



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 3755
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98124-3755

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

Milfoil Eradication Pilot Project
Near Newport, Washington

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

- 1. Background.** Box Canyon (River Mile (RM) 34.4 to Albeni Falls Dam RM 90.1) on the Pend Oreille River has a significant problem with the introduced noxious aquatic weed Eurasian watermilfoil. This invasive weed was first noticed in the Canyon in the mid-70s and since that time it spread to over three thousand acres. Eurasian watermilfoil is detrimental to water quality, fisheries habitat and is a nuisance to recreational boaters and swimmers alike. The Army Corps of Engineers has a research program that addresses noxious aquatic vegetation called Aquatic Plant Control Research and Development Program. Under this program it is proposed to do a pilot study at up to three sites (about 10 acres at each site) to test a recently registered new formulation of the herbicide Triclopyr called Renovate™ OTF (On Target Flake). This new formulation has the herbicide sorbed onto an inert clay particle. The new formulation is supposed to adhere to the milfoil plant better and apply more herbicide directly to the plant. The pilot project also includes both pre and post project monitoring.
- 2. Project Location.** There are three sites that have been identified for the application of the herbicide Triclopyr and are located in Box Canyon on the Pend Oreille River. The final Environmental Assessment (EA) has maps showing the test sites. One additional site will be the control site where no action will occur other than monitoring. All of these sites are down stream from the town of Newport, Washington.
- 3. Proposed Action.** The Corps proposes to apply the herbicide Triclopyr (in the form of Renovate™ OTF- On Target Flake) at three 10-acre sites. Aqueous application rates will likely range from 0.75 to 2 ppm, and will not exceed the maximum rate approved on the USEPA Section 3 label (2.5 ppm), and/or approved by the Washington Department of Agriculture (WDA). Herbicide applications will be made in the summer (July-August), when discharge from the Albeni Falls Dam has reached a level that will not cause excessive dilution of the herbicide, but prior to plant canopy formation on the water surface. The product will be applied using a mechanical herbicide spreader, mounted on a boat, and in accordance with all label directions and restrictions.

Treatment sites will be permanently established and recorded using GPS technology. Water depth contours will be determined to calculate herbicide treatments. Three sites will be treated with Renovate® OTF and one site will remain as an untreated reference (check) site.

Pretreatment and 6 to 8 week post treatment assessments of the vegetative communities will be conducted at each site using a quantitative point-intercept method. Assessments will

determine plant species occurrence and abundance (biomass) in the plots, including percent control of Eurasian watermilfoil. Data will be statistically analyzed and used to compare treatment effects.

The potential effects of the proposed action are evaluated in the final EA that accompanies this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The final EA and FONSI will be available online under Milfoil Eradication Pilot Project at: http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/ers/doc_table.cfm .

- 4. Summary of Impacts.** A final EA has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed action. The final EA describes the environmental consequences of the proposed project, which are briefly summarized below.

The proposed work will have short-term impacts to water quality in the vicinity of the three test sites in Box Canyon but effects will be minimal since triclopyr exhibits low toxicity and is not persistent. For the most part, triclopyr, is dissipated rapidly from the water column and is not adsorbed on the sediments for very long periods; but there may be some persistence up to a few days after application. As the milfoil plants die and decompose, there may be a slight reduction in dissolved oxygen and small increase in phosphate and nitrogen in the water column due to decomposition. In time this will be offset as native plants are no longer suppressed and are expected to resettle these test areas producing more dissolved oxygen and utilizing available nitrogen and phosphate for plant growth.

Potential impacts to fish and wildlife were considered during the planning of this proposed action. One reason for choosing the herbicide triclopyr was its low toxicity to fish and wildlife (as well as humans). Potential impacts to some fish and aquatic life are further reduced when considering the timing of the application. The proposed project is scheduled to occur in July or August depending on river conditions. By this time water temperatures are relatively warm (with exceedences of over 20⁰ Celsius not uncommon) which will facilitate microbial degradation. It is also expected that some of the more cold water associated fish such as rainbow, cutthroat and bull trout will not be found in the project area due to high water temperatures.

In regards to threatened and endangered species, the pilot project is not likely to affect either the Bald eagle or Bull trout. In regards to the Bald eagle, there is little chance of ingestion of the herbicide triclopyr due to the fact that Bald eagles are not herbivorous, there is no bioaccumulation in prey species and triclopyr degrades rapidly. Bull trout would most likely be the other species of concern. Very few bull trout have actually been observed in Box Canyon in recent years. There is only a slight probability that Bull trout will be in the area during the proposed application of the herbicide.

As for potential impacts on water related recreation activities, in the short term, there will be a slight impact on recreation – primarily for swimmers and fishers who may have used the test sites. Usually swimmers avoid areas with dense foliage of milfoil. Once the project is concluded there is expected to be an over all improvement in the areas surrounding the test site as a result of milfoil being eliminated. As required by Washington State regulation, posting of treated areas will occur prior to 24 hours of application. These postings (as signs)

will advise the public to stay out of treated areas for 12 hours following the herbicide application. This potential impact will be mitigated by the use of signs noting the application. The Applicator will be on-site during the process notifying any would be fishers or swimmers of what is going on and suggesting they fish or swim upstream until the herbicide dissipates.

The Corps determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed work.

A concurrence letter dated June 13, 2007 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was received and agreed with the Corps' finding that the project is not likely to adversely affect Bull trout, Bald eagles and Bull trout critical habitat.

- 5. Finding.** Based on the analysis detailed in the EA and summarized above, this project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and, therefore, does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

6-22-07

Date

/S/

Michael McCormick
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander