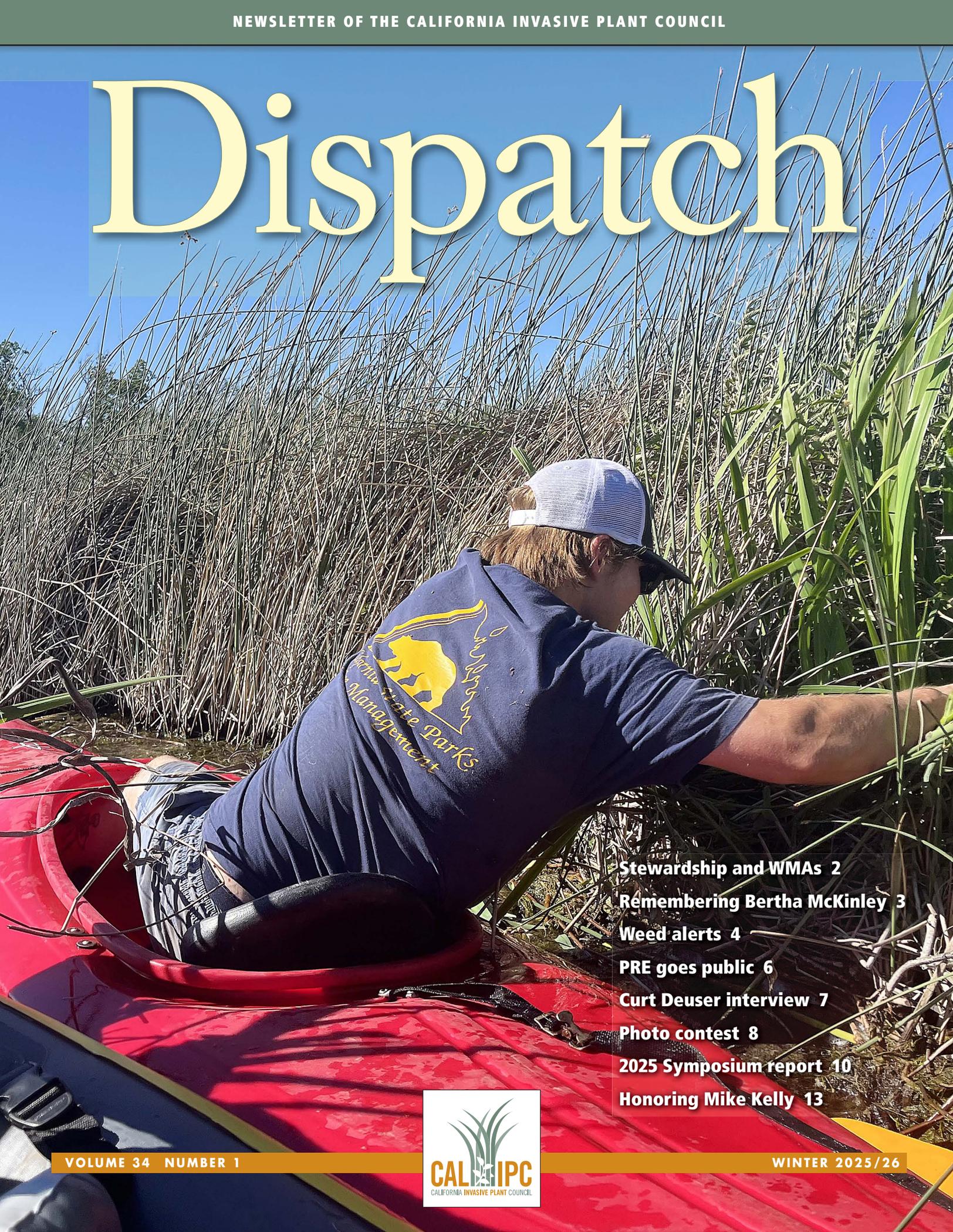


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Protecting California's environment and economy from invasive plants

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

A Vision for Stewardship and WMAs

By Executive Director Doug Johnson

Good news – the state's network of Weed Management Areas (WMAs) has funding for the first time in many years and new legislation (AB-900) adds stewardship to the tracking requirements for the state's 30x30 initiative to protect 30% of the state's lands and waters by 2030. Together, these pave the way toward a sustained effort on strategic weed management across California.

"Strategic" is key. The secret sauce of WMAs is that they bring together a range of entities at the local level that can collaborate on projects spanning multiple jurisdictional boundaries. This is essential for implementing early detection and rapid response (EDRR). While individual landowners focus on weed threats to their own property, the WMAs' collaborative infrastructure provides the means to tackle larger landscape-level challenges.

Assessing which weed species most merit an EDRR response can be tricky. It's easier to see widespread weed problems than to know about the new weeds trying to gain a foothold in your region. That's where resources like the online CalWeedMapper tool come in, providing critical information on the distribution of each weed species and helping local managers set priorities.

A new "timeline tool" extension to CalWeedMapper shows an assessment of how completely a given region (like

that covered by a WMA) is addressing selected target species each year. This functionality gives WMAs a way to gauge their progress over time towards fully treating EDRR targets.

In the cumulative, it also provides a way for the state to assess its level of stewardship. As AB-900 points out, having 30% of the state's acres protected from development is an important, but not sufficient, goal for protecting biodiversity. Those acres need to be stewarded, not only by working on those acres themselves, but also by implementing EDRR work that stops the spread of new environmental weeds at the broader landscape level.

There are several keys to realizing an effective system of EDRR implementation and tracking.

