



Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 10-4

Combating Invasive Species

A. BACKGROUND

1. The National Invasive Species Council (Executive Order 13112) defines an *invasive species* as “an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” The rapid spread of invasive species remains one of our country's biggest environmental problems, a situation complicated by the sheer number of invasive species, lack of a coordinated and comprehensive effort to prevent introductions, monitor and survey for new introductions, and the remarkable ability of invasive species to adapt, reproduce and ultimately overtake entire ecosystems.
2. Invasive species are a global problem. The annual cost of impacts and control efforts equals five percent of the world’s economy. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates the country spends at least \$138 billion per year to fight and control invasive plant and animal species, such as the emerald ash borer beetles that have destroyed millions of trees in the East and Midwest. Invasive species influence the productivity, value, and management of a broad range of land and water resources in the West, ultimately limiting the direct and indirect goods and services these ecosystems are capable of producing. Over 100 million acres (an area roughly the size of California) in the United States are suffering from invasive plant infestations.
3. On a scale of biodiversity destruction, the EPA reports that invasive species rank second only to urban development. In addition, invasive species have been identified by the Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service as one of the four significant threats to our nation’s forest and rangeland ecosystems.
4. The Western Governors recognize that the spread of invasive species results from a combination of human behavior, susceptibility of invaded environments, and biology of the invading species. These characteristics are not dictated by geopolitical boundaries, but rather by ecosystem-level factors, including climate change, which often cross state borders. Scientists and land managers across the West have expressed the need to develop a strategy for more aggressive invasive species prevention, early detection, and management.
5. Invasive species have significant negative economic, social, and ecological impacts which include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Reduction of the value of streams, lakes, reservoirs, oceans, and estuaries for native fish and wildlife habitat;
 - b. Degradation of water resources for human uses including drinking water, energy production, irrigation systems and other water uses;
 - c. Decreased real estate property value and increased costs of property development;

- d. Detraction from the aesthetics and recreational value of wildlands, parklands, and other areas;
 - e. Degradation of ecosystem functions and values, including populations of desirable species;
 - f. Reduction of the yield and quality of desirable crop and forage plants that are important in production of our food supply;
 - g. Reduction of native biodiversity, resulting in a growing number of threatened, endangered and extinct species (Note: invasive species have contributed directly to the decline of 42 percent of the threatened and endangered species in the United States);
 - h. High cost of control; and
 - i. Reduction of preferred native vegetation important to native fish and wildlife as well as livestock.
6. Aquatic invasive species such as the zebra mussel, quagga mussel, and Eurasian water milfoil are spreading into more western water bodies each year. The most common sources for the introduction of these species in the West are recreational watercraft and materials sold by aquatic plant and animal suppliers. This is a regional, interstate issue and no western state can independently implement programs to adequately prevent or reduce the spread of invasive species. The economic and environmental damage from aquatic invasive species will continue to rise in western states without a well-organized and adequately funded effort to survey and monitor for invasive species as well as implement prevention, control, and eradication programs in each state to complement coordinated multi-state efforts.
7. Many of these invasive species were introduced, or their distribution was expanded, due to inadequate implementation of federal regulations dealing with international trade and/or interstate commerce.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors support coordinated, multistate management and eradication actions to limit or eliminate intentional and unintentional introductions and improve control of invasive species. The principal objectives should be to maintain properly functioning natural systems and their associated native fish and wildlife populations, ensure agricultural productivity, enhance resource and environmental protection, and protect human health. Control programs should be economically practical in relationship to the long-term impacts an invasive species will cause.
2. Programs for the control and/or eradication of invasive species must incorporate education, prevention, and early detection and rapid response techniques.
3. Western Governors strongly encourage all natural resource management agencies, local governments, universities, nonprofit organizations and the private sector to collaborate and form partnerships with states to prevent the spread of invasive species, avert new unauthorized introductions, and work together to find creative new approaches for protecting and restoring natural, agriculture, and recreational resources.

4. Western Governors urge full funding support for invasive species management programs on federal lands as well as financial assistance for state invasive species management, including the National Invasive Species Act and programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal, Plant, and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and funding support for state invasive species councils. These programs provide valuable services in the detection and elimination of invasive species as well as coordination and communication, and their participation is essential for states relying on these services to maintain strong trade and export functions.
5. Western Governors encourage the federal government to:
 - a. Assume responsibility and a direct partnership role with states in interstate interdiction of invasive species;
 - b. Substantially increase grant funding to the states for monitoring, intrastate interdiction and containment; and
 - c. Implement aggressive invasive species control programs within the federal agencies (e.g., Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, US Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers) who have jurisdictional responsibility for land and water resources.
 - d. Establish rapid response spending authorization for states responding to early detection of invasive species.
6. Western Governors support a coordinated regional approach to invasive species management. Of particular importance will be:
 - a. Developing scientifically based and coordinated species lists between the states;
 - b. Developing efficient coordination and communication mechanisms to share information promptly with each other and the federal government to allow for the most effective cooperative and rapid response;
 - c. Establishing consistent and effective policies and procedures to prevent transport, sale and dispersal of undesirable species, particularly those under eradication in specific states; and
 - d. Increasing awareness and support for effective public outreach and education throughout the western states.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. This resolution shall be posted on the Western Governors' Association website and shall be referenced and used as appropriate by Governors and staff.
2. Western Governors' Association staff shall coordinate within existing WGA committees, such as the Climate Adaptation Workgroup and the Forest Health Advisory Committee, to promote coordination and cooperation of invasive species management across agencies.
3. The Western Governors' Association shall seek financial and human resources to work with appropriate partners to facilitate the development and coordination of strategies to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial species.

4. WGA shall support increased pass-through funding for invasive species management to states including funding for the Federal Highway Administration to support of state Department of Transportation invasive species management efforts. F:\10resos\IS.docx