

Herbicide as a Restoration Tool - Discussion Group

Facilitator: Joanna Clines, Sierra National Forest

Topic Co-leaders: Dave Bakke, USFS, Region 5 Pesticide Use Specialist and Joel Trumbo, California Dept. of Fish & Game Pesticide Use Coordinator

Note taker: Jennifer Erskine Ogden

[Handout of Cal-IPC draft policy statement on herbicide use handed out by Joanna Clines, directing any comments to Doug Johnson.]

Introduction:

Four themes to discuss in session:

1. Basing herbicide use on “best available science”—what is “real” science and what is emotional based “science.”
2. Interagency policies—what are the IPM policies for different agencies and different land use?
3. What are the hurdles to using herbicides in different areas? A discussion on the lack of ability to control weeds because assessment takes too long for rapid response on new weeds.
4. Information for land managers—websites to find relevant information, etc.

Dave Bakke, located at USFS regional office as the Pesticide Use Specialist for Region 5 (CA, Hawaii, Pacific Islands). He’s the invasive plants specialist for state and private forestry. His background is in forestry, and is involved in forest ecological health—helps forests get through planning and process for using herbicides.

Forest service Risk Assessment (RA) sheets (see www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/pesticide/risk.shtml) are generally a notch above others because USFS has access to pesticide companies’ CBIs (confidential business information) which include formulation information given to EPA but not accessible to the general public for patent reasons. The general public has free access to these USFS risk assessments of herbicides, and they’re a good source of information. The abstracts are 20-30 pages long and are condensed reports and easily accessible. The RAs also cover surfactants (including a 2003 RA of NPE surfactants) and dyes. The RAs are conservative—they represent a worst case risk (i.e. a naked child runs through a spray stream, or an entire truck of herbicide tips into a creek while someone is drinking from the creek). The EPA uses only literature submitted to them, while USFS also looks for the latest science out there. Databases used include BIOSIS, DIGITOP, National Ag Library, EPA Iris, extoxnet, USFS risk assessment, Extension sites, monthly journal table of content alerts.

Joel Trumbo, with CDFG, helps with herbicide recommendations on CDFG lands. Does research on herbicides and surfactants mostly on frogs and fish. Sees himself as a manager more than a researcher. Has 20+ years of experience on pesticide use. Believes the worst move someone can do is make decisions based on assumptions, erroneous information, etc. Herbicide use decisions should not be based on philosophy, just good science.

Discussion:

Peter Warner (State Parks): There is a lot of erroneous information out there. This type of information can be latched onto by those with political clout which can make life difficult for managers. Science is behind the eight ball when it comes to herbicide use.

Charlie Blair (CNPS): CNPS is making a policy statement on herbicide use. He finds it's best not to belittle the philosophy commentators but to address specific concerns/questions.

Jean (consultant at Vandenberg Airforce base): What can be used as a surfactant, if one prefers a non-NPE surfactant?

Dave Bakke: While NPE has issues with endocrine disruption, the dose/exposure time is the issues. The list of non-NPE surfactants is small.

Joel Trumbo: You can't just look at the toxicity of a compound but also need to look at exposure time.

Lew Strigger (NPS): The NPS uses Roundup on everything because certain herbicides are "listed" for specific plants and banned in specific areas, and it's too difficult to get permit use for other herbicides. Someone recommended challenging assumptions being made by NPS and to look at the herbicide list for SF (on SF website) as a model because it's larger than the herbicide manufacturers' lists.

Gerald Moore (Petaluma Wetlands): Trying to get rid of Perennial Pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*)—how can he deal with it in permanent wetlands (with standing water).

Scott Johnson (Wilbur Ellis): Try newly registered Habitat (Imazypr) + non-NPE surfactant. Also Renovate (triclopyr based).

Charlie Blair: A general question about suppression of shrubs for timber production for DB. One type of forestry is to take out trees for timber and establish a new forest; In CA, because it's a Mediterranean climate, there are issues with summer drought/water relations/competition of tree seedlings with shrubs. Herbicides are one type of tool used for the purpose of forest reformation. In the mid-1990s the USFS was using quite a bit of herbicides because of fires and clearcuts, but they are not doing it as much. The Sierra National Forest is a multiple use agency thus they do use them at times.

Tom (CNPS, SF) The Corte Madera Spartina Project should be used as an example of how to deal with a potentially unfriendly public when using herbicides. Have homeowner groups "meet the weeds."

Joanna Clines: I did the same thing with yellow star thistle in Sierra NF—did field trips with the public so they could see what the issues were, and what the USFS was dealing with.

Unknown: Is there a place/website to find neutral sources of information?

Joel Trumbo: Extoxnet is a good site as well in university extension informational websites. Need to use an adaptive management strategy because recommendations differ depending on site and infestation.

Ed Stanton (private land management firm): Went to the city he's working in and they didn't have an herbicide policy and neither did the public. Any suggestions?

Janet Klein (Marin Municipal Water District): Has 1,000 acre broom infestation. Spoke to public about ounces/acre, not how much gross herbicide using. Start out with good PR and keep it going. She was shut down because her field guys didn't speak English and someone became hysterical when they saw the spraying occurring on the side of the road but couldn't get information out of the sprayers.

Walt Decker (Mendocino Coast WMA): When dealing with people that have some bit of an open mind, you must have a process and explain the process to the public and why you are following that process.

Bill Winans, (San Diego County): What is a "site-specific" recommendation? In other words, what defines a site?

Joel Trumbo: Look at a site and what is there—legally, is there water, rare and endangered species, etc. What is the nature of the site?

unknown: If treating a large area, try different methods to see what works best. Look at representative area. Write a suite of recommendations and get pre-audited by the Ag Commissioner's office.

Athena (Sequoia/Kings Canyon NPS): Plateau is used to control cheat grass but is not labeled in CA. What to do?

Ans: Look and see if there is a special local need label, and talk more with others.

Brendan O'Neil (State Parks): Do you need an aquatic NPDS permit on water?

Ans: Yes if on water. If the application is next to and not on water, it's outside NPDS needs.

Drew Kerr (Invasive Spartina Project): We got a special use permit for Habitat on Spartina but what about using it for other species?

Ans: CA requires state generated data for each species. Tests are currently being done on other species.

Cindy Burrascano (SD CNPS): Lots of turnover in USFWS folks on the ground—new employees are anti-herbicide and not based on science.