1. WMAs need steady funding. The program has one-time funding through June of 2028. Follow-up funding will be needed, ideally annual funding built into the state budget.
2. WMAs need support in using CalWeedMapper to select priority target species and identify all known populations of those species in their region.
3. WMA partners need to keep good records in the Calflora online database, which enables the CalWeedMapper timeline tool to track which weed populations have been managed in a given year.
4. Initiatives like 30x30 need to recognize that weed management is a critical part of stewardship, and that the state's hard-won infrastructure for supporting weed management – such as the WMA program – must remain funded if we are to successfully champion stewardship.

The WMA program leverages coordinated on-the-ground action across the whole state, which is the only way to get ahead of new wildland weeds. California should invest in this cost-effective approach to environmental stewardship.

ON THE COVER

California State Parks Forestry Aide Zion Gray pulling yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacoris*) during EDRR surveys by kayak on Lake Britton (McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park). Photo: Caitlin Dalby, submitted by Leah Gardner.



Wildland Weed News

CAL-IPC UPDATES

Symposium – Save the date for our 2026 Symposium, October 20-22, online! Registration will open this spring. Slide decks from last November's Symposium in Ventura are posted in the archive at cal-ipc.org, with video recordings to come.

PRE Tool – After years of work on the Plant Risk Evaluation web tool, it is available to the public. More on page 6.

Master Gardener training – Cal-IPC worked with Master Gardener state coordinators and other state partners in CA, NV, AZ, OR, and WA to hold online trainings for volunteer Master Gardeners so they can respond to public inquiries about environmental weeds.

OTHER NEWS

WMA funding – The California Dept. of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is contracting with Weed Management Areas (WMAs) across the state, providing

YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Thank you for keeping your membership current. Note that your expiration date is shown on the mailing label of this newsletter. Cal-IPC's success in meeting its mission depends on your vital support.

\$120,000 to each WMA for work through June of 2028. CDFA is assembling an Oversight Committee for the WMA program.

Prop. 4 – Due to Cal-IPC advocacy, the new \$10 billion climate bond includes \$20 million for the state's interagency Invasive Species Council. The council will offer grants to fund efforts that strengthen the state's response to invasive species.

Glyphosate study retracted – *The New York Times* (1/2/26) reported that the journal, *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology*, has retracted a much-cited study on the safety of glyphosate, based on concerns that the authors had potential conflicts of interest. The US EPA is scheduled to revisit their assessment of glyphosate this year.

Article on spread – A new open-access review published in the journal *Biological Reviews*, "The spread of non-native species," provides what the lead author describes as "the first cross-taxonomic, cross-ecosystem synthesis focused specifically on spread—the process linking introductions to large-scale invasions."

INHABIT – More weed species are being added to the USGS web tool, which

features maps and tabular summaries of habitat suitability for invasive plants to aid in the prioritization of hotspot locations and inform surveillance efforts and watch list development.

Public Gardens – After 5 years, the Public Gardens as Sentinels against Invasive Plants program has expanded to 68 botanic gardens across North America, amassing a database of 1,100 plants. A current alert focuses on golden rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), which has been observed spreading by 11 gardens.

Drone restrictions – New federal restrictions on top drone manufacturers from China have created a bottleneck for natural resource managers, among other drone users.

Aquatic guide – The Delta Interagency Invasive Species Coordination Team (DIISCT) has released a "Quick-Start Guide for Managing Invasive Aquatic Vegetation in Tidal Wetland Habitats in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta."

(Continued on page 14)

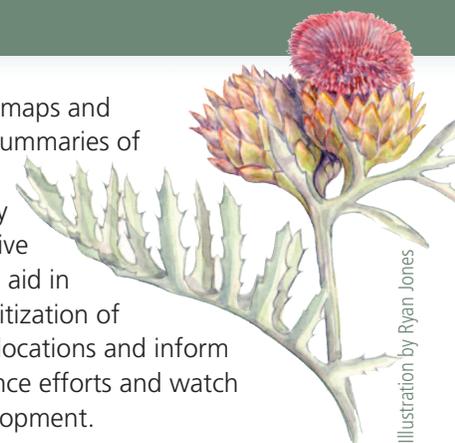


Illustration by Ryan Jones

Remembering Bertha McKinley

Last fall, we lost a longtime staff member, Bertha McKinley. As part of Cal-IPC's team for more than 20 years, Bertha's contributions have been immeasurable, and her presence will be greatly missed.

Bertha was an avid native plant gardener and conservationist. In the 1980s and 1990s she served in many roles, including president, for the San Diego Chapter of CNPS. There was significant development pressure in the region, and the chapter led advocacy to ensure that local, state, and federal agencies fulfilled their obligations to protect native habitat.



Bertha was a fixture at the Symposium sales table, keeping tabs on books, brochures, and other Cal-IPC merch.

Not long after Cal-IPC hired its first staff person, Executive Director Doug Johnson, in 2002, Bertha moved back to Berkeley with her husband Daniel. Bertha jumped in to support the fledgling staff as a volunteer and quickly became indispensable on a number of fronts: member communications, book sales, tee shirt production, newsletter proofreading, accounting support, mail processing, and more, supporting a range of administrative, fundraising, and programmatic efforts.

We are so grateful to have known Bertha and to have had someone as committed and enthusiastic as her working to support Cal-IPC's mission.

