



Webinar Brief for Resource Managers

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Weed-free Mulch, Unicorns, and Other Myths

Presented on 5 April 2017 by Steve Popovich, Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation National Program Lead, Bureau of Land Management, Washington D.C.

Project Summary: This webinar presents an overview to understanding what weeds are and are not included in agricultural straw/mulch certified under Weed-free Forage programs by both States and the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA). It presents simple steps the user can take to make informed decisions when acquiring mulch to assess and minimize weed presence, including office and field tips. Alternative sources to agricultural mulch and relative costs are also discussed.

Management Implications

- Increase quality control regarding weed content during mulch procurement
- Minimize weeds hitting the ground during mulching operations and reduce need for follow-up weed treatment
- Less weeds increases project effectiveness

Abstract: When we procure agricultural mulch/straw, we often specify Certified Weed-free Straw and call it good. But did you know that many listed noxious weeds and undesirable weedy species, such as cheatgrass, can still be and often are present? Weed contaminant in mulch is becoming increasingly problematic. Producers are challenged to provide tighter levels of weed presence at a time when contamination is becoming more difficult to control. Yet many users are unaware of what weeds may be occurring in the straw they order, and end up unknowingly buying the bonus gift that keeps on giving – weeds! Knowing exactly what you are getting is particularly important with national ramp-up of demand stressing the use of native plant materials in revegetation, such as increasing landscape-level resiliency, sage grouse habitat restoration, and incorporation of pollinator-friendly host plants. This webinar will overview which weeds are and are not considered in weed-free mulch, and presents simple – yet largely unused – tools you have as an end-user in minimizing what weeds are present in the seed you are ordering, so that you can make more informed decisions when buying or using agricultural mulch products. Find out why relying upon Certified Weed-free Forage is not enough to tell you what you are REALLY buying, and be able to come away armed with information you can use immediately to help keep your projects out of the weeds!