

The document may not exactly match the latest MRDG format available. The MRA process and the MRDG have evolved over the years through use by wilderness managers and the lessons learned have been integrated into each subsequent revision. This example should be used as a reference while following agency guidelines and using the current MRDG Instructions and Worksheets as needed.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT DECISION GUIDE

Supplement

Treatment of Noxious Weeds in Wilderness

*U.S.D.A. Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region*

This supplement is intended to help clarify the Minimum Requirement Decision Guide for the treatment of noxious weeds in wilderness. Refer to this supplement for assistance when completing the Worksheets in Step 1 and 2 of the Minimum Requirement Decision Guide.

Step 1 - Part A

1) Is this an emergency?

Probably not. Noxious weeds issues in wilderness are not considered true emergencies under Forest Service policy. Emergencies are typically issues that directly relate to immediate danger to humans, or are related to criminal activity, fatalities, or fires.

2) Does the project conflict with wilderness goals, objectives, and desired future conditions from laws, policy, or plans?

Answer this question in terms of the Wilderness Act, policy, and direction contained in other plans. Describe how the treatment of noxious weeds help achieve the goals and objectives for this wilderness.

3) Are there any less intrusive actions that should be tried first?

There are many ways to address the weeds issue in addition to the spraying of herbicides. What actions have been taken previously or are being taken now (information, education, grazing, biological control, fire, hand pulling, outfitters and guides, volunteers, etc.)? Be specific as to what's been done. Why aren't these enough? Has an assessment of previous treatment been completed?

4) Can this project be accomplished outside of wilderness?

Probably not if you have noxious weeds in wilderness. But consider the treatment (or need for treatment) of adjacent areas also.

5) Is this project subject to valid existing rights?

Check for valid existing rights within the proposed treatment area and adjacent areas. Are these a contributing factor?

6) Is there a special provision in subsequent legislation (other than the Wilderness Act of 1964) that allows this activity?

Check it out. If so, is it a contributing factor to weed spread or introduction of weeds? Would the special provision be a useful tool for treatment of noxious weeds?

Part B

1) How does the project benefit the wilderness as a whole?

Noxious weeds can interfere with the natural conditions of all wilderness resources (fish, wildlife, plants, soil, water, etc.). Briefly explain the relationship and the consequences of no treatment.

2) How does the project insure that human presence is kept to a minimum and that the area is affected primarily by the forces of nature rather than being manipulated by humans?

Weed treatment is a manipulation of wilderness but the lack of treatment of invasive noxious weeds species affects the forces of nature also. Explain how weed treatment could be considered short-term manipulation so that the forces of nature dominate in the long term.

3) How would the project ensure outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive an unconfined type of recreation?

A visitor to wilderness has an individual sense of place. If native vegetation (and eventually native fish and wildlife species) is replaced by a noxious weed dominated system, will the visitor's sense of place be altered?

4) What does your management plan, policy, or legislation say to support the project?

State any specific guidance from your plan, policy, or legislation.

5) How did you consider wilderness values over comfort, politics, convenience, economic, and commercial values while evaluating this project or activity?

There are inevitable additional influences on the issue of treatment of noxious weeds in wilderness. For example, choosing the most cost effective, expedient, or easiest method of treatment may not always be the most appropriate method of treatment in wilderness. Disclose what these influences are for your project and describe how consideration of wilderness values dominated your decision process and analysis.

Step 2

This step provides the site-specific information and alternatives necessary for a decision. The information required is similar to that required for the site-specific NEPA document. Required information includes the following:

- Alternative methods of treatment including no treatment
- Inventory, maps, amount and type of herbicide to be used and other site specific information
- Species and priority for treatment
- Assessment of prior treatment
- Information, education, and prevention measures to be implemented
- Mitigations, constraints and Best Management Practices to be used

The information may either be documented as part of the Minimum Requirement Decision Guide or a site-specific NEPA document for this project can be referenced. The NEPA checklist contained in this section should be completed regardless of which method is used.