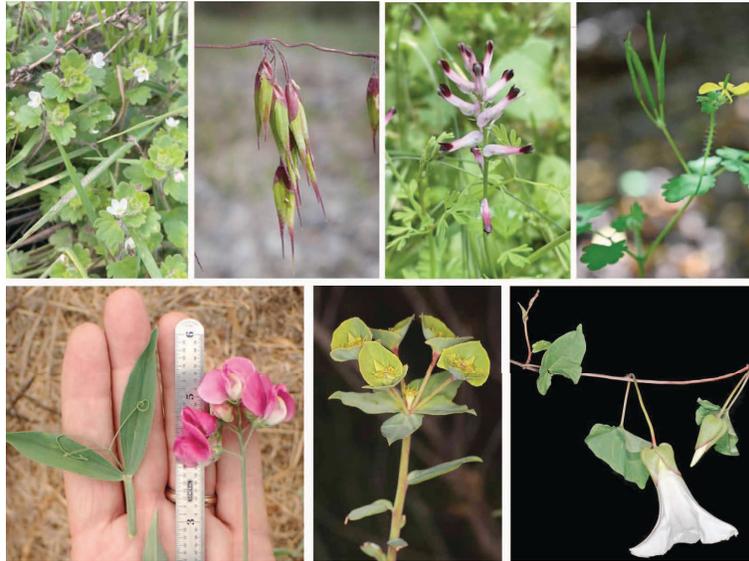
Cal-IPC “Weed Alerts” for 2025

Jutta Burger, Science Program Director, Cal-IPC

Ron Vanderhoff, Orange County CNPS Board and Cal-IPC Inventory Committee

Time does not stand still and neither do the weeds! Each year, we continue a Cal-IPC Symposium tradition originating over 20 years ago to share information on a selection of potentially problematic non-native species that have either been newly discovered in California or have been rapidly expanding in California. Candidate species for these “Weed Alerts” are nominated by botanists, land managers, and other experienced members of our community. From these, we select a handful of species to highlight based on how novel they are, what risks they may present, and how significant any change in their recent distribution and/or impact have been. Weed Alerts raise land managers’ awareness of the featured species and encourage managers to collect more information on the species’ distribution and impacts to aid further evaluation. At this year’s Symposium, we shared information on seven species, which are listed and described below.

Calystegia silvatica ssp. disjuncta (large bindweed; Convolvulaceae) is a perennial vine native to Europe and northern Africa. Because of its large, attractive flowers and growth habit, it has been introduced to many regions as a garden plant. Unfortunately, this species is not only highly competitive, but also cross-compatible with our native *Calystegia sepium*, lending confusion to its identification. Large bindweed is well established in Washington and Oregon; in California, it was first recorded in Humboldt County in 1976 and has since been reported from multiple locations in



Clockwise from upper left: *Veronica cymbalaria* (Jennifer Mo, Calflora CC BY-NC 4.0), *Ehrharta longiflora* (Keir Morse, CalPhotos CC BY-NC-SA 3.0), *Fumaria muralis (demicook, Calflora CC BY-NC 4.0)*, *Chelidonium majus* (Joe Broberg Calflora CC BY-NC 4.0), *Calystegia silvatica ssp. disjuncta* (©Gerald Carr, Oregon Flora), *Euphorbia terracina* (Steve Matson Calflora CC BY-NC 4.0), *Lathyrus latifolius* (R. Vanderhoff).

northern California. An earlier record from 1945 from Stinson Beach, Marin County, only identified to species may even predate this record. Its distribution now extends south at least to Santa Cruz County, with a disjunct population verified in San Diego County. It has almost certainly been under-reported due to its similarity to the far more common *C. sepium* and because of intermediate forms that are probably hybrids. One of the distinguishing character traits of *C. s. disjuncta* is its two bracteoles (aka bracts) subtending flowers, which differ from those of *C. sepium* in several ways: by overlapping (obscuring the flower calyx), by often having a reddish tinge along their margins, and by having a more sack-like form. Its leaves are less angular and with a more U-shaped base where the petiole attaches. Hybrids are intermediate and are referred to as *C. x lucana*; they are also fertile and backcross with both parents. This species is reported to overtop and smother native and other

vegetation. It has not yet been evaluated or listed by either Cal-IPC or CDFA.

Chelidonium majus (greater celadine; Papaveraceae) is a short-statured biennial or perennial herb that is native to southern Europe, northern Africa, and Asia. It has only recently been observed in California, with first records found in San Francisco and Alameda County in 2020 and 2021. Although not yet vouchered, there are also five iNaturalist records from 2018 and 2019 from Grass Valley, Nevada County. This species has been listed as invasive elsewhere in the United States (in Wisconsin, New

Hampshire, and Pennsylvania), where it can invade relatively undisturbed sites and outcompete natives. Greater celadine grows in moist understory habitat and can be identified by its hairy flower buds; smallish yellow, four-or-more-petaled flowers; long, knobby seed pods; dissected leaves; and orange sap. Leaves are greenish above and pale below. Seeds can be dispersed by ants. It has been used medicinally but is also known to cause liver damage when ingested and is toxic to other mammals. *Chelidonium majus* has not yet been reviewed by either Cal-IPC or CDFA.

Ehrharta longiflora (longflowered veldtgrass; Poaceae) is a primarily annual grass native to southern Africa. Outside of its native range, it appears to have only naturalized in California, which means that little is known of its invasive potential to date. It was first detected in 1992 in San Diego County and has since been slowly spreading northward through southern California coastal

counties. In 2025, however, a disjunct population was detected in the San Francisco Bay Area, in Alameda County. Longflowered veldtgrass is fairly distinctive for a grass due to its long-awned florets, reddish tint, and drooping inflorescence branches. Its inflorescences have a distinct open, spikey look, in contrast to its close relatives, perennial and panic veldtgrass (*E. calycina* and *E. erecta*). This species has triggered recent concern because of its range expansion in California, its capacity to establish in relatively undisturbed sites, and its close relation to other *Ehrharta* species that are problematic in California. It is currently listed as “Limited” in Cal-IPC’s Inventory and is unrated by CDFA.

