Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/5/2014 12:00:00 AM
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Comments: May 2, 2014
Bonnie Bonneau
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Dear Maria Garcia,

Thank you for the paper copies of the invasive plant control project.
The indicator species policy seems inadequate to protect the American goldfinch, a beautiful little bird whose survival is dependent on the Bull thistle. If these thistles are invasive, then the American Goldfinch is also invasive and what proof do you have that there were none here before Columbus? What will be the fate of the American Goldfinch if you target Bull Thistles?
Bull thistles are easy to pull, or mow. While Canadian Thistles have crab grass lie root systems and takes years to get out with manual methods. Canadian thistles are more invasive and Bull thistles are usually incidental.
Using the same treatment methods on these two species will endanger the American Goldfinch. In surveying for wildlife, do not ask if you have seen an American Goldfinch, but if you want to see an American Goldfinch.
The issue is not whether herbicides are toxic to the birds and insects, but that certain plant species (which cattle do not like to eat) are vital to the food, nesting and other habitat needs many methods devastate symbiotic life forms. Obviously the cattle have damaged the soil with excrement and compaction of soil, so that only a few species of what you reguard as weeds can survive. Some such species are regarded as pioneer plants which help aerate the soil and facilitate the introduction of other compatible species. This is a theory from a farming method called permaculture, and I'm not sure how it works with cattle ranching.
A beneficial insect census should accompany these treatments, as bees and butterflies, pollinators especially for which flowers are their habitat and they don't discriminate against "weeds". Removing food supplies by the acre may be the sort of imbalance that effects hives, ie. Effective reseeding is never easy in New Mexico. Will the species that you plant have to be native, or will you introduce invasives, and these are probably big factors to control if the project is to succeed. The land may require rehabilitation and rest.
Please be gentle with all species, Bonnie Bonneau