

Wisconsin Natural Areas Preservation Council

GUIDELINES

Guidelines for the Use of Pesticides¹ on State Natural Areas

Introduction

Natural areas are subject to invasion by unwanted species, both native and nonnative. These may be species we wish to control and, in fact, may be required by law to control. The question of what to do in such cases can be perplexing. The consequences that follow the establishment of invading species range from creation of a simple nuisance, to complicating a management operation, or to threatening the preserved community. The first of these consequences is trivial and probably is best ignored. The second and third consequences are the conditions these guidelines address.

The primary objective of natural areas is to preserve whole communities and their inherent natural processes. It should be accepted that some problems of invasion are not correctable and that the consequences of achieving control may outweigh the benefits. Most components of natural areas, e.g., soil bacteria, fungi, protozoa, soil and other arthropods, soil-bank seed and spores, et al., are out of sight and not measurable; thus, they are usually ignored. The interactions, synergisms, and dynamics of ecosystems literally tie each entity, abiotic as well as biotic, to all other components of the ecosystem. To alter one component is to alter others, at least to some degree. Hence, monitoring to detect adverse effects of pesticide applications is difficult and loaded with untenable assumptions.

Any decision to control unwanted species, either plant or animal, needs careful consideration based on clear, specific management objectives. The use of pesticides should be considered only as a last resort.

The Natural Areas Preservation Council recommends that the Department of Natural Resources implement the following guidelines on State Natural Areas. The Council also suggests that the Department consider these guidelines in its management of other state-owned lands and in its recommendation to other agencies and individuals.

Guidelines

1. Use of chemical pesticides on State Natural Areas has been avoided almost completely in the past. The Council reaffirms that general approach.
2. In all cases where the decision has been made that the invading species must be controlled, non-chemical controls should be attempted first, e.g., hand pulling or picking, mowing, local cultivation, fire, other forms of manipulation, and, perhaps, temporary regulation of the moisture regime.
3. Before a pesticide will be considered for use on a State Natural Area, the following conditions must be met:
 - a. Other control methods have been tried and found ineffective.

¹Pesticides are chemicals -- natural and artificial -- that are applied to control or eliminate live organisms.



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- b. Persistence of the unwanted species is demonstratively inimical to management objectives. Cases of succession in buffer zones, on unclassified sites, and in certain forest and other communities may fail this test.
 - c. It must be possible to treat the target species and only that species by direct contact, e.g., stump painting or application to individual leaves or bodies.
 - d. The pesticide to be used must be of proven efficacy and one that is quickly degraded into benign, naturally-occurring substances.
 - e. The pesticide must be applied by individuals trained in the application and handling of pesticides and instructed in the use of such substances in State Natural Areas.
4. Recommendations on the use of pesticides on State Natural Areas will be considered, on a case-by-case basis, by the Natural Areas Preservation Council upon written application and after other control measures have been exhausted or justification why other control measures will not be effective

Ordinarily, application must be made in advance of each proposed treatment program. However, the council will consider requests to grant site managers limited discretionary use of pesticides to control certain species that have a capability for rapid expansion.

5. Policies and practices that reduce the incidence of invasion by exotic species should be developed and implemented. Prevention is preferable to attempts to cure problems. Research on invasion and establishment of exotic species is critically needed and should be promoted.

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