Euphorbia terracina (carnation spurge; Euphorbiaceae) is an annual or perennial herb that is native to Europe and was first detected in Los Angeles County in 1967. Since then, it has spread northward to Monterey County and southward to Mexico. Carnation spurge is listed as invasive in Australia and has naturalized in South Africa and New Zealand. It looks similar to another California invasive plant, oblong spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*), but its leaf tips are pointed instead of rounded, its stems are hairless rather than hairy, and it has large triangular bracts subtending flowers rather than oval ones. It tends to grow in drier climates, but it can invade a broad range of habitats, including coastal sage scrub and chaparral, coastal bluffs and dunes, oak woodlands, grasslands, even seeps and marshes. Carnation spurge is a strong fire follower that germinates quickly and forms dense stands. It is allelopathic, suppressing other plant species around it, is a dermal and eye irritant, and is toxic if ingested. Currently this species has “Limited” status in Cal-IPC’s Inventory due to its limited distribution. It is listed as a noxious weed by CDFA. Based on land manager commentary about how difficult this species is to control and its recent range expansion, we consider it worthy of a Weed Alert and a target for immediate removal wherever found.

Fumaria muralis (wall fumatory; Papavera-ceae) is an introduced species in California that has avoided notice because of its similarity to other, more established congeners such as *F. capreolata* and *F. officinalis*. This species, native to western Europe and northwestern Africa, was first reported in California from Cupertino (Santa Clara County in the San Francisco Bay Area) in 2011, yet in the last 14 years it has spread to (or been detected in) at least 12 counties and has already become one of the most frequently encountered *Fumaria* species in the Bay Area. Wall fumatory can be differentiated from other related species (with some difficulty) by a combination of characters: its mostly pink flower color, larger flower size, its narrow-necked (0.5 mm at narrowest) lower cylindrical petal, sepals that are toothed along the lower 2/3 of their margin, the absence of a central yellow streak on petals, and more rounded fruits. Otherwise, flowers and leaves are similar to other species. Unfortunately, this species is not listed in either the *Jepson Manual* or the *Flora of North America*; you need to go to the *Flora of South Australia* (Kellerman, 2013) or other resources for keys to this species. *Fumaria muralis* is mostly ruderal in habit but is spreading quickly. New, related species, such as *F. agraria*, have also now been found in California. *Fumaria muralis* has not yet been reviewed by either Cal-IPC or CDFA. More information is needed on its impacts to natural and agricultural resources.

Lathyrus latifolius (perennial pea; Fabaceae) is a perennial forb native to the Mediterranean. It has been in California since the 1920’s, likely introduced as an ornamental. As such, it might not be an obvious candidate as a Weed Alert. However, this species has recently been observed to be spreading more rapidly in northwestern California, potentially because of roadside maintenance practices that disturb soil, reduce competition, and spread propagules. Leaves are compound, with two leaflets each and winged petioles. Stems are also winged. Flowers are showy, pink or purple (rarely white in California) and borne in clusters

that are usually >5 in number. This species is especially problematic because it can spread easily by both seeds and rhizomes, is toxic to mammals, and overtops native vegetation. Currently *Lathyrus latifolius* is listed as a “Watch” species in Cal-IPC’s Inventory and is unlisted by CDFA.

Veronica cymbalaria (pale speedwell; Plantaginaceae) is a low-growing annual native to Europe that was first observed in Santa Clara County, California, in 2021. It is still limited to just that county. Probably introduced as an ornamental groundcover (though it is rarely found on the market), it grows up to a maximum of 30 cm, with diminutive white four-petaled flowers, and hairy stems, leaves, flower buds, and fruits. Leaves are simple, rounded, and lobed. Flowers are on long pedicels and fruit are four-lobed capsules with 1-2 seeds per locule. This species has been found in both disturbed and undisturbed riparian habitat. Pale speedwell warrants Weed Alert status both because it is a new introduction and because of its recent naturalization in Chile, which has a Mediterranean climate similar to California’s, where it was recently reported as having escaped from their National Botanic Garden. It has not yet been reviewed by either Cal-IPC or CDFA. and more information on its impacts and ability to spread are needed.

Along with informing land managers, Weed Alerts help to inform Cal-IPC’s Inventory Committee of candidate species to be further evaluated for potential inclusion in Cal-IPC’s Inventory. New species are continually being introduced into California, both as inadvertent hitchhikers through trade and travel or as horticultural or agricultural imports, but only a small fraction of these become problematic and merit assessment as invasive. Cal-IPC’s Inventory currently includes 331 species that have been assessed as harmful or as posing a high risk of becoming harmful. Cal-IPC uses two evaluation tools: The Plant Assessment Form (PAF), which evaluates species that are already well established, and the Plant

(Continued on page 6)

PRE goes public!

Jutta Burger, Science Program Director, Cal-IPC
Dave Waetjen, Web Developer

The Plant Risk Evaluation (PRE) web tool, used by Cal-IPC to assess the risk of a particular plant species becoming invasive in California, now has a new website where evaluations are available for anyone to view.

What is PRE? It began over a decade ago as part of our work to address the potential introduction of invasive plants through horticulture. PRE is an algorithm to assess the invasive potential of ornamental plants in a region-specific manner, developed by a research team led by Joe DiTomaso, Christiana Conser, Sarah Reichard, Lizbeth Seebacher and Dave Fujino.

Their approach to plant risk evaluation (later termed PRE) consists of 20 questions focused on impact, reproduction, dispersal, and how well a species' worldwide distribution matches with climate similar to that in the region of interest. It has been peer reviewed and has a high (95%) accuracy rate for correctly identifying ornamental species as either high or lower invasive risk (Conser et al., 2015).

