

USFS wants comments on invasive species

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is seeking comments on proposed methods for treating invasive plant species on National Forest System lands, including manual and chemical treatments. The goal of the project is to eradicate, control or contain infestation of non-native invasive plants.

Manual methods include hand pulling, pulling with tools, clipping, mulching and tarping to kill with excess shade or sunlight. Mechanical methods, such as mowing, cutting, trimming or using a weed-eater could also be applied to acres treated manually, and heat could be used as well (thermal treatment). Chemical methods involve the use of herbicides with application methods ranging from by hand to directed or limited broadcast spray. Up to a maximum of 100 acres would receive chemical treatment annually and as many acres as possible would receive manual treatment. Only herbicides approved for use by the states of California and Nevada and the California Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board will be used.

Non-native invasive plant species reduce the amount and quality of fish and wildlife habitat, increase erosion, and impair recreational access. Invasive plants can spread rapidly, especially where there are soil-disturbing activities, because their populations are not controlled by plant-eating wildlife, pathogens and competitors present in their native habitat.

Manual methods are ineffective against some species, which can actually expand their range or become more dense after manual treatment because new shoots or new plants can form from any plant parts left at the site. The LTBMU is currently using

limited manual methods only, but private landowners, and county and state agencies are already using herbicides on lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The proposed action describes the herbicides and application methods proposed for use in detail, as well as steps that would be taken to protect water quality, public health and other plants and wildlife. To view the scoping letter and proposed action, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects/local/terrestrial-nnpst.shtml>. Comments will be most helpful if received by Nov. 20, 2009.

For more information or to find out how to submit comments, view the scoping letter and proposed action on the website or contact Cheryl Beyer at (530) 543.2842, cbeyer@fs.fed.us.