

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 02-060-1]

Availability of an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that an environmental assessment has been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to the control of rush skeletonweed, *Chondrilla juncea* (Asteraceae). The environmental assessment considers the effects of, and alternatives to, the release of a nonindigenous organism, *Bradyrrhoa gilveolella* (Treitschke) (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), into the environment for use as a biological control agent to reduce the severity of rush skeletonweed infestations. We are making this environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before August 26, 2002.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 02-060-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 02-060-1. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and

address in your message and "Docket No. 02-060-1" on the subject line.

You may read any comments that we receive on the environmental assessment in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Tracy A. Horner, Entomologist, Biological and Technical Services, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737-1228; (301) 734-5213.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is considering an application from the University of Montana for a permit to release a nonindigenous organism, *Bradyrrhoa gilveolella* (Treitschke) (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), to reduce the severity of rush skeletonweed, *Chondrilla juncea* (Asteraceae), in the continental United States.

Native to Eurasia, rush skeletonweed has become established in the District of Columbia and several States including California, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. This invasive weed infests roadsides, railways, rangelands, pastures, grain fields, coastal sand dunes, and shaley hillsides in mountainous regions. Rush skeletonweed causes losses in infested grain fields, reduces rangeland forage production, and reduces plant and animal diversity.

While chemical, mechanical, and cultural methods are available to control rush skeletonweed, these methods may damage the environment. In addition, the effectiveness of biological control

agents that are currently used to control rush skeletonweed appears to vary depending upon the location; e.g., in California, a rust (*Puccinia chondrillina*) appears to be more effective in controlling rush skeletonweed, and in eastern Washington, a gall mite (*Aceria chondrillae*) appears to be more effective in controlling it.

The biological control agent *B. gilveolella* has the potential to suppress rush skeletonweed populations in the continental United States. *B. gilveolella* larvae feed on the roots of rush skeletonweed, causing the plant to die or increasing its susceptibility to pathogenic fungi. APHIS has completed an environmental assessment that considers the effects of, and alternatives to, releasing *B. gilveolella* into the environment for the biological control of rush skeletonweed infestations.

APHIS' review and analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with releasing *B. gilveolella* into the environment are documented in detail in the environmental assessment, entitled "Field Release of *Bradyrrhoa gilveolella* (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), for Biological Control of Rush Skeletonweed, *Chondrilla juncea* (Asteraceae)" (May 2002). We are making this environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment. We will consider all comments that we receive by the date listed under the heading **DATES** at the beginning of this notice.

The environmental assessment may be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/> by accessing "Document/Forms Retrieval System," then "3-Permits-Pests"; the environmental assessment is document number 0032. You may request copies of the environmental assessment by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. Please refer to the title of the environmental assessment when requesting copies. The environmental assessment is also available for review in our reading room (information on the location and hours of the reading room is listed under the heading **ADDRESSES** at the beginning of this notice).

The environmental assessment has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for

implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 19th day of July 2002.

Peter Fernandez,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 02–18845 Filed 7–24–02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 02–065–1]

Availability of an Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact have been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to the control of Siam weed, *Chromolaena odorata*, in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The environmental assessment considers the effects of, and alternatives to, the release of a nonindigenous fly, *Cecidochares (Procecidochares) connexa*, into the environment for use as a biological control agent to reduce the severity of Siam weed. The environmental assessment provides a basis for our conclusion that the issuance of a permit for the field release of *Cecidochares (Procecidochares) connexa* into the environment will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Based on its finding of no significant impact, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has determined that an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact are available for public inspection in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690–2817 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Tracy A. Horner, Entomologist, Biological and Technical Services, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737–1228; (301) 734–5213.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Siam weed, *Chromolaena odorata*, is a perennial shrub native to South America and Central America where it is controlled by competing plants and natural enemies. However, Siam weed has become an invasive weed in much of tropical Asia, Africa, and the western Pacific including Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. It becomes the dominant vegetation in abandoned fields, vacant lands, disturbed forests, and roadsides, suppressing native vegetation and preventing the natural reseeding of forest trees. In addition, it interferes with the cultivation of crops such as rubber, oil palm, coffee, cocoa, teak, cashew, and coconut. During the dry season, Siam weed can become a fire hazard. The tangled thickets of this weed interfere with wildlife movement in forests, and the leaves of Siam weed are toxic to livestock.

Chemical, mechanical, and biological control methods are available to control Siam weed, but these methods have limitations. For instance, chemical and mechanical control methods are expensive, and chemical control method poses some environmental concerns. Of the four insects released in Guam for the biological control of Siam weed, only one insect has become established, with limited effectiveness. The effectiveness of the tiger moth, *Pareuchaetes pseudoinsulata*, has been limited to areas of dense thickets. A nonindigenous fly, *Cecidochares (Procecidochares) connexa* Macquart (Diptera: Tephritidae), would potentially complement the tiger moth in the control of Siam weed because *C. connexa* has the ability to locate, and become established within, patchy distributions of Siam weed.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received a permit application from the University of Guam to release *C. connexa* into the environment to reduce the severity of Siam weed infestations in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. APHIS prepared an environmental assessment entitled “Field Release of *Cecidochares (Procecidochares) connexa* Macquart (Diptera: Tephritidae), a non-indigenous, gall-making fly for control of Siam weed, *Chromolaena odorata* (L.) King and Robinson (Asteraceae) in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands” (February 2002). The notice of

availability and request for comments on the environmental assessment was published in the *Pacific Daily News*, March 7–9, 2002, the *Saipan Tribune*, March 5–7, 2002, and the *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 1, 2002. We received no comments on the environmental assessment.

We are advising the public of APHIS' record of decision and finding of no significant impact regarding the issuance of a permit for the field release of *C. connexa*, without conditions, for use as a biological control agent to reduce the severity of Siam weed infestations.

The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact may be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/> by accessing “Document/Forms Retrieval System,” then “3-Permits-Pests,” and document number 0031. You may request copies of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. Please refer to the title of the environmental assessment when requesting copies. The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact are also available for review in our reading room (information on the location and hours of the reading room is listed under the heading **ADDRESSES** at the beginning of this notice).

The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 19th day of July 2002.

Peter Fernandez,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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