNF Invasive Plant Control Project in the subject line) E-mail attachments must be  
readable by Microsoft Office (2000 or XP) or Adobe.

In order to have standing to appeal, each individual or representative of a group or organization  
that submits comments must sign or provide for verification of identity according to the  
requirements of 36 CFR 215.6(3)(iv) and (v). Only those who provide timely comments,  
through one of the methods and including all of the information described above, will have  
standing to appeal (36 CFR 215.13).

If you wish to reference scientific literature in your comment letter, I request that you send a  
copy of the reference you have cited and include rationale as to how you feel it is pertinent to the  
specific project at hand. This will allow me to fully evaluate your comments; if I do not receive a  
copy of the literature, I may not be able to utilize it in making my decision.

Copies of the decision will be mailed to those who request it and those who comment on the  
project. The final decision on this project will be subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11.

Comments that are received on this proposal are part of the public record and therefore, are  
available for public inspection upon request. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted  
and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to  
appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215.

Copies of the EA can be found on our webpage at:  
[www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/pages/proposed\\_projects.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/pages/proposed_projects.htm).

Copies of the final Decision Notice will be mailed to those who have submitted comments on  
this proposal and to anyone who requests a copy of these documents.

Thank you for your interest in this project. If you have any questions, please contact Lee Evison,  
Forest Planner, at (231) 775-5023 x 1+8737.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Barry Paulson*  
BARRY PAULSON  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures

cc: Lee Evison