The PRE algorithm was transformed into a user-friendly web-based tool and database by a team led by the non-profit Sustainable Conservation with support from the Horticultural Research Institute and USDA Farm Bill funding. Since 2016, it's been used by various partners, including PlantRight and Cal-IPC, as well as others across the country, to conduct evaluations on ornamental plants, especially those observed spreading outside of cultivation.

Though it was developed with the specific goal of assessing the risk of plants introduced through horticulture, PRE has also become Cal-IPC's go-to resource for conducting risk evaluations more broadly. In particular, we use it to evaluate non-native plants growing outside cultivation in California to gauge their risk of becoming invasive in the future.

Since 2016, all species evaluated as "high

Home page of the new PRE site, which will make over 500 plant evaluations public. The PRE tool is used to evaluate a plant species' risk of becoming invasive in a given area, helping land managers anticipate future problems.

risk" in California have been added as Watch species to Cal-IPC's invasive plant Inventory. The tool is especially useful in predicting future invasiveness when little data is available on impacts in California. (Established plants with current impact are evaluated using a different tool, referred to as a Plant Assessment Form).

Until recently, the growing database of species and cultivar risk evaluations required a login and password to view. As a result, stakeholders without access were unable to see completed evaluations. With the latest release of the website, supported by funding from the Western IPM Center, PRE's database of published evaluations is now available to everyone at <https://pretool.org/>. For California, that means that users will be able to view all risk assessments that have been conducted and published regardless of what their risk level is.

At present there are over 60 plant evaluations available for California. More will become available as they are moved over from the previous platform. The goal is to make the full database of over 500 finalized evaluations from California and other states across the country available to the public. Additional improvements

are in the works, including an updated climate match model that will increase the accuracy of overlays of species distributions with regional climates.

Cal-IPC "Weed Alerts" for 2025

(Continued from page 5)

Risk Evaluator (PRE), which predicts the risk of a species becoming invasive in the future. Species that score as "High," "Moderate," or "Limited" using the PAF are considered invasive and included in the Inventory. Species that score as a high risk using the PRE tool are added to the Inventory as "Watch" species.

Special thanks to the members of the Cal-IPC Inventory Committee and the many people that nominated Weed Alert candidates, including Barbara Camacho (East Bay Regional Park District), Jennifer Mo (Valley Water), Peter Warner (botanical consultant), and Andrea Williams (Williams Ecological Assessment & Planning). If you have species of concern to report for next year's Weed Alerts, email Cal-IPC Science Program Director Jutta Burger at jburger@cal-ipc.org.

Confessions of a weed warrior: An interview with Curt Deuser

Interview by Steve Buckley, National Park Service

Curt Deuser retired earlier this year after a career with the National Park Service. Steve Buckley is the Liaison for the Park Service's California Invasive Plant Management Team.

How did you first come to the field of invasive plant management?

In 1988, I was offered a job that involved starting a tamarisk control program at Lake Mead NRA. My job was to initiate a systematic prioritized approach to controlling tamarisk. The park had recently conducted tamarisk inventories at springs and other locations. I conducted literature reviews and interviewed others in the field on control methodologies and realized there was a lack of standardized methods. So, I began conducting control experiments using the most up-to-date technologies.

What kept you in the field? Observing some early successes was rewarding, while experiencing a steep learning curve in a challenging field. I think the amount of learning and the challenges kept me in the field. I really enjoyed learning about the various weeds, the nuances in managing each species, and the unique locations and habitats I got to work in. As I became more experienced I was able to travel to different states to help others avoid the stumbling blocks you come up against when starting a program, while also learning from colleagues. The camaraderie of people doing this work is great.

How have you seen the field change?

When I first started working in invasive plant management, it was a relatively new concept only a few years or less than a decade old. Weeds in an agricultural setting, yard, or gardens have been



Curt Deuser receives an NPS award for Professional Excellence in Natural Resource Stewardship in 2015.

around for centuries, however, it was not a common concern in the natural environment until the late 1970s or early 1980s. Now, there's a lot more overall interest and concern. Awareness has grown about the importance of land stewardship. Many groups and partnerships focused on invasive species have organized in the U.S. and worldwide. Now, ground-disturbing actions like building construction, road construction, and wildfire suppression address invasive species as a standard practice and build in the costs to reduce invasive plant impacts before, during, and after these operations. None of this was common practice when I started. When we started, we were on the fringe of natural resources management, and now we're on the forefront of habitat restoration.

What advice do you have for someone starting in the field today? Stay in the field and work at the ground level as long as you can. That's where you will gain the most practical knowledge, not to mention having the most fun and a chance to work outdoors in beautiful places. If you stick with a career in the natural resources field, you may well look back on your field years as your best and fondest memories. Most times, promotions lead to office-based jobs

and lots of meetings. When I attended conferences, I would sometimes think about how much could be accomplished if we were all out working in the field. One of my favorite quotes is "I've never seen a computer that could kill an invasive plant". However, some of us have to spend time in the office preparing and planning so the field work can be done.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing

invasive plant managers today? Consistent funding and keeping talent. Unfortunately, even though awareness has grown, the funding tends to be limited to specific short-term project-based efforts. I would like to see long-term, program-based funding that supports permanent career opportunities. I think that is what the NPS Invasive Plant Management Team approach helps accomplish, but we still have a ways to go in the field. I also think the continued human-caused disturbances from growth and development and climate change-related natural disturbances will exacerbate an already challenging field.

