

NEWS RELEASE



United States
Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Bitterroot National Forest Clearwater National Forest Nez Perce National Forest

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Forests Release Plan to Manage Weeds in Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness

Public comment is now being accepted regarding a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that addresses the management of noxious weeds and other potentially harmful invasive plants in and adjacent to the 1.35-million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness invasive plant management plan describes the problem with weeds and presents various alternatives for dealing with the problem.

According to Lead Forest Supervisor Tom Reilly, there is a serious problem with weeds and other invasive plants that needs to be addressed. “These plants are choking out native vegetation and changing the character of the Wilderness. It will take quick and decisive action to reverse the trend.”

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement proposes five alternatives for dealing with weed infestations and anticipated new invasions. The alternative identified as “preferred” proposes more than 4000 acres of herbicide treatment per year. Another 50,000 acres may be treated through “biological controls,” or the introduction of weed-eating insects.

Mechanical treatment—the physical pulling or removal of weeds—is also allowed under the plan.

Priority would be given to confining larger weed infestation to current locations and preventing the spread of invasive weeds into areas where they currently don’t exist.

Reilly said the proposal to use herbicides in designated Wilderness was not made lightly. He explained the proposal calls for selective hand-operated herbicide application

from backpack- or stock-mounted sprayers to ensure herbicides are applied only where needed.

In addition to chemical, biological and mechanical methods of treatment, the plan calls for stepped-up prevention, education and monitoring efforts.

Reilly said the proposal is consistent with the 1964 Wilderness Act which created the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness because it would maintain natural conditions within the Wilderness.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available from the Clearwater National Forest's website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater> or by calling Chad Benson at the Powell Ranger Station (208-942-3113).

Comments are due by May 19, 2008. Forest managers expect to complete analysis and make a decision regarding the project by late July.

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For additional information, contact Chad Benson, Powell Ranger Station (208-942-3113)