



ponds, riparian vegetation and fish and wildlife habitat. In the past, approved post-grazing levels of vegetation were established by Regional and Forest personnel; our current post-grazing vegetation levels fall within these guidelines.

Grazing could be allowed in some research natural areas (RNA), botanical special interest areas (BSIA), and administrative sites (AS). However, the Gifford Pinchot NF has chosen not to permit grazing in RNA, BSIA, and any AS not specifically related to grazing.

There are three active allotments on the Forest.

There are three active allotments on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. These allotments are almost all on transitional rangeland. They are located on portions of the Mt. Adams District and Mt. Saint Helens District in the areas of Twin Buttes, Mt. Adams, and Ice Caves.

Results: Livestock use for the 2003 season consisted of no sheep and 458 cattle pair totaling 553 Animal Unit Months (AUM) for the Forest, which is approximately 48 percent below the allowed and permitted head-months. Field analysis and utilization monitoring was completed during the grazing season

Evaluation: During 2003 any grazing allotment non-compliance concerns were addressed and corrected. The Twin Buttes permit was in non-compliance for unauthorized personal convenience non-use. Administration action was taken. The Ice Caves allotment did not meet the utilization standard of 3" stubble height. Permittee was notified of non-compliance and administrative action was taken.

During 2003 any grazing allotment non-compliance concerns were addressed and corrected

Recommended Action To Be Taken: Monitoring and current management practices are to be continued. Continue to emphasize prevention and coordinate monitoring activities with the permittees, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and botany, wildlife, fish, and hydrology specialists to maintain and improve resource conditions. Complete the NEPA process for the Ice Caves Allotment Management Plan.

Invasive Species (Noxious Weeds) ⁴⁶

Introduction

Noxious weeds are a problem because they can be toxic to wildlife, domestic livestock, and humans and they displace desirable plant communities. Toxicity to flora and fauna is the primary concern because they are rarely ingested by people. Ecosystem changes produced by noxious weeds can be dramatic and have highly adverse impacts to plant and animal environments. These types of changes impact all resources. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest is part of the FY 2004 Invasive Plants EIS with the Mt Hood and Olympic National Forests and Columbia Gorge Natural Scenic Area. This analysis will yield priorities and treatment strategies for invasive species.



Results: Approximately, 2,000 acres were field reviewed across the Mt. Adams and Mt. St. Helens districts. One hundred ten acres of tansy ragwort, scotch broom, five knapweeds, and hound’s tongue were treated manually and with biological controls. The treatment sites are within the Mt. Adams Ranger District, Wind River Nursery, and Mount. St. Helens Ranger District and Mounument.

Invasive weeds were treated on 110 acres and 2000 acres were monitored.

Recommended Action To Be Taken: Continue with the prevention measures, inventory of infestations, and aggressive treatment.

Research Natural Areas (RNA) 

Introduction: The Forest Plan forbids any activity within an RNA that would adversely affect the natural values for which the RNA was established. Prohibited activities include livestock grazing; timber and miscellaneous forest products harvest; recreation development and use; road construction; temporary facility installation; unlawful mining or mining of common variety materials; establishment of exotic plant, animal, or insect species; and establishment of non-endemic levels of insects, pathogens, or disease.

The Forest Plan forbids any activity within an RNA that would adversely affect the natural values for which it was established.

The seven areas designated as RNAs through the planning process are listed in Table 7. These areas provide representative examples of biologically important ecosystems and are managed to conserve their biological diversity. They serve as undisturbed controls for comparison with managed areas and are valuable for studying natural processes. Research Natural Areas are permanently protected federally designated reserves where long-term studies that contribute to our knowledge of the ecosystem is encouraged. The standards and guidelines for Research Natural Areas focus on maintaining their natural state for research and education. RNA standards and guidelines also apply to three proposed RNAs until they are evaluated for RNA designation. Monitoring serves to evaluate whether the natural conditions of the Research Natural Area have been modified, and prescribes corrective actions if necessary.

Table 7. - Research Natural Area Monitoring

Research Natural Area	Last Monitored	Standards & Guidelines Met?
Butter Creek	2003	yes
Goat Marsh	2003	yes
Sisters Rock	1999	yes
Steamboat Mountain	2002	yes
Cedar Flats	2000	yes
Thornton T. Munger	2003	yes
Monte Cristo	2000	yes
Proposed Smith Butte	2001	yes



Butter Creek, Goat Marsh and TT Munger RNAs were monitored. Standards and guidelines were met.

