

CHAPTER 1

Purpose and Need

There is a need to supplement the 1999 FC-RONRW Noxious Weed Treatments EIS (1999 EIS) due to changed conditions that include weed expansion and the threat of new weed species within the Wilderness. Implementation of the Integrated Weed Management program prescribed in the 1999 EIS, and the results of monitoring following herbicide treatments indicate minor changes to the standards and guidelines would make treatment methods more effective.

The 1999 EIS discloses 1775 acres on 293 sites were infested with noxious weeds at the time of the analysis. Inventories from 2002 indicate 4,222 acres on 471 sites within wilderness are now weed infested (Appendix B). This increase in size and number of known infestations within the Wilderness indicates a need to review our chosen weed treatment alternative to ensure treatment within this expanded area does not lead to adverse effects.

The Record of Decision for the 1999 EIS documents the Forest Supervisors' selection of Alternative 2 (Appendix M). The weed treatment decisions made as a part of this decision were initiated in the fall of 1999 and have continued for the past 4 years. The goal of the selected alternative from the 1999 EIS is to combine manual, biological, and chemical practices to treat weeds wilderness-wide as quickly as possible. The primary components of the selected 1999 alternative are as follows;

- **Incorporate Integrated Weed Management and Wilderness Minimum Tool Concepts**
- **Initiate weed treatment practices, including a combination of hand pulling, the use of herbicides and the use of biological control methods**
- **Authorize treatment of all known weed sites within the wilderness**
- **Incorporate Adaptive Management to analyze and treat newly discovered infestations**
- **Monitor to determine treatment effectiveness and effects on other vegetation**
- **Recognize the importance of coordination, education, inventory and prevention practices, but defer the specific details of non-treatment practices to a future analysis**

The results of implementation and monitoring of weed treatment activities during 1999 through 2003 indicate a need to clarify or modify certain standards and mitigations within the 1999 EIS. Specifically, we need to; 1) clarify that the prioritization criteria for treatment of targeted weeds are intended to be guidelines, 2) clarify that the criteria for determining the type of treatment for specific weed infestations are intended to be guidelines, 3) clarify the use of jet boats as a "ground based" application method, 4) modify the prescribed rate of approved herbicide application up to, but not to exceed, herbicide label rates, 5) clarify the purpose and timing for consultations with EPA and other Regulatory Agencies, including NOAA-Fisheries and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, 6) clarify the role of calibration in herbicide application projects, 7) clarify the integrated role and use of biological agents for noxious weed control.

An additional herbicide for use on annual grasses may benefit future restoration projects in the FC-RONRW. Cheatgrass, an exotic annual grass now dominates many areas within the

wilderness. Restoration of these cheatgrass sites to native vegetation may be desirable and will require reducing the density of cheatgrass and other exotic annual grasses (Rice, 2003). Herbicides presently authorized for use within the wilderness are not effective in control and management of annual grasses. Therefore, there is a need to analyze an additional herbicide that could be used to treat annual grasses as a component of future restoration projects.

The 1999 EIS deferred specific decisions related to non-treatment weed management practices to a later analysis, specifically the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement. The FC-RONRW Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement focuses on wilderness issues other than noxious weed management, and defers the analysis of weed management to this Supplemental EIS. This SEIS describes non-treatment weed management practices including, prevention, education, coordination and inventory, which are to be integrated into the weed management program for the FC-RONRW.

Decision to be made

The scope of this decision includes the proposed modification of specific standards and mitigations associated with existing noxious weed treatments in the FC-RONRW and the proposed use of an additional herbicide (Plateau).

Decisions based on this analysis will be made and implemented through a Record of Decision (ROD).