Finding of No Significant Impact Gypsy Moth Cooperative Eradication Program in Hennepin County, Minnesota

Environmental Assessment
April 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) evaluating the impacts of a treatment for gypsy moth (GM) in Hennepin County, Minnesota. The EA is incorporated into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by reference and is available at the APHIS website at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/ea/ or from-

USDA-APHIS-PPQ,
900 American Blvd East, Suite 204
Bloomington, MN 55420

The draft EA evaluated the potential impacts to human health and the environment from the proposed treatment using the microbial insecticide, *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk) at the Nokomis (298 ac) site, located in Hennepin County, MN, north of the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. The use of Btk for GM eradication was previously evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement as one of six alternatives for treating GM and found to be the preferred alternative for the proposed Nokomis site. The EA was made available to the public for a 30-day public comment period beginning on February 25, 2020, on the APHIS web site at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/ea/. The notice of availability was published in the Star Tribune. APHIS and the MDA received no comments on the EA.

The analysis in the EA suggests that the treatment of gypsy moth at the Nokomis site, located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, with Btk will not result in significant impacts to human health and the environment. Under the proposed alternative, APHIS would provide funding for GM treatments at the Nokomis site. MDA would apply Btk (Foray® 48B) at a rate of 64 fluid ounces (fl oz. or ½-gallon) of product per acre using low flying aircraft. Two applications will be made within each treatment block with a 5- to 10-day interval between applications. The MDA estimates these applications to occur in mid-May 2020. The exact date of application will be timed so that the applications occur during the early larval stages when GM caterpillars hatch from their eggs and are most susceptible to treatments. The program will survey the treatment block for two years after treatment using pheromone-baited GM traps to ensure that the treatment was effective. Traps are baited with disparlure, a synthetically produced sex pheromone that mimics the natural pheromone female GM use to attract the male GM.

There are two federally listed species within the proposed treatment area to consider: the threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the endangered rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*). Three mussel species including snuffbox mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*), winged mapleleaf (*Quadrula fragosa*) and Higgins eye pearlymussel (*Lampsilis higginsi*) are also included in the species list for the proposed treatment area, but no habitat for these species occurs within the Nokomis treatment block. No critical habitat occurs in the proposed treatment area. APHIS has determined that the proposed gypsy moth program may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the northern long-eared bat, or rusty patched bumble bee. APHIS has determined that the proposed gypsy moth program will have no effect on the snuffbox, winged mapleleaf, and Higgins eye pearlymussel and their designated critical habitats. APHIS received a concurrence letter from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service on April 20, 2020.

There are no disproportionate adverse effects to minorities, low-income populations, or children, in accordance with Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations," and Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks." Available risk assessment and toxicity data that is summarized in this EA show low risk to the human population, including children, from the proposed use of Btk.

I have determined that there would be no significant impact on the quality of the human environment from the implementation of the preferred alternative. APHIS' finding of no significant impact from the preferred alternative is based on the results of the analysis in this EA. Lastly, because I have not found evidence of significant environmental impact associated with the proposed program, I further find that no additional environmental documentation needs to be prepared and that the program may proceed.

ERIN STIERS

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04/27/2020

Erin Stiers
State Plant Health Director - Minnesota
Plant Protection and Quarantine
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Date