



Executive Summary

Idaho's Action Plan For Invasive Species

Prepared for

Governor Dirk Kempthorne and the State of Idaho

by the State of Idaho Invasives Species Council

January 2005



DIRK KEMPTHORNE
GOVERNOR

January 10, 2004

Dear Interested Parties:

In Idaho, we fortunately recognize the problem invasive species pose to our state. There is a consensus that action must be taken.

Along those lines, I issued an executive order in 2001 creating the state's Invasive Species Council and charged it to "Minimize the effects of harmful non-native species on Idaho citizens and ensure the economic and environmental well being of the State of Idaho."

I am pleased to present Idaho's plan to prevent the entry and spread of unwanted species in our state, prepared through the efforts of the Council. In large part it reflects both the comprehensive assessment of the problem in Idaho completed in 2003 and the "Invasive Species Summit" held in February of 2004. During the Summit, nearly 200 people representing a wide range of those concerned with the issue met to exchange views and suggest actions.

Now we are ready to begin implementing those actions. The plan includes provisions for education and training, needed laws, program management and program coordination, all of which would augment the existing cooperative efforts of federal, state, or local governments and private entities, with specific timelines and responsibilities included with each task. Taken together, completion of these tasks will prepare our state to meet the challenge of invasive species so that we can protect our economy, our natural resources and our health from the threats invasive plant and animal species pose in Idaho.

Over the coming years, be assured that, in Idaho, this issue will begin to receive the attention it merits. I look forward to working with the Legislature and our partners within federal and local governments as well as private entities as we move forward with this plan and meet the threat posed by unwanted invasive species.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dirk Kempthorne".

DIRK KEMPTHORNE
Governor

DK:jj

Executive Summary

“Idaho has taken a first step toward a coordinated and effective statewide invasive species program by creating the Idaho Invasive Species Council, named by Governor Kempthorne in 2001.”

Invasive species are harmful, non-native plants, animals, and pathogens that damage our economy and environment. They include species like white pine blister rust, zebra mussels, Asian gypsy moth, yellow star thistle, New Zealand mudsnails, cereal leaf beetle and Medusahead rye—organisms that threaten the interests of all Idahoans, from our recreational pursuits to our ability to help feed the nation. Unfortunately, as worldwide commerce and travel increase, so does the threat that unwanted species will arrive in our state or spread to areas where they are not now found. Idaho is not alone in facing these threats and there is growing national awareness of the need to prevent and control invasive species.

In our state, Governor Kempthorne issued a 2001 executive order that created the Idaho Invasive Species Council. The membership of the Council reflects the existing partnerships among federal, state and local governments plus private entities that have long been working to prevent and control unwanted invasive species. In 2003, the Council completed an assessment of the invasive species problem in Idaho. In February 2004, the Council hosted nearly 200 stakeholders at the first ever Idaho Invasive Species Summit. The recommendations generated by experts and stakeholders in these forums have culminated in the Idaho Invasive Species Action Plan.

Meeting the growing challenge posed by invasive species in Idaho will require carefully crafted, coordinated and well funded actions that will augment those programs already in place. This strategic action plan includes 22 separate actions in the following summary table, which, if implemented, will help prevent the invasions of new species in Idaho and control the spread of those that are already here.

It is not intended to either supplant current efforts or add another managerial level to them.



White Pine Blister Rust—Thought to be introduced from imported nursery stock about 1900, this forest pathogen has decimated northern Idaho’s famed white pine stands. It can also attack high elevation whitebark pine, the seeds of which are an important food for wildlife.

page
4

Rather, the proposed actions will focus on the areas that all invasive species efforts have in common and benefit each, whether for the control of noxious weeds, the prevention of aquatic organisms that would harm fish or recreation, insects or fungi that attack our trees or the host of animal and plant diseases. These commonalities include managing invasion pathways, providing adequate funding, controlling existing invasions and educating the public to understand their stake in the prevention and control of unwanted species.

This plan is predicated on the belief that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Science tells us that the longer an invasive species has to establish itself, the more difficult and expensive it is to manage. In other words, the sooner we can intercept an invasive species, the more cost effective the solution. Therefore the strategies outlined in reflect these priorities: (1) preventing new invaders from ever arriving, (2) quickly detecting and eradicating those that make it here, and (3) managing existing problems.

