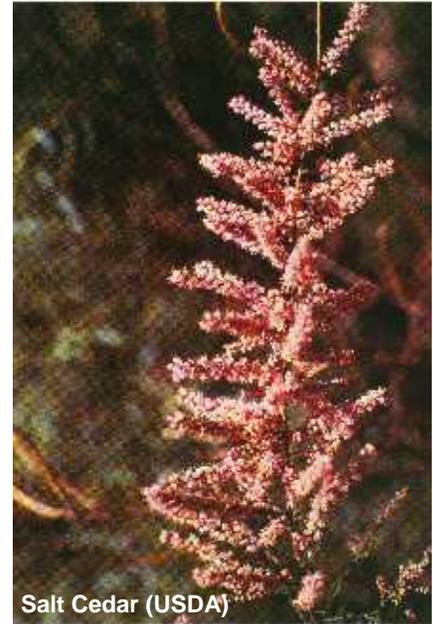


INVASIVE SPECIES IN COLORADO

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.

- 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.
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Invasive Species in Colorado: A Quick Look

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

| Name | Type | Origin | Extent | Damage |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| Russian Olive | Shrub/ Small Tree | Germany; introduced to U.S. in late 1800s as an ornamental | Extends throughout western and central U.S. | Outcompetes native vegetation interferes with natural plant succession and nutrient cycling and taxes water reserves |
| Multiflora rose | Shrub | Japan; introduced in 1866 as rootstock for roses and subsequently promoted for erosion control | Occurs throughout eastern U.S and Colorado, California and Washington | Highly prolific and can form dense thickets which exclude native vegetation |
| Eurasian Watermilfoil | Aquatic plant | Eurasia; accidentally introduced in 1940s either from an aquarium or on a boat | In 33 states including California and most recently Colorado | Can form large floating mats on the surface of water bodies preventing light penetration for native plants and impeding water traffic |
| Salt cedar (tamarisk) | Shrub/ Tree | Eurasia & Africa; introduced as an ornamental shrub in the early 1800s | Occurs in the intermountain region of the western U.S., throughout the Great Basin | Fire-adapted species with long tap roots that allow them to intercept deep water tables and interfere with natural aquatic systems and vegetation; degrades native wildlife habitat |
| Common buckthorn | Shrub/ Small Tree | Eurasia; introduced as an ornamental shrub, for fence rows, and wildlife habitat | Found in 23 states primarily in the NE and Midwestern U.S. | Form dense thickets which crowd and shade out native shrubs and herbs, often completely obliterating them |

| Name | Type | Origin | Extent | Damage |
|---------------|------|--|---|--|
| Northern pike | Fish | Northwestern Europe across northern Asia, to northern North America; introduced to CO as early as 1874 as gamefish | Many rivers and reservoirs in CO (including the Yampa, White, Colorado) | Predatory threat to the Colorado pikeminnow, a federally endangered species with critical habitat in the lower Yampa River |

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:

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*For more information, please contact Aimee Delach at Defenders of Wildlife
202-682-9400 x271 ♦ adelach@defenders.org*