

### Vegetation Management Summary

In the course of researching the information on the grass, brush, and tree species presented herein, it has come to our attention that certain problems involved with vegetation management in the EBRPD are recurrent difficulties associated with a lack of common direction and goals.

First the criteria by which species are classified as problems is not made entirely clear by the District's policy on existing vegetation. Two types mentioned are non-indigenous species and any species which encroach on grassland, but there is no stated justification for considering poison oak a problem, in spite of the obvious health hazards. In addition, certain non-indigenous species (such as *Eucalyptus*) may be tolerated because they are "naturalized," having grown on a site for so long that they are commonly thought of as natives.

Second, if a species is deemed undesirable, what then should be done? Although the "Principles and Policies" review several methods of control, a general policy of management practices is not recommended.

We feel that the absence of clearly spelled out guidelines for vegetation management has hindered the District in undertaking an effective management program. Conflicting concepts of appropriate action and lack of funds for management of vegetation exist within the District and must be overcome if successful management is to be achieved.

In the interest of constructing a workable structure from which proper vegetation management may be accomplished we recommend these steps be taken:

1. An overall vegetation inventory, similar to the vertebrate inventory done by R.C. Stebbins (Appendix 4, Vegetation Management Plan) should be taken for those parkland areas where vegetation management is necessary.
2. A general philosophy pertaining to what kind of vegetation is desirable and undesirable within the parks should be formulated and agreed upon. (A general philosophy has already been stated in the Principles and Policies, but does not seem to be supported by all District personnel).
3. Realistic goals in management should then be developed to coincide with the philosophy adopted by the District.
4. Proper control methods should be agreed upon and implemented consistently by a corps of people who are aware of the overall goals of management activity.
5. Regular re-evaluation and monitoring of areas where management is practiced must be included in the duties of vegetation management personnel.

As specific recommendations, we suggest that:

The policies of maintaining grassland areas for recreation and not removing non-indigenous vegetation solely on the basis of its being non-indigenous are both practical and desirable. It is apparent to us that existing grassland areas are essential to the worth of the parks and that the cost of attempting to eliminate non-indigenous species just because they are non-indigenous is financially impractical and unnecessary. We feel that a good philosophy would be to try to maintain the current vegetational balance within the parks, and prevent the intrusion of possibly undesirable plants which may present themselves in the future.

The methods of control that should be emphasized are:

1. The use of appropriate herbicides under strict supervision, in order to prevent spread of the problem species. (This practice will have to be accompanied by a program to inform and educate the public about the intelligent use of such chemicals).
2. A well conceived and regular timetable of controlled burns on areas of chaparral brush should be implemented.

In addition, we strongly emphasize that documentation is needed in the monitoring and evaluation process which is integral to successful vegetation management.

Obviously it is quite a bit easier to make recommendations as we have done here, than actually to implement such suggestions. We realize that bureau, conflicts in philosophy, and of course, lack of funds are major obstacles in the District. Too, we realize that generalized goals and plans do not allow for the special cases that inevitably occur in vegetation management. However, it is our opinion that some direction and initiative must be lent to vegetation management in the District if major problems with park usage and appearance are to be avoided in the very near future.

It is hoped that the information gathered here, and recommendations put forth within this section have done something to help realize the goal of improved park management.

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