



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SOUTHEAST ARIZONA GROUP
Chiricahua National Monument
Coronado National Memorial
Fort Bowie National Historic Site
12856 East Rhyolite Creek Road
Willcox, AZ 85643



In Reply Refer To:
File Code 7617

March 21, 2012

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

In 2009 the National Park Service (NPS) proposed to treat invasive plant species at Chiricahua National Monument in Willcox, AZ, Fort Bowie National Historic Site in Bowie, AZ, and Coronado National Memorial in Hereford, AZ. At that time we asked for your input as we worked to assess the potential environmental impacts from invasive plant treatments. Respondents asked to be kept informed as we finalized the proposal and analysis. Unfortunately, we were not able to complete the assessment process in a timely manner.

Due to the changed conditions in the park units, and that time that has passed since we previously requested your comments, we are reinitiating the environmental assessment and are asking for any additional public input. Any comments previously submitted have been retained and will be considered. If you have any new comments on the proposal shown below, please follow the comment process described at the end of this letter.

Invasive plant inventories have been completed by the NPS Sonoran Desert Inventory and Monitoring Network, Tucson, AZ, and identified a number of invasive plant species in all three park units. During the summer of 2011 the Horseshoe 2 Fire burned across Chiricahua National Monument, and the Monument Fire across Coronado National Memorial. Post-fire conditions are often susceptible to the colonization and spread of invasive plant species. Invasive plant surveys were conducted immediately following the fires and additional early detection surveys are planned to continue to identify invasive populations in need of treatment.

In response to known invasive plant issues and the potential for increased infestations following the wildfires, we are assessing the impacts of implementing integrated pest management practices to treat non-native and native plants that become invasive (or out of balance) with the natural plant communities, primarily due to disturbance. Treatments to invasive species that are present in the monuments or become established over the next 10 years will be assessed.

Treatments will be specific to the biology of the invasive species and will be based on the best research available. Treatments to be considered would include:

- Mechanical – mowing, pulling, smothering, and tilling
- Chemical – herbicides
- Biological – organisms or pathogens specific to target invasive plants
- Cultural – prescribed fire, grazing and restoration

Herbicides will be applied under the supervision of a licensed applicator according to label directions. Restoration following treatments may be implemented to restore native plant communities and to prevent re-colonization by invasive plants. Research projects may be implemented to help determine the best treatment methods for specific species.

An Environmental Assessment will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The park encourages public participation throughout the planning process. There will be two opportunities to comment formally on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. The park is currently in the scoping phase of this proposed project, and invites the public to submit written suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the proposed project online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/chir>.

If you are not able to submit comments electronically through this website, you may submit written comments to the address on this letterhead. Please provide comments by April 23, 2012. These comments will be considered during preparation of the Environmental Assessment.

It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the environmental assessment process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Robert Love
Acting Superintendent