Idaho is fortunate to have many effective programs to combat noxious weeds and other invasive species. Many of these efforts are led by county government and local cooperative weed management entities, which are best suited to understand local needs and take action on the ground. Others are the result of partnerships with federal agencies or private groups. This plan is intended to assist rather than duplicate or regulate these existing programs. By focusing on prevention, education, information sharing, fixing the gaps in our defenses, and setting clear priorities, this plan will improve the prospects for success for everyone working to control invasive species.

Executive Summary

The Problem

For many people, the term “invasive species”, by itself, may not raise particularly frightening images. After all, purple loosestrife is an attractive plant growing along the edge of wet areas. West Nile virus is something that one reads about in the paper and which mostly affects horses without making anyone’s friend or neighbors deathly ill. Most insects are simple nuisances, and weeds are something to be sprayed if they appear in your yard. Here, in Idaho, even with our outdoor, often rural lifestyle, for most there is no consistently negative image arising from either the term or from the tangible effects of species that we would rather not have.

In the broadest sense, invasive species include those species purposefully or inadvertently brought here and which exhibit “invasive” characteristics. This excludes the multitude of introduced species that have great value. Rather “invasive species” escape their original or intended ecological niche to habitats where they may grow and spread uncontrollably. Once there, they cause harm, whether to Idaho’s economy, to human health, or to our state’s natural world, and include:

- Pests that threaten agricultural commodities;
- Forest pests including those that may attack commercially valuable timber species and those that threaten shade trees found mostly in urban settings;
- Diseases that threaten the health of humans or domestic animals and wildlife;
- Nuisance exotic animal species that can displace or compete with native species;
- Noxious weeds which displace ecologically or economically valuable native rangeland species or agricultural crops or threaten the integrity of streams and lakes.

“For many people, the term “invasive species”, by itself, may not raise particularly frightening images.”

Current Efforts



Kudzu—Originally introduced into the United States as an ornamental vine at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, kudzu rapidly escaped its intended ecological niche. Found mostly in southern states, it covers trees and human structures. It has been discovered in the Pacific Northwest.

Over the years, Idaho, like all other states, has enacted statutes and created programs designed to prevent and manage a wide variety of invasive species. Often, these programs are administered in cooperation with various federal agency partners and range from monitoring plant pests to veterinary inspections for communicable animal diseases to tracking weed species, along with parallel efforts to control those unwanted species that do arrive in our state. The agencies involved in this important work include the Idaho Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Fish and Game and Lands, along with the Federal Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), among others.

In addition, the University of Idaho's colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Cooperative Extension Service play important research and educational roles. Finally, local governments, industries and their associations, various interest groups and individuals work cooperatively in control and educational efforts, often coming together in successful efforts such as cooperative weed management areas and the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign. All told, current invasive species management in Idaho costs in excess of \$10 million each year, in a mix of state funds, property tax assessments, industry fees and federal agency contributions.

One might legitimately ask why, given the state's significant and ongoing efforts, there is a need for a comprehensive strategic action plan. Idaho's programs have been likened to a "patchwork quilt", where each "patch" represents an individual program or effort. So long as the patches connect, the quilt is useful, but if they do not, then there are gaps in the coverage through which undesirable species can enter. The extent to which Idaho's efforts have gaps and how they might be filled is the substance of this strategic action plan.

Executive Summary

Idaho's Strategic Action Plan

This strategic action plan is based upon: (1) the findings of the statewide assessment of invasive species management in Idaho, completed in 2003; (2) recommendations of the Governor's "Invasive Species Summit" held early in 2004; (3) the efforts of four separate working groups made up of invasive species professionals; and (4) consideration of successful programs in other states and actions undertaken by the federal government. Developed under the direction of the Idaho Invasive Species Council, the 22 individual proposed actions in the plan address:

- Early Intervention – Prevention, Early Detection, and Rapid Response
- Containment, Control and Restoration
- Reaching Important Audiences through Education and Training
- Broadening Knowledge through Research and Technology Transfer
- Assuring Adequate Funding
- Creating an Adequate, Effective Legal Structure
- Coordinating Our Efforts

The plan includes a specific long-term goal—a desired condition to be achieved within the next decade for each of the above areas. Every proposal has a short-term, measurable objective, a specific timeline for implementation and each seems to be achievable within the state's fiscal and political climate. As noted previously, each is designed to enhance the ability of managers of existing programs to do their jobs better, more easily and in coordination with other efforts.

"Local governments, industries and their associations, various interest groups and individuals work cooperatively in control and educational efforts."



