

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
TUCSON FIELD OFFICE

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Project Title  
Environmental Assessment NEPA # DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2013-0038-EA

**BACKGROUND**

Many partners are working together to control buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) in the Tucson area to help control invasive and noxious grass. The goal of this project is to control buffelgrass and Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) in the Tucson Basin and the Ironwood Forest National Monument, Arizona (IFNM). The project proposes to treat the grasses with an herbicide, Glyphosate (e.g. Roundup Pro or the generic equivalent) in the form of a liquid spray applied with backpack spraying units, vehicle-mounted units (along roads where possible), and by hand removal in areas deemed sensitive (i.e. near Nichol Turk's head cactus) or unsafe for backpack sprayer use.

Should the treatment of the grasses not occur, its uncontrolled growth and constant threat as a fire hazard may result in the loss of native Sonoran Desert vegetation and the wildlife that depend on the Sonoran Desert ecosystem. Buffelgrass and Bermuda grass displace native plants, animals, and habitat by competing for space, sunlight, moisture, and nutrients. Dry buffelgrass leaves produce tinder-dry fuels that quickly carry hot wildfires. Native Sonoran Desert plants and wildlife have not evolved with fire and are seriously damaged by it. Buffelgrass evolved with frequent fire in the African savannah, and quickly moves in to space created by fires that kill native plants and damage wildlife habitat. Currently, buffelgrass has formed large and dense colonies in several locations in the IFNM and along the many roads and highways that link the IFNM with Saguaro National Park and the urban lands of the Tucson field Office, which provide continuous flashy fuel and have the potential to quickly carry wildfires. Multiple treatments will be required to effectively eliminate these stands of buffelgrass and Bermuda grass.

**RATIONALE FOR FINDING**

**Context**

- The proposed action does not conflict with cultural resources and will not affect historic properties.
- The proposed action is compatible with special status, BLM sensitive species, and wildlife habitat as the proposed action does not include authorization for any road construction, clearing of habitat, destruction of riparian areas, or fragmentation of habitat and is, therefore, in compliance with the Biological Opinion (BO) (BO# 22410-2006-F-0414)
- The proposed action does not promote non-native and invasive species. The proposed action is to treat and remove existing stands of two invasive grasses.
- The proposed action is compatible with Land Health Standards and vegetation resources.
- The proposed action is compatible with migratory bird species. The migratory bird species observed there, trampling and/ or increased predation of nests may not be a serious issue because of the inter mixed stands of cover plants with the invasive ones that are being removed.
- The proposed action is compatible with recreational resource uses within the area.
- The proposed action is consistent with Bureau policies and management goals within the area.

### **Intensity**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Control of Invasive Grasses - Tucson Basin decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

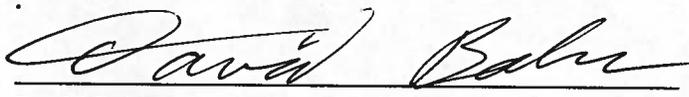
1. ***Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*** Removal of invasive grass species will promote the health of native vegetation of the Sonoran desert and reduce the wildfire risk from large stands of buffelgrass on a popular recreation site. There will be a slight reduction in ground cover with the elimination of large stands of buffelgrass which currently slows rainfall and runoff from the sites.
2. ***The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*** There will not be any affects to public health and safety.
3. ***Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*** There are no unique characteristics of the geographic area such as park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers. The area VHA's in the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) of the Waterman Mountains and the Ragged Top area are within the treatment area. The IFNM was designated to protect items of cultural, historic and scientific values.
4. ***The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*** The effects on the quality of the human environment will not to be highly controversial as these projects are ongoing and have the support of the community.
5. ***The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*** The effects on the human environment are known and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. ***The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. These action are ongoing in the community and will not set any precedence or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.***
7. ***Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. The action is related to other actions in the Tucson basin, but cumulatively they do not result in significant impacts.***
8. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.
9. ***The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*** The project will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been

determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Beneficial effects are expected to the habitat for the Nichol Turks-head cactus.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.



**David Baker**  
**Acting Field Manager**

**Date**

