



DECISION NOTICE
2013 COOPERATIVE GYPSY MOTH SLOW THE SPREAD PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
HALIFAX, PATRICK, PITTSYLVANIA, RUSSELL, SMYTH, TAZEWELL, &
WASHINGTON COUNTIES, VIRGINIA
AND THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

DECISION

Based upon my review of the analysis documented in the EA for this project and the 2012 FSEIS, it is my decision to provide federal financial and technical assistance to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) for the 2013 gypsy moth cooperative slow the spread project on 16,296-acres of non-federal lands in Virginia by implementing alternative 2 – use of mating disruption (page 7 of the EA). Mating disruption treatments will be implemented in June 2013. The treatments will be followed by two years of post-treatment monitoring using pheromone-baited traps to evaluate treatment effectiveness. The design criteria identified on page 8 of the EA will be followed to reduce the impact of the selected alternative with regard to the aerial application of insecticides.

DECISION RATIONALE

The Cooperative Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Project EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

Pheromone trapping in 2012 indicated that low-density gypsy moth populations are present in seven areas located on non-federal lands in Virginia. Without intervention, these low-density pockets of infestation will continue to grow, coalesce and cause an increase in the rate of spread within the STS project boundaries in Virginia and into adjacent states.

The five proposed treatment site in Halifax, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Russell, Smyth, Tazewell, & Washington Counties and the City of Virginia Beach, Virginia addressed in the EA meet USDA Forest Service environmental, biological, and economic criteria for financial assistance. I have determined that a Federal role exists.

The No Action alternative would not meet the USDA's or State's objective of reducing the rate of gypsy moth spread. Alternative 2 (proposed action) was selected because it meets the purpose and need by reducing spread by at least 60% while protecting the environment and non-target species. It is also compatible with the alternative selected in the ROD for the 2012 FSEIS.

Six treatment alternatives were considered and eliminated from detailed study due to public, biological, and/or environmental concerns (pages 6 and 7 of the EA). They are:

1. **Use of diflubenzuron.** This alternative was eliminated because diflubenzuron can have impacts on aquatic organisms and other insects and because other treatments that have fewer non-target impacts will meet STS project objectives on all of the treatment blocks.
2. **Use of *Btk*.** This alternative was eliminated because *Btk* can have impacts on non-target moths and butterflies. Other treatments that have fewer non-target impacts will meet STS project objectives on all of the treatment blocks.
3. **Use of the biological insecticide Gypchek®.** This alternative was eliminated because an alternative gypsy moth specific treatment, which is less expensive and has no production restrictions, will be effective on the low-density populations proposed for treatment.
4. **Use of mass trapping.** This alternative was eliminated because the efficacy has not been adequately demonstrated and the cost is high.
5. **Use of sterile insect release.** The limited period during which pupae must be released and the need to synchronize rearing of mass quantities of pupae for that release are obstacles to an operational program. The amount of acreage proposed for treatment, insufficient availability of treated pupae, and greatly increased application cost associated with a sterile insect release does not make this option a viable one for a project of this magnitude.
6. **Use of tebufenozide.** This alternative was eliminated because tebufenozide can have impacts on aquatic organisms and other insects and because other treatments that have fewer non-target impacts will meet STS project objectives on all of the treatment blocks.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Forest Service and VDACS requested public input on issues or concerns related to the proposed action during public meetings in late January and early February 2013 (see EA page 4 and EA Appendix B). Public comments associated with this project were reviewed by resource specialists of the VDACS and USDA-Forest Service and by consultation with the following: VA Department of Conservation-Natural Heritage Program (DCR), Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), and US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). No issues related to the proposed action were identified (see page 4 of the EA). Comments and questions were addressed in the EA (see EA page 5 and EA Appendix B).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

Based on the analysis described in the EA, I have determined that the actions associated with slowing the rate of spread of gypsy moth populations on non-federal lands in Halifax, Patrick,

Pittsylvania, Russell, Smyth, Tazewell, & Washington Counties, Virginia and the City of Virginia Beach is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This determination was made considering the following factors:

CONTEXT

The physical and biological effects are limited to the areas where gypsy moth slow the spread action will be implemented on 16,296 acres of non-federal lands in Virginia.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action (see pages 13 through 17 of the EA).
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety because based on the available epidemiological studies and the long history of its use, there is no evidence that the application of mating disruptant formulations causes adverse effects to the general public (see page 4 of the EA).
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because these characteristics would not be affected by the action (see page 5 and pages 13 through 17 of the EA).
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 are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. The best available science was considered in making this decision. The project record demonstrates a thorough review of relevant scientific information, consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk (see EA pages 13-17).
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with similar actions. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA pages 13 through 17).
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.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects,

because the proposed control methods are well established and have been utilized frequently in the past (see EA pages 13 through 17).

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. No other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future projects or activities were identified whose effects could combine with the proposed action and result in a significant cumulative effect (see EA pages 13 through 17).
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because there are no effects to any cultural resources listed or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (notice of concurrence contained in the Project Analysis Folder, VDACS office, Christiansburg, VA).
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 action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973, because it was determined that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect any federally listed species and the US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this finding (see EA page 16 and Appendix D).
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (see EA Appendix A).

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA were considered. The EA identified applicable laws and regulations in Appendix A. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11(a).

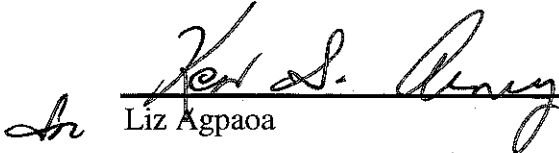
IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.



CONTACT

For more information about this project please contact Larry Bradfield, VDACS, 1580 North Franklin Street, Suite 7, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073 (540-394-2507).


Liz Agpaoa

Regional Forester, Southern Region

3/21/2013
Date

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