Date Prepared: June, 2002

Species Common Name: Oregon semaphore grass

Species Scientific Name: *Pleuropogon oregonus* Chase

Suspected or Documented Occurrence on USFS Region 6 National Forests:

Fremont National Forest: Suspected

Description:

Glabrous, perennial grass from slender rhizomes with purplish red scales and long soft internodes; culms erect, soft and spongy, 55-90 cm tall; sheaths closed ¾ their length, purplish red; blades erect, flat, 8-18 cm long, 4-7 mm wide; raceme 7-20 cm long, bearing six to eight spikelets, each spikelet seven to fourteen flowered, upper florets pistillate, the lower perfect; flumes unequal, 2-4 mm long; lemmas strongly seven nerved, 5.5-7 mm long, bearing an awn 5-12 mm long at apex; paleas same length as lemmas, with two subapical awns 2-7 mm long (Meinke, 1982).

Plant glabrous, the culms 4-9 dm tall; sheaths closed about ¾ their length; ligules 2-5 mm long, acute, entire to lacerate, glabrous; blades 4-7 mm long; racemes mostly 10-15 cm long; spikelets nearly erect, 7 to 13 flowered, 2-4 cm long; glumes 2-4 mm long; palea subequal to the lemma, awned from each keel somewhat below the midlength, the awns 2-7 mm long (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Field Characteristics: The most obvious field characteristic is the two awned palea and the spikelets having many florets (Rittenhouse, 1991). At times the spikelets are second (all on one side of the rachis), hence the name semaphore grass (resembling the flags on a ship) (Rittenhouse, 1991). From a distance, this grass blends in with the surrounding vegetation and is difficult to locate (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Look Alikes: One associated species, northern mannagrass (*Glyceria borealis*), may be confused with Oregon semaphore grass (Rittenhouse, 1991). The differences are that northern mannagrass is awnless on both the lemma and palea (Rittenhouse, 1991). Other than this, no other grass species should be confused with Oregon semaphore grass (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Habitat and Distribution:

Habitat: *Pleuropogon oregonus* habitat consists of wet meadows, marshlands, and streambanks (Rittenhouse, 1991). It appears that standing or flowing water, at least early in the growing season, is important where populations are present (Rittenhouse, 1991). Elevation of the populations along Camas Creek is approximately at 5,600 feet (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Distribution: This species is only known from disjunct populations in Union (northeastern Oregon) and Lake Counties (Rittenhouse, 1991). There are only three known populations known (Rittenhouse, 1991). *Pleuropogon oregonus* is know only to exist in Oregon (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Currently, all know populations occur on private land within the Lakeview Ranger District boundary on the Fremont National Forest (Rittenhouse, 1991). These populations occur along Camas Creek from Camas Prairie to Mud Creek (Rittenhouse, 1991). Four populations have been documented there (Rittenhouse, 1991). Information regarding population size is lacking (Rittenhouse, 1991). More habitat is present in some of the larger meadows of the Warner Mountains (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Abundance:

Rare

This species is one of the rarest species in Oregon, with less than five known populations (Rittenhouse, 1991). Many habitat sites exist, but are on private land (Rittenhouse, 1991). Rittenhouse feels that Rogger Meadow, Summit Prairie, Horse Prairie, Whiskey Flat, Camas Prairie Bull Prairie, meadows along Burnt and Willow Creeds, and the wet meadows along the creeks draining into Camas Creek should be surveyed for potential populations (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Summary: Location of *Pleuropogon oregonus* on the Lakeview Ranger District.

Description	Size (Stems)
1.) Mud Creek	100
2.) Camas Creek	??
3.) Camas Creek	??
4.) Camas Prairie	??

Phenology:

Pleuropogon oregonus flowers from late-June to late-July (Rittenhouse, 1991). Plants are only identifiable when in flower until seed dispersal (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Habitat Associations:

Associated species include *Glyceria borealis,* many species of *Carex, Ranunculus alismaefolius, Mimulus primuloides* and other associated vegetation of wetlands (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Threats/Potential Impacts of Management Activities:

Timber Harvest: This species will not be impacted from timber harvest (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Grazing: At this time, it is unclear what effects domestic cattle grazing will have on *Pleuropogon oregonus* (Rittenhouse, 1991). Since all the current populations exist on private lands, there is no control over grazing procedures (Rittenhouse, 1991). However, the area at Mud Creek is grazed every year and the plants seem to flower every year (Rittenhouse, 1991). At this point, it has no been determined if this population is decreasing, remaining stable or decreasing (Rittenhouse, 1991). It has been noticed that most of the razing occurs after the plants flower (Rittenhouse, 1991). By late August, the area where the population exists is severely overgrazed (Rittenhouse, 1991). Rittenhouse feels that any grazing earlier in the year, over a period of a couple years would probably be detrimental (Rittenhouse, 1991).

Mechanisms Providing for Species Conservation and Protection:

Due to the small distribution of *Pleuropogon oregonus,* reintroduction of this species into a suitable habitat located on non-private land should be considered.

Image of *Pleuropogon oregonus*:

Close-up:

Habitat:

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References:

Meinke, Robert J. 1982. Threatened and Endangered Vascular Plants of Oregon: An Illustrated Guide. US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rittenhouse, Bruce. 1991, October 29. Status Report for *Pleuropogon oregonus*, on the Lakeview Ranger District, Fremont National Forest.