

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
**For**  
**Russian Knapweed Bio-Control - *Jaapiella ivannikovi* Field Release**  
**DOI-BLM-OR-130-2012-0001-EA**

**I. Introduction**

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Permit Unit approached the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Spokane District for consent to distribute *Jaapiella ivannikovi*, on public lands in order establish an insectary that could be monitored over time. *J. ivannikovi* is an insect which USDA has recently approved for control of Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), a designated noxious weed in Washington State. The use of biological control agents is an integral part of the BLM's Integrated Weed Management (IWM) strategy and partnership with APHIS has been crucial to utilizing a diverse range of insects and pathogens on a variety of noxious weed species.

**Compliance with Land Use Plan**

The project area is in the Upper Crab Creek Management Area of the Spokane District's Border Resource Area. The Spokane Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment (1992) specifies that weed control activities are a component of special management to support diverse ecological values within this management area.

**Description of Proposed Action**

The BLM is proposing to release a biological control agent, *J. ivannikovi*, for the control of Russian knapweed (*A. repens*), as a demonstration control project. The proposed location of the field release will be within the Goose Butte grazing allotment (00560), in Lincoln County, Washington. The legal description for the release is T. 21 N., R. 36 E. Sections 19, 20, 21, 22, and 30 W.M. (see Map).

The proposed action involves the classical biological control method of releasing *J. ivannikovi*, a flower/bud-gall midge to suppress *A. repens* at the bolt/bud stage of its phenology. As a demonstration control project the proposed release will not exceed a total of 10 acres. The gross area of the proposed project is roughly 400 acres within the Goose Butte allotment based on known infestation records of *A. repens*.

Field release locations will be selected based on the patch-size and density of the *A. repens* infestations favoring large continuous patches over individual plants or sparse patches. These locations will be mapped, flagged, and locations recorded by GPS in order to monitor the insects

establishment. The use of herbicides will be restricted within 20 feet of the perimeter of the release sites to prevent damage to the insectary area.

In the following 5 years after initial release, BLM will monitor the insectary area in early spring when young *A. repens* shoots are most susceptible to gall formation. Stands infested by *J. ivannikovi* will be inspected for reduction of plant vigor and biomass as well as reductions in stand density and extent. Monitoring data will be used to determine whether site conditions are suitable for *J. ivannikovi* and if subsequent augmentative releases would successfully establish an insectary on Goose Butte. Additional releases will be conducted if the analysis of monitoring data indicates that *J. ivannikovi* establishment was limited by initial population size.

It is not expected that *J. ivannikovi* alone will eradicate *A. repens* infestations within the project area, but as a demonstration release the goal is to determine if the climate and habitat conditions are suitable to establish populations of the biocontrol agent.

## **II. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

The BLM independently evaluated the Environmental Assessment (EA) *Field Release of Jaapiella ivannikovi (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae), an Insect for Biological Control of Russian Knapweed (Acroptilon repens), in the Continental United States*, prepared by the USDA APHIS in 2009, and found that it adequately addresses environmental impacts of the proposed action described above. The BLM takes full responsibility for the scope and content of this EA.

Based on the effects discussed in the EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action, with identified mitigation measures, is *not* a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. None of the environmental effects identified meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and the BLM will not prepare one. This finding is based on the following:

Context: As described in the EA, there would be no adverse environmental effects. Due to host specificity of *J. ivannikovi*, there is not threat to other vegetation, wildlife, or human safety.

### Intensity

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed. The physical and biological effects are limited to the site of the proposed action and adjacent lands.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted.

3. There would be no adverse impacts to wetlands, floodplains, areas with unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no known effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural resource surveys, and through required mitigation, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act was identified. The 2009 USDA FONSI for “Field Release of *Jaapiella ivannikovi* (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae), an Insect for Biological Control of Russian Knapweed (*Acrotilon repens*), in the Continental United States” Environmental Assessment made a no effect call on federally listed threatened and endangered species or their habitat in the continental United States.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations and requirements for the protection of the environment.

/s/ Linda A. Clark

June 1, 2012

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Linda A. Clark  
Border Field Office Manager

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Date