

**Fiscal Year 2007 Appropriations Questionnaire
Office of Congressman Mike Thompson**



Exact Name of the Appropriation Recipient: US Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Research Service Western Regional Research Center, Exotic and Invasive Weeds Research Unit
Appropriations Sub-Committee with Jurisdiction over Project: Agriculture
Local Contact: Raymond I. Carruthers
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Name and Contact of any other Representation: Doug Johnson, International Broom Initiative Biological Control Working Group (510) 843-3902, dwjohnson@cal-ipc.org

Describe the organization's main activities. Please include whether the organization holds a public, private or non-profit status. The mission of the Exotic and Invasive Weed Research Unit is to develop and transfer integrated, biologically-based approaches to management of invasive weeds, directly and through partnerships with others.

Provide a brief description of the activity or project for which the funding is requested. Funding is requested to develop biological controls for brooms, gorse, jubata grass, Cape ivy and other high priority invasive plants of the Pacific coast states. Brooms are one of the western region's worst exotic invasive plant problems, causing extensive ecological and economic damage to coastal habitats and forests in California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii. Biological controls are a key component of weed control strategy for such widespread species, especially in areas where herbicide use is limited. Developing successful biological controls requires specialized facilities and staff as well as coordination of regional and international cooperators. The International Broom Initiative has initiated this
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coordination, including broom biological control experts from Australia, and the USDA-ARS quarantine lab in Albany is uniquely equipped to carry out this project. A similar task force will be set up for biocontrol development on jubata grass and other plants.

Has this activity or project been authorized by the federal government?

Control of invasive species is mandated by the National Invasive Species Council, which was established by executive order in 1999. Biological controls are an accepted technique of addressing invasive plants, and USDA-ARS has been a central player in researching and developing them. This project was authorized and partially funded by the federal government in FY04, FY05, and FY06 at a level of approximately \$266,000, and it has the strong support of USDA Deputy Under Secretary Rodney Brown and Hilda Diaz-Soltero, USDA Senior Invasive Species Coordinator.

Is funding for this activity or project contained within the Administration's FY2007 budget request? If so, at what amount?

No, funding for this activity is not contained in the President's budget. However, as stated above, USDA officials have expressed strong interest in the project. The panel at a 2003 USDA-sponsored forum made the following recommendation: "Of all the weed species current needing additional biological control efforts, invasive brooms and gorse are considered to be the highest priority. Brooms and gorse are a serious economic and ecological problem as they are spreading rapidly in California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii; they displace native plant communities, inhibit forest regrowth, and increase fuel loads increasing fire frequency/ intensity."

However, the Exotic and Invasive Weed Research Unit (EIWRU) in Albany has new funding in the President's budget, approximately \$440,000 under "Early Detection." While we support new efforts aimed at early detection tools like remote sensing, additional funding is needed to address the high priority weeds impacting natural areas such as brooms, gorse, jubata grass, and Cape ivy. No new resources are currently allocated to these projects in the President's FY 06 budget. Recent successes with biological controls for saltcedar illustrate the potential for controlling these other high priority invasive plants.

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Provide information on the total project cost and the amount of federal funding requested for FY2007 and information about other funding sources contributing to this project or activity. Please also identify any previous sources of federal funding.

Total funding requested for FY07 is \$2.55 million. The EIWRU would be directed to implement a new CRIS (Current Research Information System) project at its Biological Control of Weeds Quarantine Facility (\$1,300,000). The unit would add two scientists (one entomologist and one molecular systematist) for development of broom biocontrols, and two scientists (one entomologist and one plant ecologist) for development of biocontrols for jubata grass, Cape ivy and other weeds. Funding would also support foreign cooperators in South America and South Africa, who help collect and characterize natural plant enemies (\$350,000). Technical and field support in the western US would be provided by the State Dept. of Agriculture offices in California (\$130,000), Oregon (\$130,000), Washington (\$130,000), and Hawaii (\$130,000). Overall coordination and implementation would be facilitated by a local/state/federal consortium, the Environmental Weed Biological Control Working Group (\$380,000). USDA overhead fees are to be taken only from the resources left within ARS headquarters and not from resources passed to cooperators.

What federal agency are you requesting funding from?

Agricultural appropriations.

Is this project of national significance? If so, how?

Yes. Control of invasive brooms is crucial to the ecological and economic health of many west coast forests, including valuable timberlands that supply much of the nation's forest products. Brooms also degrade natural landscape aesthetics in coastal areas treasured by tourists from around the country for their recreational values. Brooms degrade wildlife habitat, which further reduces recreational value for hunting and backpacking. In addition, brooms add to fuel loads and increase the potential for catastrophic wildfire in many areas.

What communities or groups support this project?

The project has strong support from public and private land managers battling brooms in California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii, as well as international support from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Brooms and other invasive weeds are a serious problem for those managing natural areas, such as state parks and forests, as well as private landholdings. Endorsers include local fire

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districts, county agricultural offices, and NGOs such as the California Cattlemen's Association, the California Native Plant Society, the California Forest Pest Council, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and others.