

Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

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The Intermountain Noxious Weed Advisory Council Concerning

H.R. 1462, the Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

Committee on Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

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Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 1462, the Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001. Indeed, it is an honor to do so. My name is George Beck. I am a Professor of Weed Science at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and I also am chairman of the Intermountain Noxious Weed Advisory Council. INWAC has worked diligently since its inception in 1987 to raise the awareness of the problems associated with invasive, nonnative weeds throughout the western United States, particularly on lands managed by the federal government. Invasive weeds threaten the integrity and environmental stability of our ecosystems and dramatically interfere with agricultural production systems. Invasive weeds displace native plants, decrease native biological diversity, and disrupt established ecosystem processes. Invasive weeds also decrease livestock production on rangelands and pastures, decrease crop yields, and decrease wildlife habitat. The breadth and serious nature of this problem across our nation certainly requires that a concerted weed management effort be waged by private landowners and public land managers, if we are to be successful.

H.R. 1462 will provide much-needed funds to manage invasive weeds throughout our country. Weed management is expensive and easily can cost from \$100 to \$200 per acre especially if seeding of desirable plant species is necessary. Financial assistance provided by H.R. 1462 will help to defray weed management expenses and stimulate more landowners and land managers to become engaged in this effort. Our collective experience at the county weed district level clearly demonstrates that financial assistance often engages the recalcitrant landowner in weed management. Federal land managers in particular have been frustrated by the cost of weed management because of inadequate budgets. For many years, INWAC has recommended to federal agencies that they request additional funds targeted specifically for weed management. While some progress has been made, federal agency budgets for weed management remain inadequate. H.R. 1462 will help to alleviate this situation, but federal agencies still must dramatically increase their weed management budgets through the normal fiscal process.

H.R. 1462 funds will be awarded to weed management entities; thus, the bill will foster the formation of weed management areas and stimulate a concerted weed management effort. Weeds are more efficiently and effectively managed on a landscape or watershed scale. Managing weeds in a watershed or across a

landscape creates the opportunity to form partnerships where all participants have ownership in project planning and implementation. When one has a sense of ownership, they become engaged willingly and actively. Fostering such partnerships is an extremely powerful aspect of H.R. 1462 and the bill not only will help stimulate new partnerships it also will enhance the activities of the many weed management areas that already exist in the western United States. Weed management areas such as the Big Hole Resource Area in Montana, the Tri-county Weed Management Area in Oregon, the Cheyenne River Weed Management Area in Wyoming, the Upper Arkansas River Weed Management Area in Colorado, and the Axial Basin Weed Management Area also in Colorado area are in operation and poised to take advantage of the competitive funds to be made available by H.R. 1462. Competitive grant funds in California, Montana, and Colorado, while modest in comparison to H.R. 1462, have encouraged landowners and land managers to cooperate and become organized into weed management areas in a fashion that otherwise would not have occurred. Clearly, this is outstanding and H.R. 1462 will be a powerful engine to take this process to the next level. However, competitive grants only should be a tool to boost the activities of existing weed management areas or stimulate the formation of new ones such that they become self-sufficient. H.R. 1462 limits the duration of incentive payments so as to encourage weed management areas to become self-sufficient, thereby preserving funds to help others become organized.

There are, however, a few aspects of the bill that deserve attention or clarification. Many people are concerned about how funds associated with the goals of H.R. 1462 will affect existing programs within federal agencies. The funds to support H.R. 1462 should be new monies and should not be taken from existing federal land management programs. It is critically important that federal agencies continue to increase their budgets for weed management in addition to the potential help offered by H.R. 1462. Taking money from existing programs to fund H.R. 1462 may well cause a setback in invasive weed management by federal agencies.

There are weed management areas in the west that include partners from several states. Good examples of these include the Monida Pass Weed Management Area on the border of Montana and Idaho where each state is trying to keep their weeds from spreading to their neighbor; the Team Leafy Spurge Project on the Missouri River breaks where multiple governmental agencies and private landowners from Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota employ a coordinated effort to battle leafy spurge; and the Greater Yellowstone Weed Management Area is perhaps the oldest weed management area in the country and involves Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. Colorado is an excellent example of the need for states to cooperate and form multi-state weed management areas. We are the headwaters for several major rivers that flow throughout the west. Salt cedar infests the small tributaries near Rifle and Silt that flow into the Colorado River, which then serve as infestation sources for the Colorado River drainage from Rifle to the Gulf of California. The North Platte River flows through North Park in north central Colorado and on into Wyoming. Leafy spurge infests the banks of the North Platte on both sides of the Colorado-Wyoming border and a very active weed management area encompasses the neighboring counties in each state. H.R. 1462 should encourage the formation of multi-state weed management areas, but section 7(d)3(B) prohibits any weed management entity from using funds to operate a weed management area in more than one state. This is confusing and potentially counterproductive to the goals of H.R. 1462.

Research-based information is the fundamental component for developing effective weed management. While data are available for the majority of invasive weeds and the various habitats they infest, not all the questions have been answered. This is especially the case when a new weed occurrence is found. Funds from H.R. 1462 should be available to support applied research that provides immediate and practical results when necessary. While H.R. 1462 does not prohibit funds from being used on research, it is not

specifically mentioned. A clause in the bill that describes the type of research that could be supported would be beneficial.

H.R. 1462 prohibits use of funds to manage weeds on land that is used to produce an agricultural commodity. This is understandable in light of other federal programs that are available to crop producers. H.R. 1462 excludes livestock production from this prohibition, but the definitions cited are broad enough that when subject to interpretation, may lead to logistical problems when administering the bill. For example, forage growing on rangeland could be construed by some to be an agricultural commodity and thus, funds from H.R. 1462 could not be used by weed management entities to manage weeds on that land. If this occurs, it would be counter to the goals of H.R. 1462. Perhaps language could be inserted in the bill that clearly states rangeland and pastures upon which forage is grown and directly consumed by grazing livestock is excluded as an agricultural commodity.

H.R. 1462 is an outstanding bill that will help take our collective weed management efforts in our country to a new and much more appropriate level than we now enjoy. The essence of invasive weed management is to be a good neighbor and conscientious steward of the land. H.R. 1462 will promote these fundamental tenets.

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