What, if anything, would you have done differently over the course of your

career? Looking back, I probably would have taken more details or temporary promotions to diversify a bit, but overall I really wouldn't change a thing. I don't think I would have become a leader in my field otherwise. I do have one regret that while I was performing Burn Boss duties on a prescribed fire, I inadvertently let one of the oldest ponderosa pine trees burn down. It had a cat face burn scar that was on fire and we had an option to spray it down with some water foam but we were very remote and had a limited water supply

(Continued on page 14)

2025 Photo Contest

Constance Taylor, Conservation Specialist, Cal-IPC

It was a year of stellar photo submissions from all over the state, with 74 entries and 835 votes cast. These photos help us tell the story of weed removal efforts throughout California, and give us a great way to help spread the word about amazing organizations and projects. Thank you to everyone who submitted photos and voted in the contest! Below are the top vote-getters as well as a few staff picks that capture different aspects of weed management.



First place: “Invasive species don’t take holidays—neither do we!” by Austin Zhang, showing artichoke thistle treatment in Black Mountain Open Space Park (volunteer Del Brook pictured). Austin is the Executive Director of the Youth Care Club (YCC), a student-run volunteer organization that includes seven schools across San Diego County. YCC hosts and participates in volunteer events throughout the school year and is a youth affiliate of the American Chinese Culture and Education Foundation (ACCEF).



Second place: “Weeding volunteers acting as pallbearers, sending invasive mustard on its final ride to a trailer for disposal.” Photo: Debbie Josephson, submitted by Marvin Josephson, taken at a volunteer workday at Fiscalini Ranch Preserve along the Santa Rosa Creek Trail in Cambria, CA. Debbie Josephson and Marvin Josephson are volunteers for the Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, a non-profit that stewards 437 acres of wild California coastline to preserve biodiversity, habitat, and trails that are open to the public.



Third place: “Rain or shine, Project ARISE volunteers battle invasive *Arundo donax* at their beloved San Diego River.” By Sophie Zeng, a senior at The Bishop’s School in La Jolla, CA, and President and co-founder of Project ARISE. Project ARISE is designing an AI mobile app that recognizes and classifies the most invasive plant species with the goal of preserving biodiversity. They work with chapters across the world to get people involved in invasive plant management and removal.



Staff pick: Clearing dead dry grasses (rattail fescue) from a hillside that abuts the community of Piru, CA. Photo by Alissa Goldberg, Fuels and Chipper Coordinator for the Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council, a grassroots organization helping residents protect their communities from catastrophic wildfire.



Staff pick: Tackling Mediterranean broom (*Genista linifolia*) on Catalina Island with sharp tools, herbicide, and proper PPE: eye protection, gloves, long sleeves, and long pants. Photo: Brian Larson.



Staff pick: HELIX Environmental crew taking down 15-foot walls of Himalayan blackberry across a 50-acre project, using Vastlan and Roundup Custom while carefully working around native California blackberry. Photo: Diego Chafloque (submitted by Claire Watkins).



Staff pick: Veg Techs rest after removing iceplant. Photo: Jenna Allred of the National Park Service at Point Reyes National Seashore. Restoration efforts at Point Reyes often remove iceplant, a significant invasive species in the area's coastal ecosystems.

2025 Symposium Report

Nikki Valentine, Conservation Specialist, Cal-IPC

The 34th annual Cal-IPC Symposium took place in mid-November in Ventura, CA, bringing together a diverse and dedicated community committed to advancing invasive plant management. This year's theme was "Beyond Eradication: Resistance, Resilience, and Recovery." Hosted as a hybrid event, the Symposium welcomed more than 600 participants, including land managers, researchers, restoration practitioners, students, and volunteers from across California and beyond. Over four days, attendees shared research, practical management strategies, and lessons learned through talks, posters, workshops, discussion groups, and field trips. Here are some highlights!

- An energetic poster session allowed a range of presenters – from university students to retired professionals – to share their work on a range of topics, from biological control agents and population genetics to remote sensing, volunteer engagement, and adaptive management approaches.
- Four workshops allowed attendees to dig deeper into topics like mapping with ArcGIS, controlling weeds with string trimmers and backpack sprayers, and principles of integrated pest management (IPM).
- John H. Anderson Stewardship Scholarships were awarded to 40 people for attendance in person and online.
- Cal-IPC's Student and Emerging Professionals Section organized a Career Panel featuring a range of professionals with different experiences to share, from building

I enjoyed the Symposium so much! I learned so much and I can't wait to use all this new knowledge in practice.

Every presentation and workshop I attended was super informative, and I loved having the opportunity to chat and collaborate with peers and professionals!

— *Recipient of a John H. Anderson Stewardship Scholarship*

credits toward state licensure for herbicide applicators, featured a round of Pesticide Safety Jeopardy, with Dulce Cortez (Laguna Canyon Foundation) and Lana Nguyen (CA State Parks, Orange Coast District) tying for first place.

- Cal-IPC's annual raffle featured weed management tools, wooden crafts, and a much sought-after quilt depicting a serene landscape through a window framed with invasives.
- Cal-IPC's own Constance Taylor hosted a rousing karaoke session, filling the venue with exuberant singing until the event was cut off at 10 pm!

Theme Sessions

Plenary sessions followed the Symposium theme: "Beyond Eradication: Resistance, Resilience, and Resistance." The opening plenary on "Resistance" featured talks from Evelyn Beaury (New York Botanical

Garden) and Sarah Kimball (UC Irvine) underlining social and ecological resistance to invasive species. Invasive species management is most effective when resistance is built before invasions take hold, both through human systems that limit introductions and through ecological communities that resist establishment.

Social resistance focuses on reducing invasive species introductions through the horticulture trade, which still accounts for roughly half of invasive plant introductions. According to Beaury's research, 15

invasive plant species were still sold in California in 2020. Beaury stressed that strengthening and standardizing regulations to reduce invasive plant propagule



A large restoration site planted out in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Photo: Joey Algiers.

field skills to getting on State of California hiring lists.

- The Laws & Regulations session, designed to provide continuing education

pressure from horticulture is a critical component of invasion resistance.

