Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Finding of No Significant Impact

Bactrocera spp. Fruit Fly Cooperative Eradication Program Los Angeles County, California

Environmental Assessment
July 2022

Background and Program Contacts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzed alternatives for control of the oriental fruit fly, *Bactrocera dorsalis* (OFF). *Bactrocera* species fruit flies are exotic agricultural pests periodically detected at actionable levels in the State of California.

USDA-APHIS' involvement in a new *Bactrocera* control program with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) was triggered by the laboratory confirmation of 14 sexually mature male OFF trapped within a 3-mile radius during one OFF life cycle. CDFA reported the detections between June 21 and June 28, 2022; the flies were caught in Jackson traps placed in fig, lemon, and orange trees growing in North Hills, a community in the city of Los Angeles, California.

USDA-APHIS analyzed potential impacts from actions proposed for a *Bactrocera* emergency cooperative eradication program. This EA (USDA-APHIS 2022) is tiered to a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision published in November 2018 (USDA-APHIS 2018). The EA and supporting environmental documentation are available on the USDA-APHIS website and from:

USDA–APHIS–PPQ
State Plant Health Director
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 7-400
Sacramento, CA 95814

or

USDA–APHIS–PPQ
Fruit Fly National Policy Manager
4700 River Road, Unit 26
Riverdale, MD 20737
Email: richard.n.johnson@usda.gov

Public Involvement

USDA-APHIS is prepared to consider new information received concerning this emergency program. Public feedback may be submitted to either of the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) addresses shown above.

Major Issues

Major issues considered in the EA for the proposed OFF cooperative program include:

- Impacts to agricultural products
- Environmental fate of chemical treatments
- Risks to human health
- Risks to historic properties
- Risks to minority and low-income human populations
- Risks to nontarget species

Alternatives

The EA for the proposed OFF cooperative program analyzed three alternatives:

1. No Action
2. Quarantine and Commodity Certification
3. OFF Eradication (Preferred Alternative)

Summary of Environmental Effects of the Alternatives

Each action alternative is associated with potential environmental consequences per the issues; potential impacts were considered in the EA in Chapter 3, *The Affected Environment and Potential Effects to the Environment*. Doing nothing, the No Action alternative for USDA-APHIS, could have significant consequences for the agricultural fruits produced in Los Angeles County and impact the people relying on these products for income, especially rural communities. Unregulated pesticide applications to protect host plants could result in the development of pesticide resistance in OFF populations and see the establishment of fruit fly populations in the North Hills region and elsewhere. Quarantine and commodity restrictions would likely result in similar effects as the No Action alternative, would require many more inspection and certification personnel, and could harm agricultural trade.

Eradication measures under the proposed action include using chemical compounds that could have potential environmental consequences, but applications could be abated to minimize adverse effects. The prescribed chemical treatments allowed previous fruit fly programs in California to successfully eradicate OFF outbreaks. OFF eradication would be very beneficial for California's agricultural community and costs and would reduce people attempting to control fruit fly outbreaks themselves, with unknown environmental consequences, and without coordinating efforts.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The analysis in the EA indicates that there will not be a significant impact on the quality of the human environment as a result of the proposed action, the Preferred Alternative. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Cooperative *Bactrocera* spp. eradication efforts conducted by USDA-APHIS and CDFA will be localized in Los Angeles County and not regional or national in scope; the initial program area is identified in the EA.
2. The methods used by the North Hills OFF Program to manage fruit fly damage are target-specific and are not likely to negatively affect public health and safety when used as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.
3. The proposed activities will not have an impact on unique characteristics of the geographic area such as park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecological critical areas. The nature of the methods proposed for alleviating damages is not likely to permanently affect the physical environment, as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there is some opposition by some members of the general public to insecticidal use, the proposed program uses are not highly controversial among scientific and industry experts. The EA discusses each method and application of these methods to assure minimal potential effects from their use.
5. The USDA-APHIS Fruit Fly Program considers socioeconomics and equity for all Americans to ensure compliance with various environmental statutes and executive orders. Based on the analysis documented in the EA, USDA-APHIS' proposed action is not anticipated to have any adverse impacts on Tribal, minority or low-income populations, as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.
6. Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the effects of the proposed activities under Alternative 3 are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Implementation of Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 carries the potential risk of an established exotic fruit fly population in the North Hills region.
7. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for any future action with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. The EA proposes the use of delimitation trapping and eradication treatments to combat OFF from getting a foothold in Los Angeles County, using methods that are well-established among professionals managing invasive insects.
8. Impacts to nontarget species, especially other insects, are expected to have a low to negligible impact based on the available information. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative is not expected to have any adverse effect on migratory birds or their flight corridors, or other nontarget species in the program area.
9. An evaluation of the proposed action and its effects on threatened and endangered species and critical habitat determined that the proposal will have no effect on them in the program area as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. USDA-APHIS will consult with USFWS and NMFS if any changes are made such as an expansion of the OFF-program area, or changes in the status of listed species in an affected location, to ensure that federally listed species and critical habitat are protected.

10. USDA-APHIS' implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not directly or indirectly alter the characteristics of any historic property, districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in (or eligible for listing in) the National Register of Historic Places, nor would it likely cause any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources as discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA. The California state historic preservation office (SHPO) concurred with USDA-APHIS that in general, the agency's Fruit Fly Cooperative Eradication Program does not constitute an "undertaking" pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and indicated in 2020 that USDA-APHIS no longer needs to consult with SHPO for fruit fly treatments similar in nature to past efforts.
11. The proposed action would be in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws imposed for the protection of the environment.
12. There are no irreversible or irretrievable resource commitments identified by this assessment, except for a minor consumption of fossil fuels for routine operations and work efforts conducted by program personnel.
13. The proposed action is not anticipated to have a significant impact in increasing greenhouse gases or contributing to climate change as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

NEPA Decision and Rationale

I have carefully reviewed the EA and its supporting environmental documentation. I believe the need for action and issues identified in the EA would be best addressed through implementation of Alternative 3, OFF Eradication. I considered and based my finding of no significant impact on the quantitative and qualitative risk assessments of the proposed pesticides, the EIS, the analysis in the referenced EA, and on my review of the program's operational characteristics. Alternative 3 is the Preferred Alternative because: (1) it offers the greatest chance of ensuring that OFF does not become established in California; (2) it will benefit the agricultural fruit crops in Los Angeles County best for resource owners and managers within current program funding constraints; (3) it will maximize selectivity of the methods available; (4) it will minimize risks to and conflicts with the public; (5) it will minimize risks to nontarget and threatened and endangered species, (6) it will result in low magnitude or negligible effects on other insect populations, and (7) it will not result in any significant direct or indirect effects on the human environment. The cooperative program will use an integrated pest management strategy which maximizes program effectiveness while conforming to all relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures designed to protect the environment.

I have not found evidence of significant environmental impacts associated with this proposed emergency pest management program. Thus, implementation of the Preferred Alternative for this program may proceed.

/s/

Helene Wright
State Plant Health Director, California
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Date

Literature Cited

U.S Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, 2022. *Bactrocera* spp. Fruit Fly Cooperative Eradication Program, Los Angeles County, California. Environmental Assessment. Riverdale, MD. July 2022.

U.S Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, 2018. Fruit fly Cooperative Control Program. Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Riverdale, MD. November 2018.