



Saguaro National Park News Release

For Immediate Release

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Saguaro National Park to Begin Spraying Buffelgrass

Monsoon rains bring dormant plants back to life and staff at Saguaro National Park, along with other city, county, state and federal land managers, are gearing up to use herbicides to control buffelgrass.

Buffelgrass is an aggressive, non-native grass that competes with native plants such as saguaros and palo verdes, and also carries wildfires that can harm these Sonoran Desert natives. Buffelgrass will continue to spread. It is a serious threat to biological conservation efforts in the area. Buffelgrass is classified as a noxious weed by the state of Arizona and buffelgrass fires are also a major threat to public safety and property

There are two main ways to effectively control buffelgrass. The herbicide currently used by the park, is absorbed only by green, actively growing leaves. If the grass is less than 50% green, manual removal is the best method. However, this is a slow, labor-intensive process, and pulling alone cannot keep up with rapidly spreading buffelgrass.

The park plans to treat approximately 50 miles of roadway and 450 acres of wilderness in both the Tucson Mountain and Rincon Mountain Districts over the next 3 months beginning in mid-July. No public closures are anticipated. An area is safe to enter approximately 30 minutes after application of the herbicide, as soon as the herbicide is dry. Blue dye will be mixed with the spray to mark plants that have been treated. In the backcountry, water containers have been distributed by mules and helicopters for use by spray crews; if found please do not disturb.

Park employees will use an herbicide with active ingredient glyphosate, which is available under several brand names, including Roundup®, Rodeo®, and Touchdown®. Glyphosate inhibits the action of an enzyme found only in plants that is essential to plant growth. Glyphosate is non-selective so it needs to be administered carefully to spray only species intended for control. Buffelgrass is the primary target, but other non-native grasses will be treated opportunistically if they are encountered, such as fountain grass, natal grass, African lovegrasses, and Bermuda grass.

Park employees and volunteers, including local residents and groups such as the employees from Citigroup and TEP have been instrumental in helping manually remove buffelgrass in the park.

For additional information, including a map of areas to be treated, please visit these websites:

<http://www.nps.gov/sagu/naturescience/invasive-plants.htm>
www.buffelgrass.org