Ecological resistance occurs when native plant communities limit the establishment and spread of invasive species. The strength of this resistance varies predictably with habitat type and disturbance, such as fire or drought. Kimball's research showed that reducing invasive annual plants can lower native shrub mortality during dry periods. After fire, restored sites with high native diversity were better able to maintain community structure and resist invasion.

Resilience

Both Sarah Hennessy (San Diego State University) and Joelene Tamm (La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians and UC Riverside) focused on persevering against invasive species. Sarah highlighted the importance of adapting to varying conditions in the mountain ranges of Southern California. The Southern Montane Forest Project developed a conservation strategy for prioritizing treatments across landscapes, incorporating adaptation science into projects, and supporting postfire recovery, with management of invasive species integrated throughout.

Joelene focused on managing altered fire regimes and the invasive gold spotted oak borer (GSOB, *Agrilus auroguttatus*). GSOB has devastated oak populations on the Highway 76 corridor, and Tamm has found that balancing a suite of IPM actions—tree health monitoring, trapping, insecticides, manual treatments, cultural burning, and



Award winners (left to right) John Knapp, John Beall, and Erin Questad. Photo: Frank Quon.

transport restrictions—keyed around the GSOB life cycle is most effective in reducing damage.

Recovery

The closing plenary session highlighted recovery as a long-term process and that ecosystems can recover after decades—or even more than a century—of invasive species pressure.

John Knapp (Catalina Island Conservancy) described management actions taken by The Nature Conservancy on Santa Cruz Island, which had been damaged by a range of environmental problems for over 100 years, from overgrazing by sheep to the spread of

Argentine ants and of course, lots of weeds. Despite this history, management actions have been incredibly successful.

Joey Algiers from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area closed out the Symposium. Their efforts growing and planting thousands of native plants play a central role in their restoration work, increasing the likelihood that vegetation communities can survive disturbance like wildfire. Joey closed by unveiling his ultimate goal: world domination in restoration through locally sourced native seed farms!

Awards

Recognizing outstanding contributions is a longstanding tradition of the Cal-IPC Symposium. This year's career and student awards highlighted the depth of dedication and talent within the community.

Career Awards

This year, we recognized three stalwarts from the restoration community. Dr. Erin Questad, Chair of the Biology Dept. at Cal Poly Pomona, was honored with the Ryan Jones Catalyst Award for her work connecting students with the stewardship community. John Beall was honored with the Ken Moore Wildlands Restoration Award – signified by the Golden Weed Wrench – for his dedication to weed management over a career with Agricultural Commissioner's offices in three different counties: Santa Clara, San Mateo, and now Ventura. John Knapp, a longtime biologist for The Nature Conservancy and now the Catalina Island Conservancy, was honored with the Jake Sigg Award for Vision and



Zaid Rocha from the Santa Cruz Dept. of Parks and Recreation took home the most coveted raffle prize, the quilt, much to the dismay of many other admirers. Photo: Frank Quon.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

Dedicated Service for his many years of tireless service and leadership on invasive plant issues in California, especially on the Channel Islands. We appreciate their long-standing contributions and leadership in the field!

Student Presentation Awards

Full Talk Presentations:

Winner: Nicholas Saglimbeni, UC Santa Barbara, "Optimizing restoration strategies in iceplant-dominated landscapes of coastal California"

Lightning Talks:

1st Place (tie):

Austin Zhang, Del Norte High School, "Smart park management: A drone-based AI solution for vegetation health monitoring and wildfire risk mitigation"; and Marielle Friedman, UC Davis, "Evaluating effects of artificial



Waiting for your raffle ticket to be drawn! Photo: Frank Quon.



Some of our student award winners: Nicholas Saglimbeni, Katherine Brafford, Olivia Parra, and Jamie Lopez.



Participants touring the native seed farm. Photo: Nikki Valentine.

light at night (ALAN) on biological control agents of yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) in California"

2nd Place: Anna Luo, Canyon Crest Academy, "Possible allelopathic effects of *Cynara cardunculus* on native coastal sage scrub species"

Poster Presentations:

1st Place: Jamie Lopez, UC Santa Barbara, "Evaluating sycamore (*Platanus* spp.) population genetics to identify native trees for coastal restoration"

2nd Place: Olivia Parra, UC Davis, "Pile burning to break negative soil legacies of invasive annual species"

3rd Place: Katherine Brafford, UC Davis, "Seed traits may predict species success in habitats dominated by thatch-producing annual grasses"

Field Trips

A storm whipped in during the tail end of the Symposium, resulting in the cancellation of two of the four scheduled field trips. Despite the stormy weather, the remaining two field trips had strong attendance.

Ventura River Steelhead Preserve

The private Ventura River Steelhead Preserve is the site of a three-year prescribed fire research project conducted by the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC) and UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE). Presenters Sophie McLean (OVLC) and Maripaula Valdes-Berriz (UCCE) discussed



Joey Algiers pointing out the endangered Lyon's pentachaeta grown in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area's native plant nursery. Photo: Nikki Valentine.

Santa Monica Mountains Native Seed Farm

The second field trip took participants to the National Park Service's native seed farm within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Participants learned about ongoing management efforts targeting fennel, Italian thistle, annual grasses, and other non-native forbs, as

Participants toured the native plant nursery, where the Santa Monica Mountains Fund has grown over 200,000 native plants for restoration. This includes the rare Lyon's pentachaeta (listed by California as endangered), which is thriving in the nursery. Participants then ventured over to the seed farm's new five-acre expansion.



