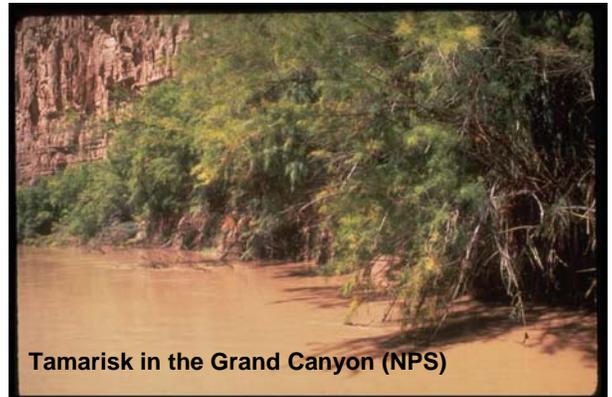


INVASIVE SPECIES IN ARIZONA

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.
- A single large salt cedar can use 200 gallons of water per day and produce half a million seeds per year.

Invasive Species in Arizona: A Quick Look

Arizona 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 |
|--|-------------------|---|--|---|
| Tamarisk (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 |
| Common carp | Fish | Eurasia; introduced as a food fish in 1872 | Common in Grand Canyon & Lake Mead | Out-compete native fish; increase water turbidity by stirring up sediments |
| Knapweed (Diffuse, Spotted, & Russian) | Weed | Mediterranean; introduced within the last 100 years | Three varieties found in 10 states across millions of acres | Threat to pastures and rangelands; out-competes native vegetation |
| Fountain grass | Grass | Introduced from Africa as a landscaping plant | Roadsides, washes and canyons in southern AZ | Crowds out other species monopolizing nutrient and water resources; difficult to eradicate |
| Buffelgrass | Grass | Introduced from Africa for cattle forage | Wind dispersed seeds establish easily on roadsides vacant lots, alleys and even the desert | Dense colonies exclude other species and monopolize nutrient and water resources; difficult to eradicate |
| Cheatgrass (Downy Brome) | Grass | Eurasia; introduced in 1890s in contaminated seed | Native semi-arid grasslands and open pinyon-juniper woodlands of the Colorado Plateau | Large root system draws water and nutrients away from particularly seedlings of native plants; opens the way for knapweed, thistle and other invasive species |

| Name | Type | Origin | Extent | Damage |
|---------------------|------|---|--|---|
| Yellow star thistle | Weed | Unintentionally introduced into California around 1850 (introduced to AZ in contaminated hay) | 15-22 million acres in CA, and throughout AZ | Can cause the fatal chewing disease in horses; forms dense stands that displaces native vegetation and therefore increases the likelihood of horses eating it |

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.

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