

KANSAS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
GREG A. FOLEY, ACTING SECRETARY

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Senate Agriculture Committee

February 4, 2003

Update on Sericea Lespedeza Disaster Declarations

Acting Secretary of Agriculture Greg A. Foley

Good morning, Chairman Schmidt and members of the committee. I am Acting Secretary of Agriculture Greg Foley, and I am here to update you on the state's efforts to help Kansas landowners with sericea lespedeza infestations.

This stubborn, destructive weed rapidly established itself on more than 500,000 Kansas acres. Last year the Kansas Department of Agriculture supported legislation that allows the secretary of agriculture to declare counties sericea lespedeza disaster areas.

This modification of the noxious weed law opens the door for private and public landowners to receive federal funding to help control this damaging weed. Temporary regulations on the sericea lespedeza disaster program are in place, and a hearing on the permanent regulation will be March 19. This is preparatory work to make qualified counties eligible for those federal funds. Congress has not yet approved funding, but we believe it is important for counties to prepare the necessary information to be considered for this declaration as soon as possible.

After a county disaster declaration is made, the State Conservation Commission will coordinate with county conservation districts and make eligible pest management practices. The SCC also works closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency to maximize targeted efforts through federal EQIP funding.

KDA has provided information packets about the disaster process to 28 counties: Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Clark, Clay, Cloud, Coffey, Crawford, Dickinson, Elk,

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Attachment 1*

Ellsworth, Franklin, Greenwood, Jackson, Labette, Linn, Lyon, Montgomery, Morris, Nemaha, Neosho, Osage, Pottawatomie, Washington, Wilson and Woodson.

A county's eligibility depends on the level of infestation. Criteria have been established in a noxious weed law regulation that defines the levels necessary for the declaration, generally making disaster counties those with severe infestations of sericea lespedeza on public land, private land, or both.

Local county conservation districts are willing to take the lead in developing the petition and supporting data, with the cooperation of the county extension service, the county noxious weed department, USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, public land managers, private landowners, and other farm service organizations. The completed petition is presented to the board of county commissioners for their approval. Once approved by the commissioners, the petition is sent to the secretary of agriculture for evaluation.

According to Senate Bill 548, the legislation enacted by the 2002 Kansas Legislature establishing this effort, local conservation districts will administer the funds when they become available. This provision will give counties flexibility on control methods and areas.

The regulations require a specific, practical action plan to manage the acres already infested. This is important for both private and public lands. Effective management of an invasive perennial plant is a long-term endeavor. An integrated approach developed for each individual situation will result in the highest probability of success. Preventing new infestations should be a high priority. This weed spreads naturally by water and animals and artificially by commercial activities like moving infested hay and mulch.

Finally, if a county does not receive the disaster declaration, other assistance can be applied for through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Private landowners are eligible to obtain cost-share control herbicides at county weed departments or at private dealers in counties that have enacted a cost-share certificate program.

Thank you. I will stand for questions.

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State Conservation Commission

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Senate Agriculture Committee
Update on Sericea Lespedeza Disaster Program
February 4, 2003

Tracy, Streeter, Executive Director

Good morning Chairman Schmidt and members of the Committee, my name is Tracy Streeter, Executive Director of the State Conservation Commission. I appear before you this morning to provide a status report on the control of Sericea Lespedeza.

As you are aware, Senate Bill 548, passed by the 2002 Legislature, created a mechanism for the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture to designate counties for Sericea Lespedeza control. This legislation also enables conservation districts located in the designated counties to implement programs to control and eradicate this noxious weed, pending federal funding.

Currently, landowners statewide may apply for federal cost-share assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), administered by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Once appropriated, thirty (30) percent of the Kansas EQIP allocation will be earmarked for grazing lands health. Applications under this category are prioritized with emphasis placed on planned grazing systems and pastures with the least percentage of non-native invasive species. It is my understanding that this criterion was developed to prevent the spread of Sericea through spot treatment. Late last week, the draft national rules for the EQIP were released and it appears that the rules will have no effect on the adopted Kansas funding criteria. A copy of the ranking criteria is attached.

Should additional federal funding be appropriated for use in the approved disaster counties, the State Conservation Commission is prepared to assist conservation districts or administer the funds at the state level if designated to do so.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide information on this very serious resource concern. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Senate Agriculture
2-4-03
Attachment 2

**FY2003 KS EQIP APPLICATION EVALUATION WORKSHEET
GRAZING LANDS HEALTH**

Attachment 3 to KS300-3-3
Dated November 14, 2002

APPLICANT _____
 APPLICATION # _____
 APPLICATION ACRES _____
 TRACT # _____
 ADMINISTRATIVE (FSA) COUNTY _____
 LOCATION COUNTY _____
 STATE _____
 DOLLARS REQUESTED _____

REQUIREMENTS OF GRAZING LANDS HEALTH RESOURCE CONCERN:

- The unit of concern will be converted to a grazing plan that will achieve 50% or less use for the year on the key forage species in identified key grazing areas during the life of the contract.
- Producer will implement a modified harvest method monitoring system using grazing exclusion cages, approved by NRCS, that will verify the degree of use of the key forage species in identified key grazing areas during the life of the contract.

HIGH CATEGORY

Priority # 1	* The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 91% of the days during the growing season.	_____	Days of rest
	OR		
	* The grazing unit land area is infested with 1-10% of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1)	_____	Acres infested
Priority # 2	* The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 86% of the days during the growing season.	_____	Days of rest
	OR		
	* The grazing unit land area is infested with 10-15% of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1)	_____	Acres infested
Priority # 3	* The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 82% of the days during the growing season.	_____	Days of rest
	OR		
	* The grazing unit land area is infested with 15-20% of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1)	_____	Acres infested
Priority # 4	* The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 74% of the days during the growing season.	_____	Days of rest
	OR		
	* The grazing unit land area is infested with 20-25% of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1)	_____	Acres infested

(1) Non-native species eligible for this priority are tamarisk (salt cedar) and sericea lespedeza.

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FY2003 KS EQIP APPLICATION EVALUATION WORKSHEET
GRAZING LANDS HEALTH

Attachment 3 to KS300-3-3
Dated November 14, 2002

APPLICANT _____
APPLICATION # _____

MEDIUM CATEGORY

- Priority # 1 * The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 49% of the days during the growing season. _____ Days of rest
OR
* The grazing unit land area is infested with 25-30% of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1) _____ Acres infested
- Priority # 2 * The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 30% of the days during the growing season. _____ Days of rest
OR
* The grazing unit land area is infested with 31% or greater of non-native invasive species and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (1) _____ Acres infested
OR
* The grazing unit is infested with a brush species at least at the high priority level as indicated in the FOTG for Brush Management and the producer will implement a plan to control the brush species. _____ Acres infested

LOW CATEGORY

- Priority #1 * The producer will implement a planned grazing system that will create an upward trend in rangeland health and desirable species vigor. _____
OR
* The grazing unit is infested with a brush species at least at the medium priority level as indicated in the FOTG for Brush Management and the producer will implement a plan to control the brush species. _____ Acres infested

(1) Non-native species eligible for this priority are tamarisk (salt cedar) and sericea lespedeza.

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