

California Legislature

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Funding the Noxious Weed Management Account

Dear Assembly Member Bloom,

The undersigned members of the California State Legislature write to request \$2 million be added to the Noxious Weed Management Account in the Department of Food & Agriculture 2017 budget. These funds will support critical local efforts across the state to control invasive plants that damage our agriculture, water, fire safety, recreation and wildlife.

AB 2402 passed in 2014, enabling collaborative regional efforts to stop the spread of top-priority invasive plants that threaten our economy and our environment. Per section 7271 of Food & Agriculture code, 60% of the funds are allocated for grants to WMAs, 20% is allocated to mapping, prioritization and research, and 20% is allocated to CDFA staff for administration and development of biological controls. County based Weed Management Areas (WMAs) will use these grants to implement on-the-ground management activities

Invasive plants impact every part of California. Rangeland weeds like yellow starthistle degrade grazing productivity while sucking up extra water (estimated at 1 million acre-feet per year in the Sacramento Valley). Riparian weeds like *Arundo donax* clog streams, carry fire, and increase flood damage. Urban parklands are infested with a range of weeds that decrease wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunity. Aquatic weeds like water hyacinth clog Delta waterways, and forest weeds like Scotch broom increase fire risk and decrease regeneration. Even our beaches are degraded by invasive plants like pampas grass, iceplant and European beach grass.

WMAs have proven to be extremely effective at addressing invasive plants. Weeds do not recognize fences or jurisdictional boundaries, so they require extensive collaboration from a range of local partners. Because weeds literally pose a moving target, it is essential to have strong mapping, planning, tracking and follow-up. CDFA has worked with the US Forest Service and the nonprofit California

Invasive Plant Council to develop effective approaches for coordinating regional partnerships to design and implement productive projects. These projects aim to strategically stop the spread of a new weed of to head off the worst impacts of a more widespread weed.

To date some 2,000 high-priority invasive plant populations have been eradicated. But eradication takes time and persistence to ensure that the soil seedbank is exhaustive. Skipping a year of monitoring and retreatment gives the plants an opportunity to spread new seed and reset the clock. Without continued funding, much of the progress made in recent years will be jeopardized.

The State of Washington released a study in January that assessed the impact of invasive species (including both plants and animals) to recreation, water facilities, livestock, timber and crops. The damage comes to \$1.3 billion each year.

In California, the appointed members of the state's Invasive Species Advisory Committee (www.iscc.ca.gov) strongly support the work of WMAs as an example of successful invasive species management. State dollars leverage other contributions and extensive participation from local land managers, public and private.

We respectfully ask for your support of \$2.0 million in the 2017 CDFA Noxious Weed Management Account for the critical work done by WMAs across the state to protect our economy, our environment, and our safety.