

CALIPC Symposium October 3, 2004
Working Group - Advocacy: Reaching Policy Makers
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Attendees want info on the following topics regarding advocacy/awareness of invasive weed issues:

How to handle “high profile” projects – awareness and public relations
Improve presentations to policymakers and legislators
General public education
How to handle sensitive issues
Herbicide use on Federal lands – advocacy at the national level
How to keep issues visible
How to improve county and state levels of involvement
Promoting environmentalism
Use of volunteers to act as advocates
Creation of a coalition for outreach/education
Importance of policy level decision-making and how to stay in that process

Who is missing from policy maker/awareness discussions?

- Caltrans
- Some NGO's
- Resource Agency

How can we increase advocacy and awareness at the local level?

With water districts:

- Via the Pesticide Use Enforcement function of County Ag offices
- Try to reach board members

Other agencies:

- Work through local fire chief
- Engage in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process for local water projects

Needs to increase organization and coordination of education/awareness and advocacy statewide:

- Need an action/alert statewide system
- Need a statewide coordinator
- Continue to engage diverse groups i.e. Real Estate agents (they have a disclose re: invasive weeds in Montana)
- California Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition (CALIWAC – private companies, Non-Government Organization (NGOs) and statewide organizations) and California Interagency Noxious Weed Coordination Committee (CINWCC – state and federal agencies) are two statewide organizations

How to tie impact to interest?

- Strengthen coalitions to increase visibility
- General education/awareness function – we need more
- Always remember to start from a beginner level when beginning an educational/awareness effort
- Always remember to connect “why are invasive plants important to ME?” to a person you are educating – how do invasive weeds affect THEIR lives?

What “bottlenecks” do we see out there that impact education/awareness?

- Cooperative Extension and University classes often giving out conflicting information – lacks coordination
- Money and funding driving the focus
- Gaps between nursery, horticulture and landscape industry re: invasive issues
- “bottom up” education more effective than “top down”
- Education needs to come before regulation

What gaps do we see with agencies?

- Erosion control work
- Permitting
- RCD/NRCS recommendations
- Regulatory agencies won’t cooperate
- Impacts on planning mitigation at the local level

What other partners should we be considering?

- Farm Bureau
- Cattlemen’s Association
- Girl and Boy Scouts (add to merit badge system)
- Additional environmental organizations i.e. Sierra Club
- Backyard Conservation Program conducted by Resource Conservation Districts
- More work with local California Native Plant Society Chapters

Other comments:

- Must link solution to the problem
- We are losing traditional advocates because of increased environmental restrictions (i.e. Cattlemen’s, Farm Bureau, nursery industry)
- Make sure local level partners get the message “up the chain”
- Respond to editorials and commentaries that contain misinformation
- Always build relationships and partnerships – strength of work is in partnerships of diverse groups
- Increase funding to hire someone to work on education and advocacy – Montana demonstrated to legislators that roadways and vehicles were a

- major conduit of weed spread and got a 50 cent portion of each vehicle registrations, which goes back to the counties for weed control/eradication
- How to increase newspaper exposure? Ask for a weekly column (Master Gardeners could write one and incorporate invasive weeds) and cultivate relationships with natural resource/ag/environmental staffer
 - Increase PR pieces – success stories, how-to booklets, etc.
 - Center for Invasive Plant Management (CIPM) is a good resource for outreach information (www.weedcenter.org)