

# 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

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### Witness Statement

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June 5, 2001

House Resources Committee  
National Parks Recreation and Public Lands Sub-committee  
1333 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Subject: HR 1462 Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001

Florida Farm Bureau Federation is very concerned with the introduction and establishment of invasive noxious plant pests. We have spearheaded efforts in Florida to unite the agriculture industry and reach consensus on ways to improve our pest protection systems. Our members have adopted policy, which for the most part supports the spirit and intent of HR 1462.

I strongly urge you to consider using the words "Invasive plants" or "noxious weeds" in place of "nonnative weeds". I believe this wording change will strengthen the bill and clarify your intent. The words native and nonnative always stir individual emotions and leave room for wide interpretations. It is not a plants origin that makes it a bad plant. It is its invasive or noxious behavior in a particular environment or setting. Here in the Southeast there are hundreds of nonnative plants, which have thrived since their introduction ranging as far back as the 1500's. Many of these plants are domesticated agricultural plants that are not invasive or noxious and for all practical purposes are considered native plants by the residents of the state. Technically these plants are not native. As a matter of fact, Citrus, our state's leading agriculture sector, is not a native plant even though it's been here for hundreds of years.

Farm Bureau agrees that we must encourage local involvement and action if we are to successfully control invasive noxious plants. These pests are not just an agricultural problem. All citizens should share responsibility for the maintenance of public lands that are overrun by an invasive pest. **While it is important and necessary to foster local action to control noxious plant pests, it may pose problems if various groups are empowered to identify, list, seek, eradicate or control plant pests, which they deem "harmful"**. For this reason I would like to know more about your intentions and guidelines for the Weed Management Entities as well as their responsibilities and authority. The State of Florida has purchased large land holdings that are managed by five separate Water Management Districts. Each of these agencies has considerable staff and resources dedicated to the control of invasive pests. Would your legislation recognize these existing agencies as the designated "weed management entity"?

Many state and federal agencies share authority for the control, maintenance or eradication of plant pests. While HR 1462 requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish this program, how would it be administered on a state level and through which agency? Will there be adequate coordination and funding among other state or federal agencies? We have learned that it is very important to include and coordinate with private organizations as well as agencies having regulatory authority such as the United States Department of Agriculture and the individual state departments of agriculture. This coordination truly helps eliminate "turf" protection between the agencies that sometimes prohibit the accomplishment of our goal of plant pest eradication or control.

Thank you for introducing this legislation. I will be contacting Florida's congressional delegation to make them aware of our position pertaining to invasive plant pests.

Sincerely,

Kevin Morgan  
Associate Director  
Agricultural Policy Division

cc. Allen Boyd  
Karen Thurman  
Adam Putnam  
Mark Foley  
Rosemarie Watkins

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