

# INVASIVE SPECIES IN NEVADA

## What is an invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, or other organisms that are introduced to a given area outside their original range and cause harm in their new home. Because they have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction, they usually spread rampantly. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health.



Tall whitetop in NV (UNR Cooperative Extension)

- The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at **\$137 billion** annually.

## Invasive Species in Nevada: A Quick Look

Nevada has been invaded by a number of harmful exotic plants. Here is a quick look at some of the worst current and potential invaders:

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Saltcedar	Shrub/ Small tree	Asia, introduced as ornamental and windbreak in 1800s	Over 1 million acres of southwestern streambanks	Lowers stream flows and water tables, increases soil salinity, displaces native species and wildlife habitat
Cheatgrass	Grass	Mediterranean, entered in shipments of grain or in packing material	Throughout intermountain west; 17.5 million acres in ID & UT	Increases fire frequency and intensity on rangelands, degrades sagebrush & grassland habitats, problematic weed in wheat fields
Knapweed (Spotted, Diffuse, Squarrose & Russian)	Weed	Mediterranean; introduced within the last 100 years	Found in 10 states across millions of acres	Threat to pastures and rangelands; out-competes native vegetation
Musk Thistle	Weed	Eurasia; spread by wind	Found in pastures, prairie ravines and hillsides, fields and roadsides in NV	Highly competitive plant that threatens many desirable foraging species
Perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop)	Weed	Eurasia, accidentally introduced in 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Infests thousands of acres in the Lower Truckee, Lake Tahoe, Las Vegas Wash and Walker River watersheds	Forms monocultures on streambanks but holds soil poorly, increasing erosion; also provides little wildlife or forage value, and increases soil salinity.

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Hoary cress	Weed	Eurasia; introduced accidentally in late 1800s, probably as contaminants in alfalfa seed	Hoary cress and its relatives are found in all 17 counties in NV	Forms dense stands that decrease forage and land value. Toxic to cattle and provides little value for wildlife.

## What Congress Can Do:

### **A. Make Prevention Our Top Priority**

- Reverse current U.S. policy on the intentional import of live plants and animals, that is, switch from a “dirty” to a “clean” list approach that requires screening for invasiveness before import and which keeps out or limits import of species so as to prevent harm to native species or ecosystems – and make the legislative changes to do so.
- Substantially cut the unintentional introduction of aquatic invaders by overseeing federal standard-setting on the discharge of ballast water in the United States, supporting the development of technology to meet these standards; ensuring that agencies monitor and enforce compliance; and reauthorizing the 1996 National Invasive Species Act in the strongest and most comprehensive form.
- When considering, reviewing, or approving trade agreements, rigorously address invasive species, e.g., by allowing for restriction of imports of non-native species that are invasive elsewhere and by identifying pathways by which inadvertent introductions travel so that they may be interrupted.

### **B. Make Federal Agencies More Effective**

- Use oversight authority to ensure that all federal agencies immediately and strongly implement that part of Executive Order 13112 that asks them to identify and reduce actions that introduce or spread invasive species in the United States or elsewhere.
- Appropriate adequate funds so that federal agencies have the resources to address invasive species problems promptly and comprehensively over the long-term.
- Strengthen the structure and leadership of the National Invasive Species Council and prompt more aggressive implementation of its National Management Plan.
- Oversee the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure that the agency and its Administrator are committed to protecting biological diversity as well as agriculture.
- Evaluate the serious problems with border inspection for pests, weeds, and pathogens, e.g., in staffing and cross-department coordination, exacerbated by moving these functions into the Department of Homeland Security and amend its authorizing legislation if needed.

## References:

Univ of Nevada Reno “Invasive Weed Identification for Nevada”

<http://agri.nv.gov/Brochures/Invasive%20Weed%20Identification%20for%20Nevada%20SP%2003-09.pdf>

UNR Cooperative Extension Special Publication 01-08. <http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/SP01/SP0108.pdf>

UNR Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet: Managing Hoary Cress. <http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/FS02/FS0256.pdf>

Westbrooks, R. 1998. Invasive Plants, Changing the Landscape of America: Fact Book. Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW), Washington, DC, 109 pp.

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