

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

June 15, 2001

The Honorable Joel Hefley, Chair
National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands Subcommittee
of the House Resources Committee
1333 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Testimony on H.R. 1462 - "Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001"

Dear Representative Hefley:

I would like to express support for the "Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001." The state of Montana has supported the development and funding of local weed management areas and cooperative programs since the 1980's. We currently have a \$1.9 million cost-share program that helps private land owners control weeds on their lands, supports creative weed management research, including the development of biological controls, and provides educational programs on weed issues.

The proposed federal legislation (H.R. 1462 and its companion bill, S. 198) would help to support the efforts we have in place in Montana. Montana has a statewide Weed Management Plan that clearly identifies weed management priorities and this legislation could be used to support and further implement effective weed management in the state.

We do have several suggestions about the legislation as proposed:

1) While funding of this legislation is critical to the implementation of the program, it is also important that current level funding for weed management programs on Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture lands not be impacted. The Montana State Weed Management Plan clearly outlines funding needs for all weed managers in the State of Montana and it should be noted that current level funding of our federal partners in weed management programs is seriously inadequate. Current funding for all federal land management agencies in Montana is less than \$2.8 million and it is conservatively estimated that the real need is more that \$10 million. We urge that any funding for this legislation not be taken from current, on-the-ground weed management programs in place by federal land management partners.

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2) Section 7(d)(3)(B) prohibits the use of funds for multi-state projects. We are currently working cooperatively with Idaho, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota on problems that cross our borders. These multi-state efforts are effective weed management programs and should be encouraged.

3) The definition of "agricultural commodity" in Section 3(2) seems unnecessarily restrictive. It seems that the purpose is to prevent use of the funds on cultivated lands. Even with the exclusion of "livestock," the current definition seems that it would prevent funds from being used on areas such as improved pasture and hay lands. At the least, the term may cause some confusion to those implementing the program. Possibly this term could be further clarified.

4) To maximize the effective use of limited funds authorized under this legislation, it may be useful to establish a specific system of prioritization for funding listed within the legislation. Montana's weed management plan helps immensely to use our limited funding wisely. It would be useful for the legislation to require weed management entities and states distributing funds to have current management plans in place and an effective process for distribution of the funds.

5) Research plays a vital role in the development of effective weed management programs. Possibly the state funding agencies could be provided leeway in the program to support limited, local research on specific local problems on a matching fund basis.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important piece of legislation. If we can answer any questions on our comments, please feel free to contact me, or our state Weed Coordinator, Barbra Mullin, at (406) 444-3140.

Sincerely,

W. Ralph Peck
Director

c: Senator Conrad Burns, Montana
Senator Max Baucus, Montana
Representative Dennis Rehberg, Montana