

Finding of No Significant Impact
Witchweed Eradication Program in North and South Carolina
Environmental Assessment
April 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to eradicate exotic witchweed from five counties in southeastern North Carolina (Bladen, Cumberland, Robeson, Sampson, and Pender) and two adjacent counties in northeastern South Carolina (Marion and Horry), which are the only locations in the United States where witchweed remains.

USDA APHIS prepared the EA to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), as described in the implementing regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§1500–1508), USDA (7 CFR part 1b), and APHIS (7 CFR part 372), and to satisfy Executive Order (EO) 12898.

USDA APHIS also prepared this EA to fulfill the need to protect the natural environment and the agricultural economy of the United States by pursuing the eradication of witchweed in areas of North and South Carolina affected by the exotic pest (approximately 2,100 acres of corn worth \$1.5 million and nearly 88 million acres of grain crops valued at \$49 billion).

The EA is incorporated into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by reference, and it is available online at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/weeds/downloads/envirodocs/witchweed-draft-ea.pdf and from:

USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine
Emergency and Domestic Programs
4700 River Road, Unit 26
Riverdale, MD 20737-1229

The EA analyzed three alternatives: (1) no action alternative; (2) quarantine alternative; and (3) eradication alternative (preferred). Each of these alternatives is associated with potential environmental consequences. USDA APHIS selected the eradication alternative using an integrated pest management approach because of its capability to suppress witchweed in a way that reduces the overall magnitude of potential environmental consequences.

USDA APHIS reviewed the program area and determined that its witchweed eradication activities are not likely to adversely affect federally listed species or designated critical habitat occurring in the counties regulated for witchweed. In addition, the implementation of the preferred alternative is not expected to have any adverse effect on nontarget organisms including migratory birds and their flight corridors.

The program's implementation of the proposed action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment (including low-income and minority populations; children; and Tribal, cultural, and historical resources) because the program has measures in place to mitigate those impacts.

Potential cumulative effects, relative to the current baseline and to past, present, and future activities in the regulated counties, constitute a small incremental change in the environment. Significant cumulative effects are not anticipated with the implementation of the preferred alternative given that the program has measures in place to minimize such effects.

I have considered and based my finding of no significant impact on the quantitative and qualitative risk assessments of the proposed pesticides, the analysis in the referenced EA, and on my review of the program's operational characteristics.

Lastly, because I have not found evidence of significant environmental impacts associated with this proposed program, I find an environmental impact statement does not need to be prepared and the program may proceed.

Anne LeBrun
National Policy Manager
USDA APHIS Plant Protection Quarantine

Date