

Cal-IPC 2004 Symposium
 Ventura, California
Social and Environmental Problems in Invasive Weed Management

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Environmental/Social Issues Working Group
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Some Salient General Issues:

Is Cal-IPC too pesticide friendly? This is a question that Cal-IPC really needs to confront. While most of us believe in and see the utility of using herbicides as part of IPM, pesticides in general have a long history of creating awful social (environmental justice) and ecological problems. We need to more explicitly tackle this issue head-on. Have we fully convinced ourselves about the safety of pesticides?

Money. Public agencies are required to be good stewards of the public’s money. What’s more important? -saving money in the budget or doing what is best for society and the environment, e.g., herbicides versus community-based stewardship.

Specific Problems:

Pro-invasives - “Dispersal biology,” that the anthropogenic dispersal of species increases biodiversity and is an essential strategy to spur evolution. *Specific solution:* Cal-IPC/Academia/others publish articles in local papers with credible scientific refutation of this claim.

Opposition to the use of herbicides is increasing. *Specific solution:* 1.) We have to open up, listen to the opposition. 2.) Herbicide fact sheet including humility about its use and the harm pesticide use has caused in the environment – environmental justice. 3.) Cal-IPC could study external costs (from start to finish).

Lack of Funding to finance planning, including environmental justice, community involvement, education, and outreach. *Specific solutions:* 1.) Cal-IPC should promote/lobby for funding of more integrated approaches. 2.) CALFED has grants for outreach.

Pesticide companies lack environmental fate information.

General Problems:

Obstructionists going mainstream – politicization.

“Let nature take its course.”

“All plants have a purpose.”

“Everything is natural”
“Playing God”

Private Property rights
Big government
Fear

Contentious meetings
Hostility
Lack of receptivity
Power struggle
Lack of trust
Feeling of powerlessness

California is an (ecological) island, and thus vulnerable to invasion.

General Solutions:

Education –

- 1.) about how government does do good things.
- 2.) Take the public to view the worst infestations - the monocultures that dominate and degrade a habitat. Create partnerships
- 3.) use the environmental groups, CNPS, Sierra Club, to carry your message.
- 4.) Work with Botanical gardens

Facts. Publicize the facts. Have a clear statement of benefits.

Plan. Early buy-in -- if planning is done right, controversy should be dealt with.

Working with the community:

Be wary of exuding the **government expert syndrome** – self righteousness.

Give power to the powerless. Humility. Respect. Go slow. Do projects incrementally.

Flexibility.

Be democratic. Inclusive. Diversify. Be Open-minded.

Work with people. Find the common/middle ground/*quid pro quo*.

Give some people what they want/an egg.

Tolerate venting. Don't take it personally. Detach emotion.

(Simultaneously) Personalize by having friendly meetings face-to-face with people, perhaps on neutral ground. Create those lasting and sustainable relationships.

During actual meetings:

Use a talking stick. Meet in a circle. Work on consensus building. Active listening.

If necessary, formal *conflict resolution* with skilled mediator (**most important**).

Agree to disagree.

Additional Notes

Cal-IPC Working Group: Environmental/Social Issues October 9, 2004 Ventura

Notes from Al Sattler

cynthia @ wildworks.org (sp?): Book review on book opposed to invasive plants removal

Maybe same as man promoting dispersal idea "speeding up evolution," writing books, actively and personally dispersing invasive plants.

NEED reputable academic to counter his arguments.

One possible counter argument could be that the resulting monocultures would undo evolution. California has been an island of high diversity. We would be losing genetic diversity, losing "information."

(Added later, in compiling these notes: Also point out that the reason why many invasive species are so successful is that they have arrived without their biological controls. If, through complete "dispersal" those animals/bacteria/fungi were also present, the invasive species would probably not be as overwhelmingly successful. Another counter argument would be that if just a few invasives take over, the resulting monocultures might not be very pleasant. On the animal side, we might be left with humans, rats, cockroaches, and Argentine Ants.)

Problem: Park inholdings with ornamental plants escaping. Possible solution would be to offer free replacement of invasive ornamentals.

Problem: Some park staff in GGNRA philosophically opposed to differentiating between native and non-native plants.

Problem: Dealing with vehement opposition, whether to removal of non-native plants/trees or to herbicide spraying, etc.

Let individuals vent. Listen carefully to what they are saying...their opposition on this issue may be part of a larger set of issues that they are concerned about.

Build personal relationships, but sometimes agree to disagree.

Be there for a while before starting a project. Most people are resistant to change. One project did education and outreach for a year before starting the project. If people are involved after plans are already done and money acquired, there will be more opposition than if people are involved early.

Find common ground. If you help opponents with a problem, then maybe they will help you.

Take people on hikes, show them native plants, show them problems with non-natives excluding native plants and wildlife, effects of non-native plants on wildlife (eucalyptus

gumming up bills of birds, for example).

Formal conflict resolution can be very successful. In one case people were threatening to kill each other, but eventually became much less hostile. Conflict resolution works when people respect the process. It includes active listening...slow down the process a lot so people really listen to each other.

There is a "Magic" group in the Palo Alto hills active in native plant restoration which is also good at conflict resolution.

There is a need to lobby the funders to include funding and time for outreach, education, and planning before action. This is done in the area of health care.

(Added later, in compiling these notes: When this issue was raised as a question in the session on funding, one reply was to start small with a pilot project first, then come back with a grant request for a larger project later.)

There need to be displays at botanical gardens of invasive plants to avoid: "Quarantine Zone"

There needs to be a clear statement of the benefits of habitat restoration.

Are weeds really a problem?

Government Expert Syndrome

Some people are suspicious of anything coming from a governmental body. Maybe have a non-profit organization, non-government organization (NGO) be an ambassador?

Herbicides issues:

Cal-IPC needs to promote more research in Integrated Pest Management, instead of just herbicides.

Some grant applications, instead of applying to use herbicides to improve habitat for natives, maybe even replanting with natives, are just being written to use herbicides.

A theme from several speakers was opposition by environmentalists to use of herbicides to control invasive plants. One speaker (yours truly, a long-time Sierra Club activist) objected to this dichotomy, saying that hopefully all those fighting invasive plants are environmentalists, whether using herbicides or not. There needs to be an effort to reach out to groups such as the Sierra Club, trying to have articles in their newsletters, etc.

One speaker said that he had carefully investigated glyphosate and concluded that it was quite safe to humans (and other animals), that it was poisonous to plants because it interrupted a key biochemical process present only in plants. He referred to ExToxNet as a source of information.

(Added later, in compiling these notes: For many chemicals, the only information available on toxicity comes from the manufacturer. Another source of information would be more trusted.)

One speaker told of a project to remove Arundo from Topanga Creek, fought bitterly by residents who did not want the creek to be poisoned. The residents asked for a year to eradicate the Arundo by hand, cutting it, but have not been successful. 89 local residents have worked on this project. Now they are asking for another year or two. The person working on the project said that they needed to get the project finished soon or funding would be lost, and asked what to do, whether to move ahead aggressively with herbicide in spite of community opposition. One speaker said definitely not, that it was great that they had so much community involvement, to give them more time to work at it in hopes that they would eventually get tired and give in to herbicide use. Another speaker commented that they need to dig down four feet to remove the roots. Yet another speaker suggested to give them some digging tools so they can get after the roots effectively.