



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
4700 BLM Road, Anchorage, AK 99507

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Proposed Project Title: Alexander Creek Watershed Elodea Eradication Project

Project Description: The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) and the multi-stakeholder Alexander Creek Watershed Elodea Task Force propose the removal of invasive *Elodea* spp. (Elodea) populations using the herbicides fluridone and diquat in the Alexander Creek Watershed. Planned activities include the complete eradication of Elodea from infested lakes within the watershed which currently includes Alexander and Sucker Lakes. The populations of Elodea in the Alexander Creek Watershed are a high priority concern for ADNR in Alaska. Elodea in the Alexander Creek Watershed has impacted native habitats, and serves as a source population for Elodea to spread to other vulnerable habitats statewide; including areas that have already been successfully treated. It is anticipated the removal of Elodea from the Alexander Creek Watershed will lessen the risk that populations will expand via flowing water, boats, gear, and float plane traffic into adjacent water bodies. The proposed actions will also protect and restore quality angling opportunities for the public in the area. The proposed project will be implemented using a combination of Federal (primarily through the US Fish and Wildlife Service), state, tribal, and private funds.

Alternatives Considered

Three alternatives were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment (EA) including: 1) no action; 2) mechanical removal; and 3) the use of fluridone and diquat herbicide treatments (proposed action). The “no action” alternative was rejected because 1) there would be continued risk that Elodea could be transported to other water bodies throughout the state, 2) the native fauna and flora would continue to be impacted by the infestations, and 3) floatplane safety would continue to be jeopardized. The mechanical removal alternative was rejected because it would not eradicate Elodea in the lakes, could increase the density and distribution of Elodea in the lakes, and would not remove the threat of transporting Elodea to other water bodies.

The proposed action involves reducing biomass and eradicating established populations of Elodea from the Alexander Creek Watershed using the herbicides fluridone (Sonar) at up to 150 ppb annually and diquat (Littora®) at up to 2 gallons/acre. Fluridone alone is an effective tool at eradicating Elodea over time, but using diquat and fluridone in tandem increases the chances of eradication, significantly reduces the risk of spread throughout the duration of the treatment, and reduces the overall time and cost of the treatment plan. This treatment design has been successfully implemented in Interior Alaska, Anchorage, and on the Kenai Peninsula. The design would eradicate Elodea with minimal or no impacts to fish and wildlife in the area and would allow native plant species to recolonize the lakes and help to restore native habitats following treatment.

Public Review

In October 2018, a multi-stakeholder task force was formed to work collaboratively to contain and eradicate Elodea from the Alexander Creek Watershed. The Alexander Creek Watershed Elodea Task Force consists of representatives of the ADNR (project leader), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD), US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Cook Inlet Aquaculture (CIAA), Mat-Su Borough, Mat-Su Salmon Partnership, SePRO Corporation, the Susitna River Coalition, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, the Alaska Civil Air Patrol, and local land owners and residents from the Alexander Creek Watershed. This task force led the overall direction of the design and reviewed the content of the Environmental Assessment prior to submission to the Service. As such, no formal scoping was conducting, but stakeholder comments were sought and addressed through this multi-stakeholder platform.

Decision and Rationale

The EA provides a compelling case for the purpose and need of this action, including the restoration of native habitats that are heavily affected by the introduction of Elodea. This project will remove a primary source population of invasive Elodea in the Alexander Creek Watershed that threatens fish and wildlife populations and their habitats in Southcentral and Western Alaska, and will reduce the potential for spread to important regional and statewide fisheries and habitats elsewhere in the state.

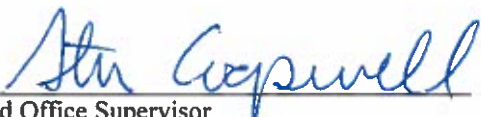
The analysis in the EA indicates that there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment as a result of the proposed action.

I find that all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project. I also find that this project complies with the role of the Service in implementing the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 and the meaning of Executive Orders 13751 and 13112.

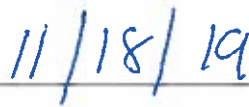
Therefore, based on a review and evaluation of the enclosed EA, I have determined the proposed removal of invasive Elodea as described in the project entitled, "Alexander Creek Watershed Elodea Eradication Project" is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed action is not required.

The Environmental Assessment, prepared by the ADNR, has been adopted by the Service according to rules contained in 40 CFR 1506.3.

Copies of the EA are available upon request from the Service's Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, 4700 BLM Road, Anchorage, AK 99507, or from the ADNR Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Coordinator, Plant Materials Center, 5310 S. Bodenbug Spur, Palmer, Alaska 99645.



Field Office Supervisor
Anchorage Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service – Alaska Region



Date