

FEATURE – USDA HELPS CONTROL WATER STEALING PLANT IN TEXAS

INTRO: Water tends to be scarce in West Texas. USDA is working with landowners to get rid of an invasive plant that is robbing the area of this precious commodity. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:32)

SALT CEDAR TREES WERE PLANTED IN WEST TEXAS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES AS ORNAMENTALS. HOWEVER, THIS NON-NATIVE PLANT USES A LOT OF WATER IN AN ALREADY DRY AREA.

Ted Crenwelge, Borden County, Texas Rancher: An acre of salt cedar will use approximately two hundred gallons a day. And as a consequence, your stream flow ceases because the salt cedar plants are eating all the water up. The problem with salt cedar is that it was imported from mainly the Middle East and there are no natural enemies on the North American continent and as a consequence it just went wild.

THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IS WORKING WITH LOCAL LANDOWNERS TO CONTROL SALT CEDAR. THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM, OR EQIP, IS FUNDING CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL TREATMENTS.

Kevin Wright, USDA NRCS: The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been instrumental in working with the ranchers out here by providing them technical assistance through the Upper Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District.

AS A RESULT AREA LANDOWNERS SAY SALT CEDARS ARE LESS THIRSTY AND STREAMS HAVE MORE WATER IN THEM.

John Anderson, Borden County, Texas Rancher: I've worked on this ranch with my kinfolks since I was a little kid and I don't remember the springs like this. And then another neighbor that's about eighty six years old has got some country back west of us and he's seeing springs that he has never seen in his lifetime.

LANDOWNERS INTERESTED IN CONTROL OF SALT CEDAR OR OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES SHOULD CONTACT THEIR LOCAL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT. FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.