

For Immediate Release

Invasive Weeds Awareness Coalition (IWAC)

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Bureau of Land Management Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition

**Land Management Professionals Take the Fight for
Native Ecosystems to the Nation's Capitol**

Group to meet in D.C. to raise public awareness of invasive weed problem.....

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Feb. 13, 2006 – Representatives from some of America's most beautiful public and private lands will congregate in Washington, D.C., for National Invasive Weed Awareness Week (NIWAW7), which will be hosted by the Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition (IWAC), February 26 March 3, 2006.

NIWAW attendees come from varying backgrounds, but share a common goal: to manage invasive weeds in the United States and protect our native ecosystems. Now in its seventh year, NIWAW focuses on sharing invasive weed information with government officials and collaborating with experts to address what has become a national and global environmental concern.

Non-native plant infestations continue to spread across the United States and weed experts will continue to work through IWAC to educate others on the impacts of these plant invasions. During the week, NIWAW participants will help members of Congress and congressional staff to understand the economic and environmental threat of invasive and noxious weeds to our nation. Participants will showcase successful control strategies and tactics in an effort to expand opportunities for success in new locations that face similar challenges. In 2004, President Bush signed the Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act, which authorized noxious weed control programs.

“For the first time in 20 years we have the critical legislation in place to help address noxious and invasive weeds. We believe this initial legislation will accelerate land managers' abilities to tackle this growing environmental challenge,” said Nelroy Jackson, Chair of IWAC.

NIWAW officials expect more than 200 representatives from industry associations, professional societies, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal agencies at this year's event. Attendees will have the opportunity to attend briefings with the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Defense as well as the National Invasive Species Council, on the problems caused by invasive vegetation. They will see the federal, state and local projects designed to curb the spread of terrestrial and aquatic noxious weeds, including the formation of Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs) throughout the country.

A CWMA facilitates the partnership of multiple stakeholder groups whose common goal is the control and eradication of noxious and invasive plant species.

"The CWMA model demonstrates our NIWAW goals," Jackson said. "Because weeds know no borders, we must set aside our own organizational boundaries and work together to address problems collaboratively. NIWAW provides an opportunity to share our successes and help each other design programs that are well planned and well implemented, in order to increase the rate of success."

Also during the entire week of NIWAW, the U.S. Botanic Garden will showcase displays designed by state and federal agency staff that demonstrate how to identify invasive plants and that highlight successful partnership projects. The public is invited and encouraged to view the displays, which will include exhibits on menacing invasive weeds, such as:

- **Garlic Mustard:** Grows in a wide range of moist to dry habitats, including roadsides, floodplains and forests throughout the Mid-West and Northeast. Each year, a single plant can produce hundreds of seeds that scatter up to several yards from the parent plant. Invasions of this weed have led to the decline of the West Virginia white butterfly; chemicals in the plant appear to be toxic to the butterfly's eggs.
- **Giant Reed:** Grows in the West from Texas to California, and in the East from Virginia to Kentucky and Missouri southward. It chokes water supplies from riversides and stream channels, as well as reduces habitat for the Least Bell's vireo, a federally listed endangered bird.
- **Orange Hawkweed:** Ranges from Alaska to Maine in pastures, abandoned farmland, mountain meadows and open woodlands. Its allelopathic qualities allow it to inhibit other plants by producing toxic chemicals in the surrounding soil.
- **Water Chestnut:** Grows in any freshwater setting, from intertidal waters to waters 12 feet deep and is found in Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania. It reduces oxygen levels, potentially increasing fish kills, and forms dense floating mats that severely limit boating, fishing, swimming and other recreational activities.

About IWAC

IWAC works to educate individuals and organizations on steps they can take to protect land, such as learning more about invasive weeds, recognizing plants that are out of place and alerting appropriate local agencies to their presence. IWAC raises public awareness of the importance of responsibly selecting noninvasive plants for landscaping and preventing inadvertent transportation of invasive plant species or their seeds to new areas.

IWAC works cooperatively with the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW), a partnership of the EPA and 15 federal agencies from the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Defense, Energy and Transportation.

IWAC also works closely with industry, other federal and state agencies, and non-government organizations such as the Weed Science Society of America and The Nature Conservancy.

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Invasive Species: Facts and Figures

- Invasive species are found on agricultural cropland and in natural and urban areas, and can be either terrestrial or aquatic. Invasive species represent all taxonomic groups- plants, animals and microorganisms- and cause harm by multiplying rapidly, crowding out native species, damaging agricultural and industrial resources and generally altering natural systems.¹
- The invasion of nonnative species is the second greatest threat to rare, native species and the integrity of ecosystems.²
- More than 50 percent of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act are adversely affected by nonnative plant, animal and marine species.³
- Nine out of 21 of the most endangered ecosystems in the U.S. are significantly impacted by exotic invasions.⁴
- 80 percent of the nation's fish communities are considered degraded because of decline or loss of native species and introduction of exotics.⁵
- The U.S. spends \$120 billion annually on the control and impacts of more than 800 invasive species infestations. This does not account for the values of species extinctions and losses in biodiversity, ecosystems, services and aesthetics.⁶
- 126 million acres of land in the 48 contiguous United States are infested by 16 invasive plants, which does not account for all invasive plant infestations throughout the country.⁷

¹ GAO, "Invasive Species: Clearer Focus and Greater Commitment Needed to Efficiently Manage the Problem, GAO-03-1 (Washington, DC.: Oct. 22, 2002); "Invasive Species: Federal and Selected State Funding to Address Harmful, Nonnative Species, GAO/RCED-00-219 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 24, 2000).

² Flather, C.H., L.A. Joyce and C.A. Bloomgarden. "Species Endangerment Patterns in the United States." USDA Forest Service Technical Report RM-241. Fort Collins, CO, 1994; Miller, R.R., J.D. Williams, and J.E. Williams. 1989. "Extinctions of North American fishes during the past century." Fisheries 14: 22-38; Williams, J.E., J.E. Johnson, D.A. Hendrickson, et al.; Scemske, D.W., B.C. Husband, M.H. Ruckelshaus, et al. 1994. Cited by Noss, Reed F. & Robert L. Peters, "Endangered Ecosystems: A Status Report on America's Vanishing Habitat and Wildlife." Defenders of Wildlife, Dec. 1995, p. 46.

³ Flather, C.H., L.A. Joyce and C.A. Bloomgarden; Scemske, D.W., B.C. Husband, M.H. Ruckelshaus, et al. 1994. Cited by Noss, Reed F. & Robert L. Peters, "Endangered Ecosystems: A Status Report on America's Vanishing Habitat and Wildlife." Defenders of Wildlife, Dec. 1995, p. 47.

⁴ Noss, Reed F. and Robert L. Peters. "Endangered Ecosystems: A Status Report on America's Vanishing Habitat and Wildlife." Defenders of Wildlife, Dec. 1995.

⁵ Noss, Reed F. and Robert L. Peters. "Endangered Ecosystems: A Status Report on America's Vanishing Habitat and Wildlife." Defenders of Wildlife, Dec. 1995.

⁶ Pimental, David, Rodolfo Zunigo and Doug Morrison. "Update on the environmental and economic costs associated with alien-invasive species in the United States." College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University, 2004.

⁷ Duncan, Celestine A. and Janet K. Clark. "Invasive Plants of Range and Wildlands and Their Environmental, Economic and Societal Impacts." Weed Science Society of America, pg. 3.