Results: In FY 2003 Butter Creek, Goat Marsh and TT Munger RNAs were monitored. RNA standards and guidelines were met in general, though there are concerns about adequate signage and encroachment by invasive species.

Butter Creek is a small (560 acres) RNA located within the Tatoosh Wilderness and adjoins Mount Rainier National Park. Because of its relative isolation, the area is less at risk to nonconforming uses. There was no evidence of use of the RNA by recreationists, nor were any management activities observed in or immediately adjacent to the RNA. The sloping terrain is not conducive to camping. There is an infrequently used trail that runs up the Butter Creek Valley that is receiving limited user maintenance. The trail is not a Forest Service system trail and is not shown on Forest Service or USGS maps. There was no evidence of special forest product collection occurring in the RNA although mushroom pickers were seen just south of the RNA on the 5270 road. No invasive/noxious weed infestations were found in the RNA. St. Johns wort occurs in the RNA but not in concentrations considered to be posing a risk to the RNA. Nearby roads 5270 and 5260 should be high priority areas for invasive species monitoring and control. No RNA signs were found marking the boundaries of the RNA.



John Scott Photo

Figure 5.- Butter Creek. RNA open mountain slope.



John Scott Photo

Figure 6. – Butter Creek RNA user maintained trail.

Goat Marsh RNA is an 1,195 acre area in the southwest of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument surrounding Goat Mountain. Recreational use of the area appears to be confined to fishing in the small lakes within the RNA as evidenced by beverage containers found on the shoreline. A washed-out culvert on Road 8123 adjacent to the RNA has resulted in deposition of debris within the RNA. The debris area should be monitored for invasive species and treated if necessary.



John Scott Photo

Figure 7.- Goat Marsh. RNA - debris from Road 8123 washout.



John Scott Photo

Figure 8. – Goat Marsh RNA – muddy lake shore with invasive species.

In 2000 an accumulation of trash was reported at the Blue Lake Trailhead, adjacent to the east boundary of the RNA. This area has been cleaned up and the trailhead/parking area reconstructed. Mushroom harvesting has been occurring in the RNA as evidenced by discarded *Boletus* in the vicinity of the Goat Marsh Trail 231A. Although the RNA is shown on the map as excluded from special forest products harvesting, signage at the entrance to the RNA should be improved to indicate special forest products collection is prohibited. Invasive species including Canada thistle and tansy ragwort have become established on the muddy lakeshore of the southern lake in Goat Marsh. A more thorough invasive species inventory should be conducted, followed by appropriate eradication. Invasive species were also seen along roads 8123 and 8123173 adjacent to the RNA.

Thorton T. Munger RNA is an 1,180 acre area east of the Wind River Experimental Forest. The southern portion of the RNA was monitored in 2002, in 2003 the northern portion was monitored. Blowdown has occurred adjacent the plantations in the Experimental Forest to the west of the RNA. While the current blowdown is just outside the RNA there is a concern that it could jeopardize the buffer intended to be left between the plantations and the RNA. No evidence of recreational use of the RNA nor special forest products collecting was observed. No invasive weed species were seen in the northern portion of the RNA, though they are present in the southern portion and were discussed in the 2002 Report.

Recommended Action To Be Taken: Posting of “RNA” and “No Camping” and “No Mushroom Collecting” signs is needed in Butter Creek and Goat Marsh. Monitor invasive species in and adjacent to Butter Creek and Goat Marsh RNAs.



Botanical Special Interest Areas ^{35d} ☹️

Thirty botanical areas have been designated on the Gifford Pinchot.

Introduction: Thirty botanical special interest areas (botanical areas) have been designated on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. These areas often contain plant species or communities that are significant because of the occurrence of threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species; are floristically unique; or have noteworthy specimens, such as record-sized tree specimens. They range in size from one to over 2,000 acres, though most are 20 acres or less. Some of these areas are popular destinations and warrant monitoring to ensure that recreational impacts do not compromise the integrity of the sites. Other botanical areas serve as baselines for monitoring trends of sensitive species. Botanical areas are selected for monitoring each year, based on level of risk to resources and vulnerability to change.

Monitoring was not conducted in 2003 because of competing work priorities.

Results: Because of competing work priorities and shortage of funding botanical, special interest area monitoring was not completed in 2003, for the third consecutive year.

Recommended Action To Be Taken:

Resume monitoring in 2004 if funding and staffing are available.