
Guidelines for Preparing Draft Environmental Assessments for the Release of Plant Pests as Biological Control of Weeds

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United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Permitting and Risk Assessment Unit (USDA, APHIS, PPQ, PRA) is providing this template to assist you in preparing a DRAFT environmental assessment (EA). The DRAFT EA that you will submit will be reviewed and finalized by APHIS as a part of the permitting process enabling us to more efficiently respond to your permit application for release of the nonindigenous organism(s) to the environment.

Instructions have been provided to assist in the preparation of each section of the document. By providing complete information, the processing of the draft EA will be expedited. For most EAs it may not be necessary to produce a document with more than 4-6 pages of text. If no information is available regarding a requested data, then state that fact.

This is NOT a scientific document and should be written in a style that is understandable by the general public. As a rule technical information, especially tables and maps, should be presented in the appendices rather than the text.

CONTENTS OF AN EA:

Title Page

PRA (Permitting and Risk Assessment), formerly known as BATS (Biological Assessment and Taxonomic Support), will compose this page based on the information you give in section I., Proposed Action.

I. Proposed Action

Provide your institutional address, or if you have none, your personal address.

A paragraph on the legal authority of APHIS will be inserted into the final draft; you will not need to repeat it in your preliminary draft.

The proposed action section should include:

Description of proposed action.

Scientific names: species, author, family, and common names if available.

Who determined the species and location of voucher specimens

Brief description of the pest status of the target organism.

Where you will obtain the organisms proposed for release.

How the organisms will be handled (e.g., in quarantine).

Number/quantity to be released.

Timing of release.

Methods to be used for release – include plant material if used.

Specific location of rearing facility.

Release site(s) – approval by appropriate officials for the State(s) directly involved should be obtained prior to submitting the draft EA to PRA.

II. Need for the Proposed Action

Describe the type and extent of damage caused the target pest species. A summary of its life history is optional.

III. Alternatives to the Proposed Action

How the pest will be controlled if the permit application is denied e.g.:

- A. Cultural control,
- B. Mechanical and/or
- C. Chemical control.

IV. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives –

- A. Chemical control,
- B. Mechanical control,
- C. Chemical control and/or
- D. Biological control

For the purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act, environmental impacts include human impacts (e.g., health, noise, nuisance, impacts on private property), direct impacts of the release organism (e.g., intended effects on targets, direct effects on nontargets), and indirect effects (e.g., potential impacts on organisms that depend on target or nontarget species).

The DRAFT EA should consider impacts as if they were to occur over the entire distribution of the target weed unless releases are to occur in places such as islands.

Topics to be addressed in the environmental impacts section:

- Potential impacts on humans and animals, if any (see above).
- Intended impacts on the target organism(s). (Actual impacts cannot be predicted with reasonable accuracy.)
- Brief description of the life history of the organism to be released (optional), including its dispersal capabilities.
- The natural geographic range for the organism proposed for release.
- Summary of the host specificity from available data/literature of the organism proposed for release along with appropriate references. If available, results of field surveys in native land and examination of museum specimens and label data.
- Summary of the laboratory experimental methods or field techniques with a more detailed description in the appendices.
- Environmental, biological, and/or ecological constraints to the reproductive potential of the organism to be released.
- Data or reports regarding potential effects on non-target species.
- Any species within the same family as the target species listed by the U.S. Fish

- and Wildlife Service as either endangered or threatened?
- Direct or indirect effects that might occur to endangered or threatened species from the proposed release.

V. Listing of Agencies and Persons Consulted

VI. References

VII. Appendix

Technical data or reports pertinent to the EA

Common name and scientific classification (all levels available) for the organism proposed for release

Short list (5-10) of references on the organism proposed for release (if an undescribed species then the list should be on a close relative).