

DECISION MEMO
Evaluation of Cages for Protection of Seed Production
Of *Angelica wheeleri* Plants

USDA Forest Service, Intermountain Region, Uinta National Forest
Spanish Fork District
Juab County, Utah

I. DECISION

A. Description of Decision

My decision is to proceed to conduct a small research project to establish and to evaluate the effectiveness of galvanized wire fence cages for protection of seed production in individual plants of the species *Angelica wheeleri*. The project will be implemented at a population of the species along a tributary to Salt Creek, about ten miles east of Nephi, UT.

The project consists of:

1. Selecting about ten plants of *Angelica wheeleri*;
2. Installing wire mesh cages around eight of the plants;
3. Comparing production of mature seed between the caged and uncaged plants.
4. Removing the cages before winter sets in.

B. Purpose of the Decision

Angelica wheeleri is found only in Utah, known from 20 collections in three mountain ranges. It is being considered for inclusion in the Region 4 Sensitive Species list, and has an "imperiled" Utah Heritage Status rank. The species prefers moist soils, occurring in meadows and along streams. Two populations have been recorded as occurring on the Uinta National Forest, only one of which is known at present. During a visit to the known population on Spanish Fork Ranger District in 2002, we noted that of the 10 angelicas seen, every plant had had the seedheads and upper stalks grazed off by cattle, wild ungulates or both. The two remaining seedheads on one plant, which were protected from grazing animals by tree branches, were infested with an unknown species of caterpillar eating the seeds. The end result was an almost total loss of seed production for 2002. We saw similar levels and patterns of herbivory in 2003. We extrapolate that this level of herbivory occurs almost every year in this population. Because grazing on other herbaceous species on the site was light and the angelica's basal leaves were not grazed off in 2002 (though partly so in 2003), we believe maturing *Angelica wheeleri* seedheads are especially palatable to one or more herbivore species. This may be threatening the long term survival of at least the Spanish Fork population. The National Forest Management Act requires National Forests maintain viability of all species occurring on them.

II. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FHS) 1909.15 SECTION 31, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

A. Category of Exclusion

The project is within the FSH 1909.15 31.1a(3) category of exclusion that includes “Inventories, research activities, and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity.”

B. Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstances

1. Steep Slopes or Highly Erosive Soils

There are no steep slopes or highly erosive soils within the decision area. The decision will not affect steep slopes or highly erosive soils.

2. Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat

The Endangered Species Act requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification to such species’ designated critical habitat.

As required by this Act, potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented in a Biological Assessment (File Record). The project occurs within winter range of bald eagles, and near but outside habitat for Western Yellow-billed cuckoo. As designed, the project will have no effect on these species. The project area appears to be suitable habitat for Ute ladies’-tresses orchid, though none have been found there. Due to the small scale and lack of soil disturbance of this project, the project is unlikely to adversely affect the orchid (BA 2004, USFWS concurrence letter, 2004, both in the project file).

3. Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds

Floodplains: Executive Order 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains.

Due to the small scale and lack of soil disturbance of the project’s activities, this decision will not have any negative impact in the floodplain where it will be implemented.

Wetlands: Executive Order 11990 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with destruction or modification of wetlands. This project’s activities are not located within wetlands.

Municipal Watersheds: This project will not have any adverse effects on municipal watersheds.

4. Congressionally Designated Areas

This project is not located in or near Wilderness or within a Wild and Scenic River corridor. No congressionally designated areas will be affected by this decision.

5. Inventoried Roadless Areas

There are no inventoried roadless areas in the project area.

6. Research Natural Areas

The project area is not within any proposed, candidate or designated Research Natural Area.

7. Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas

The project area has been surveyed for cultural resources, with none found. No effects to heritage resources are expected as a result of this project.

III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping was conducted through letter contacts with agencies and other known interested parties, and through listing the project in the quarterly notice of proposed actions. We received two contacts about this project. See the project file for comments received.

IV. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY AND/OR RELATED TO THER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision complies with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below:

Endangered Species Act – See Section II, Item B2 of this document.

National Historic Preservation Act – See Section II, Item B7 of this document.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act -- Section II, Item B7 of this document.

National Environmental Policy Act – This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The scoping for and documentation of this decision supports compliance with this Act.

National Forest Management Act – This Act requires all projects and activities be consistent with the Forest Land and Resources Management Plan. This project and decision is consistent with the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan, sub-goal 2-6:

Ecosystems on the Forest provide and maintain viable and well-distributed populations of flora and fauna. New listings of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species as a result of Forest Service management activities are avoided.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL

This decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.

VII. CONTACT PERSON

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Karen Hartman of this office (801-798-3571) or Denise Van Keuren at the Uinta N. F. Supervisor's Office (801-342-5179).

VIII. SIGNATURE AND DATE

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, as it is within one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the planning record.

/s/ William A. R. Ott

March 5, 2004

WILLIAM A. R. OTT
District Ranger

Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.