Thanks to Symposium Committee co-chairs Lauren Quon of the Cleveland National Forest and Justin Valliere, Assistant Cooperative Extension Specialist in Invasive Weed and Restoration Ecology from UC Davis! Photo: Frank Quon.

the prescribed burns they had conducted to control yellow starthistle. Participants toured the site to see the results of fuel abatement, invasive weed control, and habitat restoration and to discuss the successes and challenges with prescribed fire as a weed management tool.

well as the importance of locally sourced native seed for restoration.

Participants toured the seed barn where the seed cleaning and storage processes occur. Demonstrations of specialized seed cleaning tools, such as the milkweed seed cleaner, were especially exciting!

Honoring Mike Kelly

Cal-IPC held a party in Leucadia (San Diego County) in December to honor the land management contributions of Mike Kelly, a founding board member of Cal-IPC and longtime volunteer for the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Mike helped form Cal-IPC in the early 1990s and served on the board for the organization's first ten years, providing essential leadership during a time when Cal-IPC was entirely volunteer-run. That can-do spirit continues to run strong through our volunteer board, which does a lot of work for the organization (including organizing this party!).

Mike has supported the Friends for over three decades, doing outreach to all kinds of community groups to get them involved in helping steward the preserve. He became an expert in a range of weed control techniques and shared his expertise with other SoCal managers (he was also a frequent instructor at Cal-IPC field courses).



Founding board member Mike Kelly (standing at right) was the guest of honor at a Cal-IPC gathering in San Diego last December. Photo: Alys Arenas.

Mike spoke movingly at the party about the important role Cal-IPC plays in the state's conservation community and his desire to see the organization be well-funded in the future. Because he believes in supporting Cal-IPC's work into the

future, Mike helped create our Legacy Circle by committing to leaving part of his estate to Cal-IPC.

For all that Mike does—on-the-ground work, community outreach, Cal-IPC support—we thank him!

Wildland Weed News

(Continued from page 3)

Grassland management – The University of Wyoming has formed IMAGINE – the Institute for Managing Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems – with workshops and online resources.

Vulnerability maps – The California Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation has posted a Vulnerable Communities Platform with maps showing how climate change-related wildfire, extreme heat, flooding, sea level rise, and drought are expected to affect California communities. State grants for restoration work often prioritize projects that protect vulnerable communities.

SWAP 2025 – The California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife has completed and posted the 2025 update to the State Wildlife Action Plan, which provides an important blueprint for ways to protect our wildlife.



Slenderleaf iceplant. Photo: Jennifer Mo.

Slenderleaf iceplant – A genetics study published in the journal *Ecology and Evolution* determined that invasive *Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum*, a problem along the California coast, originated in South Africa, information that will help development of biocontrol agents from the plant’s home range.

Margolin – Noted California author and publisher Malcom Margolin passed away



CALIFORNIA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN
A Conservation Legacy for Californians
OCTOBER 2025

The recently updated Wildlife Action Plan.

last fall. He wrote *The Ohlone Way* in the 1970s, founded Heyday Books, published *News from Native California*, and *Bay Nature Magazine*.

Weed Warrior: An interview with Curt Deuser

(Continued from page 7)

that was potentially needed to protect a nearby historical structure. I made a priority decision to conserve the water and instead dug a line around the tree and pulled all the ground fuels away from it and by the next morning it had fallen to the ground. I cut a “cookie” sample from the stump and took it to Northern Arizona University tree ring lab and later found out it was one of the oldest ponderosa pines they have ever recorded. The biggest regret of my career.

What areas do you see as being opportunities for growth in invasive plant management? Drones and continued development of satellite imagery. I think the use of drones will eventually be common for invasive plant surveys in remote difficult terrain, and even more exciting will be the use of drones with spray tanks to selectively treat these difficult-to-access plants, reducing ground personnel exposure to these hazard areas.

As you get some well-earned time off, what are your parting words of wisdom for those of us who pick up your mantle

and keep on with the work? Keep up the fight and don’t get discouraged, you may have some setbacks and failures, but the successes will be all the more rewarding! I attended the first exploratory meeting to form what has now become Cal-IPC. It was in Tiburon, California, around 1990 or 1991. We had a person from the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council attend and we were using that as a model. There were 15-20 people in attendance, a very organic and grass roots experience that led to where Cal-IPC is today. The trend is in a good direction!

Individual Membership

Stewardship Circle	\$1000
Champion	\$ 500
Partner	\$ 250
Professional	\$ 100
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Student/Early Career	\$ 25

Members receive **Dispatch** and discount on Symposium registration!

Organizational Membership

Benefactor	\$2000	Pro membership for 8	Quarter-page in newsletter
Patron	\$1000	Pro membership for 6	Eighth-page in newsletter
Sustainer	\$ 500	Pro membership for 4	Logo in newsletter
Supporter	\$ 250	Pro membership for 3	Name in newsletter

Organizations receive Professional membership for their staff and newsletter recognition for 12 months!

See cal-ipc.org for full membership details

Thank You for Supporting Our Work

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WILDLAND WEED CALENDAR

Check all websites for latest event updates

Grassland Restoration Field Day

April 17, Winters
cnga.org

NEOBIOTA 2026

September 7-11, Brussels, Belgium
neobiota2026.org

SERCAL

May 18-20, Fortuna, CA
sercal.org/sercal-2026

2026 Cal-IPC Symposium

October 20-22, Online
cal-ipc.org/symposium

“Public stakeholders have expressed concerns that, despite the above County practices and State law requirements, the County’s vegetation management contractors may overutilize herbicide or pesticide products in County projects because they financially benefit from incentive and/or loyalty programs offered by herbicide/pesticide manufacturers and vendors.”

—from a resolution passed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors aiming to address a concern brought by anti-pesticide activists who allege that land stewards get kickbacks for using herbicides



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Visit cal-ipc.org/plan or scan the QR code to learn more.

Aaron Echols

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