



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2019-0002]

Notice of Availability of a Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Field Release of *Aphalara itadori* (Hemiptera: Psyllidae) from Murakami, Japan, for Classical Biological Control of Japanese, Giant, and Bohemian Knotweeds *Fallopia japonica*, *F. sachalinensis*, and *F. x bohemica* (Polygonaceae), in the Contiguous United States

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has prepared a final supplemental environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact relative to a 2020 EA for the field release of the knotweed psyllid *Aphalara itadori* (Hemiptera: Psyllidae) from Murakami, Japan, for the classical biological control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweeds (*Fallopia japonica*, *F. sachalinensis*, and *F. x bohemica* (Polygonaceae)), significant invasive weeds, within the contiguous United States. Based on our finding of no significant impact, we have determined that an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Kirsten Dyer, Agriculturist, Pests, Pathogens and Biocontrol Permitting, Pest Exclusion and Import Programs, PPQ, APHIS, 5601 Sunnyside Ave, Beltsville, MD 20705; (352) 554-0556; email: Kirsten.Dyer@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has prepared a final supplemental environmental assessment (EA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) relative to the field release of *Aphalara itadori* sourced from Murakami, Japan, for the classical biological control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian

knotweeds (*Fallopia japonica*, *F. sachalinensis*, and *F. x bohemica* (Polygonaceae)), significant invasive weeds, within the contiguous United States. After completion of the environmental analysis, APHIS authorized issuance of permits for the release.

Invasive knotweeds in North America are a complex of three closely related species in the family Polygonaceae that were introduced from Japan during the late 19th century. They include *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese knotweed), *F. sachalinensis* (giant knotweed), and the hybrid between the two, *F. x bohemica* (Bohemian knotweed). These large herbaceous perennials have spread throughout much of North America, with the greatest infestations in the Pacific Northwest, the northeast of the United States, and eastern Canada. While capable of growing in diverse habitats, the knotweeds have become especially problematic along the banks and floodplains of rivers and streams, where they crowd out native plants and potentially affect stream nutrients and food webs.

Previously, the Hokkaido and Kyushu biotypes of the insect, *Aphalara itadori*, were chosen as potential biological control organisms. These biotypes were expected to reduce the severity of infestations of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweed, and they are known to be highly host specific due to their intimate relationship with their host plants.

On May 28, 2019, APHIS published in the *Federal Register* (84 FR 24463-24464, Docket No. APHIS-2019-0002) ¹ a notice in which we announced the availability, for public review and comment, of the EA that examined the potential environmental impacts associated with the release of *A. itadori* from Kyushu and Hokkaido, Japan, for the biological control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweed within the contiguous United States. After soliciting and reviewing comments on the EA, we prepared a FONSI. On November 30, 2020, we published in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 76515-76516, Docket No. APHIS-2019-0002) a notice in which we announced the availability of the final EA and FONSI.

¹To view the notice, supporting documents, and the comments we received, go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Enter APHIS-2019-0002 in the Search field.

In June 2021, APHIS received a request to issue permits for the environmental release of *A. itadori* sourced from Murakami, Japan, into the contiguous United States. The permit applicant suggested that the environmental release of the Murakami line of *A. itadori* may be more effective than the Hokkaido and Kyushu lines. It is native to a climate and photoperiod better matched to the primary target knotweed regions of the United States. It is recently collected and thus field-adapted (not lab-adapted as are the currently permitted lines). It also performs particularly well on hybrid knotweed (*F. x bohemica*), the most abundant knotweed type in the United States.

On February 10, 2023, we published in the *Federal Register* (88 FR 8794-8795, Docket No. APHIS-2019-0002) a notice² in which we announced the availability, for public review and comment, of a supplemental EA titled “Field Release of the Knotweed Psyllid *Aphalara itadori* (Hemiptera: Psyllidae) from Murakami, Japan for Classical Biological Control of Japanese, Giant, and Bohemian Knotweeds, *Fallopia japonica*, *F. sachalinensis*, and *F. x bohemica* (Polygonaceae), in the Contiguous United States, Supplemental Environmental Assessment,” which analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the release of *A. itadori* from Murakami, Japan. Comments on the notice were required to be received on or before March 13, 2023. We received nine comments by that date, and all were supportive of the release. Comments were from State, Tribal, and local agricultural agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. One commenter suggested introduction of *A. itadori* should be gradual with monitoring to ensure that there are no unexpected effects before wider release. This is APHIS’ plan for the release, and it is described in Appendix 2 of the final supplemental EA.

In this document, we are advising the public of the availability of the final supplemental EA and our FONSI regarding the release of *A. itadori* from Murakami, Japan, for the biological

² The notice, supporting documents, and the comments we received may also be viewed at Regulations.gov as directed in footnote 1.

control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweed within the contiguous United States. Our finding, which is based on the analysis in the supplemental EA, reflects our determination that release of *A. itadori* from Murakami, Japan, for the biological control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweed within the contiguous United States will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Based on this finding, we have authorized permits for the release of *A. itadori* from Murakami, Japan, for the biological control of Japanese, giant, and Bohemian knotweed within the contiguous United States.

The final supplemental EA and FONSI may be viewed on the Regulations.gov website (see footnote 1). Copies of the final supplemental EA and FONSI are also available for public inspection at room 1620 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect copies are requested to call ahead at (202) 799-7039 to facilitate entry into the reading room. In addition, copies may be obtained by calling or writing to the individual listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

The final supplemental EA and FONSI have been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); (2) the former regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) as of February 25, 2021; (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b) effective through July 2, 2025; and (4) APHIS' former NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372) effective through July 2, 2025.

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of June 2026.

Kelly Moore,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.