




MEMORANDUM

Date: October 4, 2011

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Buffelgrass Research Spray Test Conducted in Tucson Mountain Park**

The buffelgrass research spray test conducted in Tucson Mountain Park during summer 2010 went smoothly. The technology worked as predicted, and onsite evaluation showed minimal drift of spray due to precise application of the herbicide within the test plots from the helicopter delivery system. After the initial public discussions and two Board of Supervisors meetings, the majority of people contacted by Pima County who commented on the test supported the need for the research project. No problems were encountered during the test spraying, and the effort received positive television and print media coverage.

Initial surveys conducted immediately after the summer test, and then replicated in fall 2010, showed that the application of herbicides negatively impacted large stands of buffelgrass even under the canopies of native trees and large shrubs. No significant impact on the native plant population within the study plots was observed. Cacti, shrubs and most large perennial plants have shown no damage. The data collected during summer 2010 on the more than 2,400 plants and primary survey transects is being analyzed for status and condition one year post-test and is being compared to conditions in the control plots that received no treatment. The technology performed very well, and the test was expanded to include a test at the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

To date, the results appear to support that such controlled treatments have minimal long-term impact on native vegetation. Continued uncontrolled infestation of buffelgrass has a far greater negative impact on native plant cover and the general ecosystem than does treatment.

In summary, the approaches tested demonstrate they can be used to address buffelgrass infestations in remote and rugged settings. The computer-controlled helicopter boom spray application methodology can be applied in a very cost effective manner compared to hand spraying or mechanical removal on landscape level treatments. This application technique may also have uses in less remote areas that require large-scale spraying such as abandoned agriculture fields, landfills, remote roadways and other block infestation points.

The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: **Buffelgrass Research Spray Test Conducted in Tucson Mountain Park**
October 4, 2011
Page 2

The interagency team will investigate other funding sources for additional treatment projects. We must be mindful, however, that interest and support for buffelgrass control efforts has declined across some of the key jurisdictions and agencies due to the current economic environment. Yet, the significance and need for coordinated, landscape level control efforts has not diminished. The agencies involved plan to conduct public involvement processes before any large-scale projects are formulated. One possibility that requires additional analysis includes a multi-agency plan that outlines potential Countywide or regional locations, methods and details for future landscape level efforts in which the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center will play a critical role.

CHH/mjk

c: Lindy Brigham, Executive Director, Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination
Center
John Bernal, Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Rafael Payan, Director, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation