

Weed Prevention Areas: Protecting Montana from Invasive Weeds

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Weeds are Invading!

Thousands of acres of Montana rangeland are lost each year to invasive weeds that are spreading up to 20% each year. Spotted knapweed infests over 4 million acres in Montana and is quickly spreading with noticeable movement towards eastern Montana. This weed alone costs Montana over \$46 million annually in management and lost revenue and has the potential to cost over \$155 million with continued spread. Invasive weeds diminish wildlife habitat value and can permanently damage productive, healthy rangelands. Weeds impact local and regional economies that depend on strong agricultural outcomes and wildlife-based expenditures. These industries are highly reliant on healthy ecologic systems represented by healthy functioning, weed-free native plant communities. Healthy rangelands, producer profits, and local economies that depend on them are seriously threatened by rapid and chronic weed invasion.

Protect Healthy Rangelands

Protection of healthy eastern Montana rangelands from rapid weed invasion is immediately needed. The development of cooperative Weed Prevention Areas (WPAs) can accomplish this. WPAs maximize efforts and resources by preventing invasion and promoting the urgency of early weed control that sustain high-quality rangelands and profitable ranching. WPAs work as early detection / rapid response mechanisms to avoid costly weed problems that pose unmanageable economic burdens on ranchers whose operating capital is already limited. The benefits of long-term WPAs accrue indefinitely.

Weed Prevention Areas

WPAs are comprised of unified producer groups that share common goals to protect native plant resources and livelihoods from invasive weeds through coordinated and systematic early intervention efforts. WPA protection from weeds is guided by adaptive, WPA-specific integrated plans, formulated by ranchers through a knowledge network approach. WPA-specific plans, implemented by unified producer groups during daily "on-the-job" activities, maintain the healthy, weed-free state of WPAs. WPA-specific plans include an education and evaluation component and the following strategies: (1) Specific prevention strategies aimed to greatly reduce repeated and continuous propagule pressure into WPA; (2) Systematic early detection/rapid response strategies that direct frequent monitoring of high probability sites and pathways and periodic monitoring of low probability sites; (3) Identification and eradication of small patches based on treatments to augment high mortality life cycle periods; and (4) Ecosystem management with a social aspect that maximizes rangeland persistence to discourage weed invasion.

Weeds are Coming...We Need to Unite!

Weed-free rangelands are seriously threatened by rapid weed invasion moving our way. Our individual efforts against weeds is a great start! But to ensure our rangelands, livelihoods, and communities are protected from the permanent and costly impacts of weeds, we must act now as unified groups while its cheap and easy! WPAs guide collective and unified producer efforts to protect common native plant resources from weed spread. If we all implement the same proven strategies to keep weeds out, our success is ensured! Talk to your neighbors about weeds and contact your county Extension Agent or weed coordinator for more information on WPAs. Remember...an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!



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PROTECTING MONTANA FROM INVASIVE WEEDS