



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Santa Clara/Mojave
Rivers Ranger District

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File Code: 1900-1

Date: August 18, 2010

Friends of the Angeles National Forest Scoping Outreach Interested Parties

Dear Interested Individuals, Organizations and Agencies:

The U.S. Forest Service, Angeles National Forest (ANF), Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger District is seeking public comment on the Proposed Action for the Santa Clara River Watershed Invasive Plant Treatment Project. The project is located within the Forest boundary and includes the Santa Clara River Watershed and all tributaries with headwaters on the Angeles National Forest (ANF). The project area includes approximately 262,000 acres and 744 miles of stream channels. The project is located entirely in Los Angeles County (see enclosed project area maps). A detailed description of the project can be downloaded from the Forest website <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles/projects/> under "Projects and Plans" and "Santa Clara River Watershed Invasive Plant Treatment Project, Santa Clara/Mojave River Ranger District." Hard copies and/or CDs are available upon request. A summary is provided below.

Background Project Description

The ANF conducted an arundo (giant reed) eradication project in Soledad Canyon and San Francisquito Canyon between 1995 and 2005. The Forest had some success removing arundo in treatment areas, but since treatment stopped in 2005, other invasive species such as tamarisk (saltcedar) and tree-of-heaven have become established. Also many other species such as yellow star thistle and tree tobacco continue to invade portions of the Santa Clara watershed. The purpose of this Environmental Assessment is to update and expand the original project's purpose and need, project area, and approved activities necessary for the eradication and control of the most undesirable invasive and non-native plant species (see enclosed maps of the project area). This project is part of the larger Santa Clara River invasive plant removal and restoration project that has many partners and stakeholders extending from the coast to the headwaters. The ultimate goal of the cooperators is to restore the natural ecosystem and reduce water consumption by invasive plants in Santa Clara River and its tributaries.

We are proposing the eradication, control, containment, and/or suppression of existing and new infestations of invasive and non-native plant species that are undesirable, noxious, harmful, injurious, or poisonous in the Santa Clara Watershed within the Forest boundary. Treatment areas could include non-National Forest System lands if authorized under the Wyden Amendment. The term of this project is 15 years with periodic reviews if new information is available. If the invasive species are left unchecked, the ecosystem in the Santa Clara River watershed could be dramatically changed. Invasive plants could create a host of environmental effects including displacement of native plants, reduction in habitat for wildlife and plants (including threatened, endangered, and sensitive species), reduction in water quantity and a potential increase in the intensity and frequency of wildfires. Failure to control invasives on the National Forest would result in increasing invasive species problems for downstream jurisdictions and adjacent landowners.



The project incorporates an adaptive management strategy that allows the project to be modified based on invasive plant expansion, new infestations of invasive plants in the project area, and new and/or more effective treatment methods. This adaptive management strategy would allow for rapid response for control and/or containment as long as the scope of the treatment and the effects are within those addressed in the analysis. New information would be reviewed by an interdisciplinary team and documented with proposed treatment approved by the appropriate responsible official through a formal letter to the file. This strategy would not allow for the use of new herbicides other than those included in the original analysis, would not allow for aerial applications of herbicide, and would not allow large heavy equipment into the treatment areas (e.g. dozers).

Treatment would follow integrated weed management (IWM) for each site. IWM includes an approach for selecting methods of eradicating, containing, controlling, and/or suppressing invasive plants in coordination with other resource management activities to achieve optimum management goals and objectives. Proposed treatment methods include biological control (e.g. insects and/or pathogens), manual/mechanical, flaming torch method, and herbicides. Additional treatment of targeted undesirable vegetation could include pile and burning and off-site removal by hand or helicopter. No new permanent or temporary roads are being proposed with this action.

The five herbicides that are considered as treatment options with the Proposed Action include: glyphosate, triclopyr, imazapyr, aminopyralid, and chlorsulfuron. Herbicide treatment would comply with state and federal pesticide laws, would be applied strictly in accordance with the label directions, and would be applied under the direction of a licensed applicator.

Restoration and monitoring are also key components of the proposed action. Project implementation may begin as early as the winter/spring of 2010.

The proposed activities are consistent with the objectives and management direction in the Angeles National Forest Management Plan.

How to Comment and Timeframe

This public comment period is considered the scoping stage under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This scoping notice is intended to provide those interested in, or affected by this project with an opportunity to make their concerns and suggestions known. We encourage you to be as specific as possible in your comments with regard to potential effects of the proposed action.

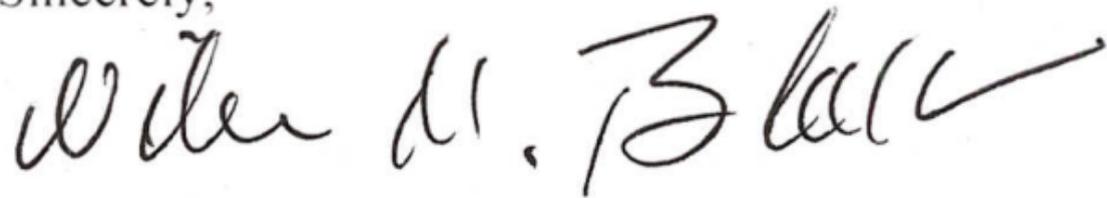
Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this project should be submitted by September 17, 2010, which marks the end of the 30-day public scoping period. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone by calling Project Planner Steve Loe at (909) 382-2724. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to sloe@fs.fed.us. Comments in writing, those hand delivered, or facsimile forms can be submitted to District Assistant Resource Officer Tasha Hernandez, 28245 Avenue Crocker, Suite 220, Valencia, CA 91355; (661) 296-5847 (FAX). The office business hours for those providing hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Please ensure it is clear that your comments are for the Santa Clara River Watershed Invasive Plant Treatment Project for all delivery methods.

The preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed and made available, along with other notices for the project, to those who have provided sufficient contact information, submitted comments, and to those who have requested to be added to the project mailing list. The preliminary EA is tentatively planned to be completed in the winter of 2010.

Comments received in response to this request, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

For further information regarding this proposed action including requesting detailed hard copies or a CD, contact Steve Loe at (909) 382-2724 or Tasha Hernandez at (661) 296-9710 ext. 242. We encourage your input on this proposal and we appreciate your interest in the management of the Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger District and the Angeles National Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wilburn D. Blount". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

WILBURN BLOUNT
District Ranger