



September 2012

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Background Brief on ...

Invasive Species

Background

“Invasive species” are plants, animals, and microbes not native to a region which, when introduced, outcompete native species for available resources, reproduce prolifically, and dominate regions and ecosystems. Because they often arrive in new areas unaccompanied by their native predators, invasive species can be difficult to control. Left unchecked, many invasives can transform entire ecosystems, as native species and habitats disappear.

Oregon Invasive Species Council

The Oregon Invasive Species Council was created by the Legislature in 2001 (**ORS 561.685**). The mission of the Council is to conduct a coordinated and comprehensive effort to keep invasive species out of Oregon and to eliminate, reduce, or mitigate the impacts of invasive species already established in Oregon. The Council has 15 members (6 ex-officio members from state agencies and academic institutions and 9 organizations and entities that comprise federal, state, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and industry).

The Council has four main statutory functions:

1. Create and publicize a system for reporting sightings of invasive species and refer those reports to appropriate agencies;
2. Undertake educational activities to increase awareness of invasive species;
3. Develop a statewide plan for dealing with invasive species. The Council developed a [plan](#) in June of 2005, completed a short-term [business plan](#) in 2008, conducted a [statewide management assessment](#) of invasive species in 2009, and began the process to develop a statewide invasive species strategic plan for Oregon in 2010; and
4. Administer a trust account for funding eradication and education projects.

The Council produces an annual [report card](#).

The Council has five primary goals:

1. *Promote cooperation, coordination, and communication* among government agencies, tribal governments, industry, nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and landowners relative to invasive species.
2. *Ensure long-term sustainable funding* and the use of an emergency fund to address the threat of invasive species to Oregon's economy, environment, and quality of life.
3. *Identify gaps in Oregon's legislation* and promote new and enhanced regulations to protect Oregon from the spread of invasive species and new introductions.
4. *Instill in all Oregonians and those visiting and conducting business with the state an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the threat invasive species* has to Oregon's economy, environment, and quality of life, ultimately leading to actions that lessen the threat.
5. *Promote systems, forums, and processes that result in efficient and cost-effective methods of research and surveillance of* invasive species in Oregon.

Examples of Invasive Species

Here are four examples of invasive species; the first 3 are currently found in Oregon:

- *Quagga and Zebra Mussels* are freshwater mollusks that typically have a dark and white (zebra-like) pattern on their shells. They are the only freshwater mollusks that attach to hard surfaces via hair-like threads. They have thin, fragile shells. They are native to the watersheds of Eastern Europe and western Asia. They were likely introduced to the Great Lakes of North America in the ballast water of cargo ships in the mid-1980s. Once established, zebra and quagga mussels can dramatically alter the ecology of a water body.
- *Feral Swine* are free roaming animals of the genus *Sus* that are not being held under domestic management or confinement. Swine have spread from Europe and Russia to habitats around the world via human introduction. They cause damage to

agricultural crops, rangelands and fish and wildlife habitat. Their destructive rooting and grubbing activities increase erosion and degrade water quality in streams; encourage the growth of noxious weeds; and cause millions of dollars in agricultural, environmental and property damage. Feral swine also prey on lambs, calves, fawns, upland birds and other types of terrestrial wildlife. Feral swine can transmit diseases such as brucellosis, pseudorabies, toxoplasma, Leptospirosis, *E. coli* and influenza to wildlife, livestock and humans.

- *Spartina*, commonly called "cordgrass," is native to the East Coast of the United States and Canada. Two of the four non-native species of cordgrass have been found in Oregon. Non-native *Spartina* converts estuarine mudflats and salt-marsh ecosystems into uniform expanses of dense grass. This invasive species alters the hydrology of estuaries by modification of tidal creeks and navigational channels, dominates newly restored tidal marshes, displaces thousands of acres of shorebird habitat, and drastically reduces biodiversity.
- *Spotted-Wing Drosophila* is a fruit fly native to Asia. It was first discovered in California in 2008. A 2009 survey in Oregon found the fruit fly from Portland south to Douglas County. Unlike most fruit flies, the spotted-wing drosophila attacks ripe, healthy fruit, and thus is of great concern to Oregon's fruit/berry industry.

The Economics of Invasive Species

Invasive species pose a threat to Oregon's economy. A total of 21 noxious weed species in Oregon cost the state \$125 million annually in production losses, fire damage and control costs. It is estimated that control costs to 13 hydropower facilities would reach \$25.5 million/year if zebra mussels became established.

Invasive Species [Online Hotline](#) and 1-866-INVADER

Early detection and rapid response (EDRR) is the most economic and effective way to protect Oregon from invasive species. The Oregon Invasive Species Online Hotline and 1-866-INVADER telephone line are designed to help all Oregonians become involved in this effort. By using the Online Hotline or calling 1-866-INVADER to report suspected invasive species, Oregonians can contribute vital early detection information to the experts best able to stop the spread of invasives.

100 Worst List

The Oregon Invasive Species Council publishes a list of the 100 most dangerous invasive species to *keep out* of Oregon. This list includes micro-organisms, aquatic and land plants, land invertebrates, fish, birds, mammals and reptiles. To be placed on the list, species must be non-native to Oregon and absent from the state or limited to a small, contained range within the state. Species are removed from the list when they have become established beyond a small, contained range, or are lower priority than another eligible species not currently on the list.

One entry on the 100 Worst List was recently discovered in Oregon. The “colonial tunicate,” a native of Japan, has been found in both Winchester Bay and Coos Bay. The potential economic consequences of this species includes fouling surfaces of boats, fishing nets, water intakes, docks and buoys as well as smothering shellfish beds.

Public Outreach and Education

Informing the public about the role they can play to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species is critical to the future of Oregon’s economy and natural resources. In 2008, the Council, with numerous partners, launched a Silent Invasion campaign to raise awareness about the threat of invasive species to Oregon. In 2010, the Council launched, in cooperation with Washington and Idaho, a tri-state outreach campaign to raise awareness about the movement of untreated firewood as a vector of invasive species. In 2011, the Council

participated in a tri-state firewood outreach campaign with the Idaho and Washington Invasive Species Councils. In 2012, the Council is partnering with Washington and Idaho on a “Squeal on Pigs” campaign that focuses on feral swine.

Recent Legislation

- **Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program (2009)**—Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the State Marine Board, and the Department of Agriculture (ODA) to operate check stations for the purpose of inspecting watercraft for aquatic invasive species. The Marine Board is directed to charge fees for aquatic invasive species prevention permits, including: \$5 for motorboats; \$5 for manually propelled boats over ten feet in length; \$20 for nonresidents; and annual fees for operators of boat liveries. The fee revenues are used for invasive species mitigation, including staffing five mobile units with two technicians per unit in each of the five ODFW regions to inspect boats (House Bill 2220).
- **Clean Launch Law (2009)**—Prohibits launching a boat if the boat has any visible aquatic species on its exterior hull, or aquatic invasive species within interior parts of boat (including the bilge). It authorizes the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, in consultation with ODA, to adopt rules to allow presence of certain aquatic species on or within a boat. A violation of the launch prohibition is designated a Class B violation, punishable by maximum fine of \$287 (House Bill 2583).
- **Invasive Species Control Account (2009)**—Establishes the Invasive Species Control Account. It authorizes the Invasive Species Council to spend money from the account to provide funding for efforts by agencies, organizations and individuals to eradicate or control new infestations and infections of invasive species (House Bill 2020).
- **Invasive Species Council Membership (2009)**—Places the Oregon Invasive

Species Council within ODA and adds two seats to the Council, one representative from the Department of Environmental Quality and one additional at-large member, bringing the total membership of the Council to 15 (House Bill 2213).

- **Feral swine control (2009)**—Prohibits selling or offering to sell a hunt for feral swine on public or private lands (House Bill 2221).
- **Adopt-a-Highway Program, Noxious Weed Removal (2009)**—Adds the removal of noxious weeds to Oregon's Adopt-a-Highway Program (House Bill 2424).
- **Integrated Weed Management (2009)**—Updates and consolidates Oregon's plant quarantine laws and enhances the definition of integrated weed management (House Bill 2212).
- **Releasing live fish into Oregon waters (2009)**—Increases penalties for releasing or attempting to release live fish into a body of water without a permit (Senate Bill 571).
- **Ballast water management funding (2011)**—Established vessel arrival fee to implement a private-public cost-share partnership to support aquatic invasive species prevention efforts associated with commercial shipping (Senate Bill 81).
- **Importation of untreated firewood (2011)**—Prohibits the importation onto Oregon of firewood harvested from outside the Pacific Northwest unless the wood has been treated (House Bill 2122).
- **Adopt-a-River (2011)**—Permits removal of invasive species under the Oregon Adopt-a-River Program (House Bill 3157).
- **County weeds programs (2011)**—Requires State Department of Agriculture to establish a program for issuing grants to counties for noxious weed control (House Bill 3358).
- **Watercraft inspection stations (2011)**—Authorizes the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Marine Board and State Department of Agriculture to require person to stop and submit recreational or commercial watercraft to inspection for aquatic invasive species (House Bill 3399).

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