

NAVAJO NATION INTEGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Project Information and FAQs

Background

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has completed a *Draft* Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed Navajo Nation Integrated Weed Management Plan on Navajo Nation tribal trust and allotment lands. The PEIS was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA ensures that federal agencies, in this case the BIA, consider significant impacts of a proposed action on the human environment, and that the public is informed about potential environmental concerns through the agency's decision-making process.

The *Draft* PEIS comment period will last for 45 days, beginning October 29, 2021 through December 13, 2021. Virtual public hearings discussing the PEIS will be held during the week of November 15 – 20. To review the draft PEIS and IWMP and to submit a comment, please visit the project website:

<https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/navajo/navajo-nation-integrated-weed-management-plan>

What is an Integrated Weed Management Plan?

An integrated weed management plan provides a variety of recommended techniques and approaches for managing and controlling exotic weed species. An integrated approach uses different weed control methods together to provide the greatest level of control. This could mean cutting a dense population with a mower and then applying herbicide immediately after to the cut part of the plant. It can also mean releasing a permitted biological control agent on a remote population for a season before returning to remove dead material and reseeding open areas with native plants. Using an integrated approach gives managers options for treating weeds based on community concerns, project location, weed species present, and avoidance or protection measures to prevent impacts to valuable resources while providing effective control.

What weeds will be treated under this plan?

The Bureau of Indian Affairs identified 45 different weed species for management. These species are non-native plants that do not naturally occur in the region. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, as a federal agency, is required to manage non-native species as part of its trust responsibility. All the species identified for control are problematic. Some can cause serious injury to livestock or wildlife. Others displace more desirable native plants, lowering native plant cover and production. There are also some that increase the frequency and severity of fire in areas where they are overgrown. While a number of native weeds occur on the Navajo Nation, like silverleaf nightshade or cocklebur, these species will not be addressed under this plan but may be addressed through another natural resource plan.

Where will weed treatments take place?

The Plan prioritizes weed treatments in six key areas: designated rangeland, designated farmland, rights-of-way, roads, riparian habitats, and Navajo Nation-designated Community Development Areas. Noxious weed populations are commonly managed in these areas and can negatively impact them by increasing maintenance costs, harming production, and impacting important natural processes. However, weed projects in non-priority areas will still be considered based on their location, size, and the weed species being treated.

What alternatives are being considered for the Plan?

The BIA considered three alternatives for weed management on the Navajo Nation. The first is the No Action Alternative, which will continue current weed management efforts on the Navajo Nation. Treatments include the use of herbicide, mechanical, and manual removal treatments. The second alternative is the integrated weed management plan. This plan would provide guidance on controlling 45 noxious weed species using manual, mechanical, chemical, biological, and cultural control methods. A key feature of this alternative are more robust requirements to coordinate with communities,

Navajo Nation Programs, and neighboring federal agencies when planning and implementing projects. The third alternative is similar to the second, with the exception of using biological control agents for weed treatments. Under this alternative, the use of USDA-approved biological control agents would be prohibited, thus requiring the use of other weed control methods instead.

What resources were analyzed in the PEIS?

The BIA analyzed the effects of each alternative on several resources on the Navajo Nation. These resources include paleontological resources, soil, water, and air, vegetation, wildlife, agriculture, public health, socioeconomics, cultural resources, environmental justice, and areas with special designation (National Parks, Navajo Tribal Parks, Biological Preserves, and Forest Management Units). Several resource topics were considered but removed from consideration because the impacts were determined to be non-existent or negligible. These resources include geologic features, climate change, neighboring National Parks, Monuments, and Recreation Areas, wilderness areas, and noise and light.

How do I access the *Draft* Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Integrated Weed Management Plan?

You can review the *Draft* PEIS and IWMP at the project website:

<https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/navajo/navajo-nation-integrated-weed-management-plan>

You may also register for one of five Public Hearings to learn more.

How do I submit a Comment? What is a substantive comment?

You can submit a comment on the *Draft* PEIS and IWMP at the project website:

<https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/navajo/navajo-nation-integrated-weed-management-plan>

The comment form is divided based on Chapters and analysis sections. Click on the “Comment Form” button to submit a comment on the Integrated Weed Management Plan and/or the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Please provide references to specific page numbers, sections, figures, or tables.

The BIA will address all substantive comments. A substantive comment is one that presents new information for the project; highlight errors, assumptions, methods, or conclusions in the analysis; request for clarifications; highlights misinformation that could affect the outcome of the analysis; or suggests new alternatives.

Written comments may also be sent to:

Bureau of Indian Affairs – Navajo Regional Office
Branch of Environmental Quality Act Compliance and Review
C/O Leonard Notah, NEPA Compliance Specialist
P.O. Box 1060
Gallup, New Mexico 87301

Next Steps

The public comment period will conclude on **December 13, 2021**. Comments will be categorized, and responses will be prepared for substantive comments. Comments and responses will be provided as part of a Response to Comments report released with the Final EIS.



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