

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 12, 2001

Representative Joel Hefley, Chairman
National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands Subcommittee
2230 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Hefley,

I am writing to provide testimony on behalf of the State of Colorado in strong support of H.R.1462, the Harmful Nonnative Weed Control Act of 2001. In my opinion, H.R. 1462 and any funds appropriated to fulfill the purposes of this Act will provide much needed financial assistance to stimulate and support the development of cooperative weed management efforts in communities throughout the nation. Like many other states, Colorado and its citizens are engaged in a fight to stop the spread of harmful, nonnative weeds and reduce the significant negative impacts these species inflict upon agriculture, the environment, state and local economies, recreation, and public health. In Colorado, these impacts easily exceed \$100 million annually to agriculture alone.

While our citizens are committed to being good stewards of our public and private lands, the cost of developing and implementing effective weed management strategies is not small. In fact, research suggests that the cost of managing harmful nonnative weeds is on par with the cost of annual wildfire-fighting efforts. However, the nation invests comparatively little to assist its citizens and local governments in the war on weeds. H.R. 1462 will help to address this inequity by providing for a nationwide competitive grant-making program to support cooperative weed management efforts and leverage additional funds from a variety of public and private sources to enhance such efforts. Colorado and several other western states including California and Montana have already initiated similar, albeit very limited, funding programs which have helped local communities to launch effective weed management efforts but have not been able to meet the demand and need demonstrated throughout these states. I believe that additional funding made available through H.R. 1462 would help to better meet the need expressed by our communities as well as communities throughout the nation.

I would like to commend you and your staff for developing a bill that will provide much needed funding to stimulate and support a wide variety of cooperative weed management efforts. It also promotes coordination with existing efforts, financial flexibility to meet the needs of communities with significant federal land holdings, accountability of expenditures, and the long-term self-

sufficiency of successful grantees. Your efforts to address the concerns raised by supporters of S. 198 have resulted in many improvements that make H.R. 1462 a positive step forward and a new benchmark for discussion and debate.

However, given the substantial responsibilities and duties that this Act will place upon States, I would like to make several points that I hope will help you and your subcommittee to continue to discuss and improve this Act:

1. Concerns have been raised by numerous entities, including many western states with significant federal land holdings, that any funding appropriated via H.R. 1462 be new funding rather than redirected, federal funding already allocated for weed management and research. I share these concerns. Federal land management agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (which manage approximately 24 million acres in Colorado alone) are presently underfunded in their efforts to manage harmful, nonnative weeds. For example, the Forest Service, in the Environmental Assessment regarding the control on weeds on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland released last month, estimates the total acreage of weed infestations on these lands to be about 8,150 acres. However, given current budget constraints, even its most aggressive weed management alternative will control only a maximum of 1,500 acres annually (18.4% of known infestations). Groups such as the Intermountain Noxious Weed Advisory Council and the North American Weed Management Association as well as the State of Colorado have worked for years to increase the resources available to federal land management agencies to address weeds adequately. Slowly, agency resources have increased in this area. Consequently, it would be quite damaging to many western states and local communities that have worked to develop partnerships and programs with federal land management agencies if allocated federal funding were reduced to fund the financial package offered by H.R. 1462. Successful weed management efforts in the West will only benefit if H.R. 1462 is a part of the solution offered by Congress in addition to increased resources for federal land management agencies. Federal land management agencies need reliable and adequate long-term funding to manage noxious weeds on federal lands just as many local communities need additional funding that would be provided through H.R. 1462 to stimulate cooperative efforts across watersheds and the larger landscape of which public and private lands are a part.

2. While weed management areas (cooperative efforts with geographic rather than political boundaries) will be a cornerstone for many successful efforts across the nation, I do not believe that they represent the only type of cooperative effort that should be considered as a "weed management entity" (WME). Under S. 198, I understand this term to include not only WMEs but also multi-state efforts that address common weed management concerns shared by communities across state political boundaries as well as state noxious weed teams that represent multiple stakeholder interests. However, in a clear departure from S. 198, H.R. 1462 contains Section 7(d)(3)(B) that prohibits the use of funds to carry out a project in more than one State. In my opinion, this will impede many communities from addressing weed problems that may be shared along vectors that cross state boundaries such as highways or rivers. Certainly Colorado communities would benefit from the opportunity to work with neighbor state communities that share water resources such as the Colorado, Arkansas, Rio Grande, and Platte Rivers. Furthermore, one of the oldest weed

management areas of the nation is the Greater Yellowstone Area, a weed management entity that shares three western states as active partners. I also believe that multi-state collaborative efforts will be an important component of future weed management successes in the West. Consequently, I expect that western efforts at the local, state, and regional level will benefit from the flexibility to share funding to address weed problems that cross state boundaries. I urge you to consider the merits and needs of such efforts and delete Section 7(d)(3)(B).

3. Section 7(d)(1) describes the numerous activities to which a WME may apply federal funding to carry out a project relating to the control or eradication of harmful, nonnative weeds. These activities reference most of the components of an integrated weed management approach but it is notable that applied research is not included. Although it is not specifically excluded and I believe it would meet the spirit, if not letter, of the Act, I ask the subcommittee to consider including a specific reference to applied research that addresses the management needs of a weed management entity. Although applied research is not a large part of many local weed management efforts, many local communities need additional information specific to their area and problems that only additional applied research can help provide. Oftentimes it is the land grant university that helps to address such needs but funding can be critically short for even the most basic and useful studies. The information generated locally through applied science, e.g. via test plots, can provide exceptionally useful information to local weed managers that will help to stretch their resources further, improve the use and effectiveness of control techniques, and reduce the costs of control for all participants. I hope you will consider the important, and sometimes vital, role that our land grant universities and their science and extension staff provide to local communities and consider inserting specific mention of local applied weed science as a specific activity permitted with federal funding through this Act.

4. To promote the development of self-sufficient weed management efforts, an important provision was added to H.R. 1462 that is lacking in S. 198. Section 7(b)(1)(B) limits the duration of incentive payments to an individual weed management entity to five years in the aggregate. Based upon Colorado's experience administering a small competitive grants program, it is important to emphasize the limited nature of funding to all applicants and to encourage grantees to develop permanent, often local, funding sources that will continue to provide the necessary financial support for a long-term weed management effort. This permits state funding to be used elsewhere by other communities in future years. Setting a duration of payments provides a strong incentive for WMEs to develop a plan for long-term self-sufficiency and to utilize funding provided by this Act to create such an effort. Without such incentives, communities may only tackle short-term concerns and not create a successful program to address the long-term nature of weeds. However, I note that a duration of payment provision has not been included in Section 7(c) regarding the use of financial awards. This may have been a simple oversight. For the reasons I have identified above, I hope that the subcommittee will consider the merit of including a similar provision here.

I hope these comments will assist you and your subcommittee's efforts to continue to improve H.R. 1462 and gain the support of your colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives. I would like to reiterate the State of Colorado's strong support for this Act. It will provide much needed funding to the nation's communities to help stop the spread of harmful, nonnative weeds and reduce the

significant negative impacts these species already inflict upon agriculture, the environment, state and local economies, recreation, and public health. On behalf of Colorado's citizens, I applaud you for your interest and action. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance and thank for the opportunity to present my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Eric M. Lane