



BIOCONTROL

Position Statement 07-PS3D-01

North American Weed Management Association

Biological control is an important part of integrated pest management. It has been used very successfully in the fight against noxious weeds throughout the United States and Canada.

Background

There have been delays in making decisions related to issuance of a permit for releasing new biocontrol agents and permit renewal of current on-going projects. This adversely impacts the ability to provide management of the target invasive plants. The implementation of a streamlined process by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is expediting their role in approving the use of potential biocontrol agents. The process gives them the opportunity to make critical decisions at the initiation of biocontrol research projects, along with other affected agencies, so any potential harm to endangered or threatened species may be identified before research begins and millions of dollars are spent. In the past, biological opinions about the potential use of biocontrol agents were received later in the decision making process from numerous FWS field personnel, which created many conflicting opinions that became major impediments to the process of developing acceptable biocontrol agents. It is encouraging that the new proposal allows only the Director of FWS to offer a biological opinion. This will eliminate or drastically reduce the conflicts. Even with these improvements, there are several concerns about federal biological control efforts. They include:

- Less emphasis on biological control
- Vacant Biocontrol Program Manager Positions
- Continued concern about communications and coordination between agencies including the establishment of the web site to track the status of clearance of biocontrol agents,
- Biological opinions of USFWS not being made in keeping with the timelines set forth in section 7. Why not?
- The permitting process is not completed in a timely manner. Why not?
- The need for additional inspection stations for precided biological agents coming from Canada or Mexico.

Position

NAWMA believes it is very important that biological control agents should not be released that will have undue adverse effects on listed species or critical habitats. We do believe it is very important that the process of making these decisions be done in a timely manner. We appreciate the initial efforts of the USFWS in streamlining the biological opinion and the development of a tracking system by APHIS for the approval process. **WE WOULD LIKE A REPORT AT THE NATIONAL INVASIVE WEEDS AWARENESS WEEK FROM APHIS AND FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPROVED PROCESS IN MAKING DECISIONS ON BIOCONTROL AGENTS.**

Distribution:

Secretary of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Secretary of Interior

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Invasive Species Liaison – Hilda Diaz-Soltero
USDI Invasive Species Coordinator – Gordon Brown
FICMNEW Co-Chairs – Peter Egan and Mike Ielmini

Adopted by the NAWMA Board of Directors
December 21, 2006