Aerial Herbicide Application - (Woody Site Preparation)

Where Applicable:

It is often necessary to conduct site preparation operations on cutover sites, semi-open fields, and other areas with significant amounts of hardwood and/or brush competition. This serves to facilitate the planting of seedlings, and to increase growth while reducing seedling mortality. These sites can be treated mechanically, chemically, or with prescribed fire. However, given the high costs of some types of mechanical site prep and the liability concerns associated with the use of prescribed fire, chemical site preparation may often be the most viable alternative.

Description:

The most common method of application for site preparation herbicides is aerial application by helicopter or, less commonly, by light plane. Aerial application with fuel and chemical support trucks allows large areas to be treated in a short period of time and also facilitates even, complete coverage and application of the chemical. After making the proper prescription for the property, the herbicide vendor will usually delineate the treatment area boundaries with a GPS unit or otherwise mark the desired application area. A suitable location for landing, refueling, and refilling the chemical tanks must be located on or within a reasonable distance from the property. The property is then aerial sprayed during late summer or early fall (August-October) when woody species are sending their food reserves down to the roots. This will ensure proper kill of the targeted species.

Common site preparation herbicides for the control of woody vegetation include various formulations of the chemicals imazapyr (Arsenal, Chopper), glyphosphate (Accord, Accord Site Prep), and triclopyr amine or ester (Garlon 3a and 4, respectively). These chemicals act to inhibit enzyme production (imazapyr and glyphosphate) or to regulate growth (triclopyr) in woody plants. In order to facilitate adherence to the leaf surfaces of plants, these herbicides are often combined with a surfactant during the mixing process. It is a violation of Federal Law to use these products in a manner inconsistent with their labeling (see specimen labels for general information, directions for use, precautionary statements, mixing and application instructions, etc.).

Benefits:

Chemical site preparation removes unwanted vegetation that would otherwise hamper planting efforts and possibly increase your costs. In addition, most site prep herbicides have some residual effect, which will aid in the initial establishment of young pines improving growth and decreasing mortality due to a reduction in competitive stress. Chemical applications from the air also eliminate the risk of erosion problems and soil compaction presented by other mechanical site preparation methods.

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Other Recommendations:

Gallons per acre of spray solution applied will depend on vegetation density. Contact an herbicide specialist for a chemical prescription tailored specifically to your treatment area. It is recommended that you have a contract with the vendor and a guarantee on the chemicals used should the application be ineffective in controlling the target species. Great care should be taken to avoid application to non-target areas and applications should cease when wind speed exceeds 10 mph. All applicable Texas Forestry Best Management Practices for silvicultural chemicals should be followed.

Chemical site preparation is especially effective when followed by prescribed fire. Such an operation, which is also referred to as a brown and burn, serves to further eliminate hardwood competition and reduce debris improving planter access. Burning should not occur until at least 60 days after application to allow the herbicide to move into the roots of targeted species.

Additional Information:

For more information on forestry herbicides, including application rates, targeted species, and material safety data sheets (MSDS) contact your local herbicide vendor, chemical representative, or consult the online CDMS herbicide database on the Internet. The database has label and safe handling information for all major forestry herbicides. The CDMS web address is: http://www.cdms.net/pfa/LUpdateMsg.asp

Cost:

Chemical site prep cost ranges from $65-110/acre depending on tract size, location, vegetative cover, availability of vendors, chemical costs, application rates, etc.