Cereal Leaf Beetle, a native to Europe and Asia, was first detected in Michigan in 1962. Since that time it has spread throughout most of the mid-western and eastern United States and reduces grain yield by eating the green leaf tissue.

page
8

For example, one proposal would train DEQ's stream survey teams to recognize and report new invasions of weeds or aquatic pests found within streams or riparian areas. If implemented, this would increase invasive species surveillance across the state by approximately 30 trained people who spend all summer in the field. Their efforts would markedly improve our ability to detect and report new weed, aquatic nuisance and possibly other species of note as they complete their work.

Invasive Species Coordinator

Although each proposal is significant, there is one upon which the success of the others rests. The plan calls for a statewide invasive species coordinator who will advance the broad spectrum of actions to prevent, detect and control all invasive species and will help coordinate the mix of local, state and federal programs targeted to this work. In meeting these objectives, the coordinator will work closely with and act as the "staff executive" for the Invasive Species Council and will have these responsibilities:

- Cooperate with program managers to take advantage of partnering opportunities.
- Implement the strategic action plan;
- With the Council, set program priorities, develop a work plan, assign accountability, set a budget, and report activities;
- Represent and report to the Governor on invasive species matters;
- Compete for federal and private grants to implement the state's action plan;
- Provide information regarding invasive species and the state's plan to the Legislature, Congressional delegation and stakeholders;

Executive Summary

- Develop proposals to assure that detection, rapid response and emergency powers are sufficient to address a broad array of invasive species and invasion pathways;
- Work with the University of Idaho, USDA and other partners to identify new and potential invaders, assess risk, and respond rapidly.
- Establish a single statewide point of contact and clearinghouse for reporting new or spreading invasive species and for disseminating information about them;
- Cooperate with program managers to take advantage of partnering opportunities.

“The plan will also give the Invasive Species Council responsibility for setting priorities and speaking with one voice for the entire invasive species management community.”

Conclusion

This strategic action plan responds to the clear message from the Invasive Species Summit—we are not doing enough to prevent new invasions of unwanted species nor to control the spread of those that are here now. The proposed actions in the plan as outlined in the following table will help fill the gaps in existing programs and make them more effective. It will also give the Invasive Species Council responsibility for setting priorities and speaking with one voice for the entire invasive species management community. It is a plan that is essential if we are to meet the growing challenge that unwanted invasive species pose to our state.



Fire Ant—The red imported fire ant was imported around the 1930's and has spread to infest more than 260 million acres of land in nine southeastern states. It has the potential of spreading west and surviving in southern Arizona and along the Pacific coast north to Washington.

Tasks, Actions, Timetables

Changes in Legal Structure and Funding	Individual Tasks	Actions Needed to Implement	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Task 1—Assure that the agencies that interact with invasive species and invasion pathways have the authority to effectively deal with them.	Task 2—Assure that all appropriate agencies have emergency powers so that they can immediately address hazardous situations that might allow the introduction and spread of unwanted species.	Legal review and legislation		•			
		Legal review and legislation		•			
Task 3—Allow funds to be spent on a wide variety of unwanted species, not solely on those that are on a formally adopted list.	Task 4—Create a regulatory structure that is based on the risks that various species will either arrive in Idaho and spread and that serious damages will result if they do.	Legal review and legislation		•			
		Collaborative effort between program managers, followed by legislation				•	
Task 5—Consider enactment of a comprehensive “omnibus” invasive species law.	Task 6—Identify all funding sources that might be available for invasive species management and position the state to take advantage of them.	Legal research and collaborative effort between program managers, possible legislation		•			
		Research by Invasive Species Coordinator			•		
Task 7—Account for invasive species expenditures in Idaho by creating a “cross cut” budget that includes funds from all sources and identifies the contributions of all state agencies.	Task 8—Enhance the effectiveness of the Invasive Species Council by clarifying its ability to set priorities and maintain accountability among the individual agencies.	Collaborative effort between program managers and Division of Financial Management			•		
		Collaborative effort between program managers and Division of Financial Management					
<i>Actions to Assure Coordinated Programs</i>							
Task 1—Establish within state government an “invasive species coordinator”, setting forth roles and responsibilities for this position.				•			
Task 2—Enhance the effectiveness of the Invasive Species Council by clarifying its ability to set priorities and maintain accountability among the individual agencies.				•			
Task 3—Integrate future initiatives, including the work of the invasive species coordinator, with existing programs in a manner that does not disrupt current programs that are working successfully.				•			

