

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Rangeland Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Suppression Program
Environmental Assessment in BLAINE, CASCADE, CHOUTEAU, FERGUS,
GLACIER, HILL, JUDITH BASIN, LEWIS&CLARK, LIBERTY, MEAGHER,
PETROLEUM, PHILLIPS, PONDERA, TETON, TOOLE and VALLEY counties
(except Fort Peck Reservation), MONTANA

EA Number: MT-21-02

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes alternatives for suppressing grasshopper and Mormon cricket outbreaks on rangeland in Blaine, Cascade, Chouteau, Fergus, Glacier, Hill, Judith Basin, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Meagher, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Teton, Toole, and Valley (except Fort Peck Indian Reservation) counties, Montana. The EA, incorporated by reference in this document, is available from 1220 Cole Ave, Helena, MT 59601, or 1400 S 24th St W, Suite 8A, Billings, MT 59102, and online at: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/plant-pest-and-disease-programs/ea/grasshopper-cricket-ea/grasshopper-cricket-by-state>.

The EA includes an analysis of the potential impacts of three alternatives. They included (1) No Action, (2) Insecticide Applications at Conventional Rates and Complete Area Coverage, or Reduced Agent Area Treatments (RAATs), and (3) Experimental Treatments. Alternative (2) Insecticide Applications at Conventional Rates and Complete Area Coverage, or Reduced Agent Area Treatments (RAATs) is the preferred alternative, although the (1) No Action and (3) Scientific Treatments alternatives are also selected for use when practical. APHIS participation in this suppression program aims to reduce grasshopper populations below economical infestation levels in order to protect rangeland ecosystems or cropland adjacent to rangeland.

APHIS has determined that the proposed suppression program, conducted in accordance with the APHIS Rangeland Grasshopper/Mormon cricket Suppression Program Aerial Application Statement of Work (treatment guidelines), which contains the operational procedures, will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

The finding of no significant impacts was determined on the following:

Human health: Potential exposures to the general public from traditional application rates are infrequent and of low magnitude. Further, routine safety precautions will continue to provide adequate protection of worker health.

Nontargets: In any given treatment season, only a fraction (less than 1 percent) of the total rangeland in a region is likely to be sprayed for grasshopper control. For species that are widespread and numerous, lowered survival and lowered reproductive success in a small portion of their habitat would not constitute a significant threat to the population. Further, domestic bees will be protected in accordance with operational procedures. Field level

contacts with local beekeepers and the Montana Department of Agriculture will ensure safeguards for bees.

Endangered and threatened species: Protection measures that resulted from informal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be implemented and therefore, the proposed suppression program is not likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or their habitats.

Socioeconomic issues: The suppression of grasshoppers in the affected area would have beneficial economic impacts to local landowner, farmers and beekeepers. Crops near infested lands would be protected from grasshopper and Mormon cricket outbreaks, resulting in higher crop production.

Cultural resources and events: APHIS will confer with BLM, USFS, or other appropriate land management agencies on a local level to protect these areas of special concern. APHIS will also confer with the appropriate Tribal Authority and with the BIA office at a local level to ensure that the timing and location of planned program treatments do not coincide or conflict with cultural events or observances, on Tribal and/or allotted lands.

Executive Order No. 12898, Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations: The human population at most sites in grasshopper programs is diverse and lacks any special characteristics that implicate greater risks of adverse effects for any minority or low-income populations.

Executive Order No. 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks: Treatments used for grasshoppers programs are primarily conducted on open rangelands where children would not be expected to be present during treatment or enter during the restricted entry period after treatment.

Executive Order No. 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds: Impacts are minimized as a result of buffers to water, habitat, nesting areas, riparian areas, and the use of RAATs. For any given treatment, only a portion of the environment will be treated, therefore minimizing potential impacts to migratory bird populations.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, the implementation of the treatment guidelines (containing the operational procedures) and the protection measures for endangered and threatened species, I have determined that the proposed suppression program will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment.

Gary D. Adams
Montana State Plant Health Director

04/22/21

Date

