

2016

Montana  
INVASIVE  
SPECIES  
Framework



# MONTANA FACES AN URGENT THREAT

**I**nvasive species include plants, animals, and pathogens that are non-native to our ecosystem and cause harm to natural and cultural resources, the economy, and human health.

Some non-native plants and animals have caused vast damage to our natural resources as well as our economy, despite the tireless efforts of many people to mitigate those impacts. The economic impact in the wake of the Yellowstone Fish Kill of August 2016 has not been calculated but is projected to be a significant hit to the local economy considering there are thousands of jobs linked to recreating on the Yellowstone.

But other species have not yet become established in Montana. Some, such as feral hogs, and the emerald ash-borer, could have devastating consequences. In recent years, we have greatly improved our system of perimeter defense and inspection stations. However, gaps remain. We are fortunate that Montana remains relatively free of invasive species that have wreaked havoc in other states.

That means we now have an opportunity that will not come again. It is imperative that we do all in our power to better protect Montana from new invasive introductions, even as we strengthen our ongoing campaigns against existing non-native species. The cost of more effective prevention, detection, response, and mitigation will not be insignificant. But if we were to fail, the

costs would be many times greater: enormous economic damage, unending costs of mitigation, and most of all, the priceless destruction of the natural and cultural heritage entrusted to us.

To address this complex problem, the Governor's Office established the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) in 2015. The Council is a diverse group of scientists and resource managers charged with developing **"a science-based, comprehensive program to identify, prevent, eliminate, reduce, and mitigate the impacts of invasive species in Montana."** The Council began their work with a Statewide Assessment or inventory of the individuals, groups, and agencies working on invasive species, their management priorities, and an estimate of their expenditures in March of 2016.

In April 2016, MISAC held an Invasive Species Summit in Helena to bring together stakeholders concerned about these problems and involved in addressing them. Nearly 200 people from across the state and beyond attended including elected officials from all levels of government, agency heads and staff members, scientists, ranchers and farmers, sovereign tribal government representatives, business people, non-governmental organization members, and many others took part. The Summit made clear how many of us recognize the importance of the invasive species issue and the critical need to strengthen our efforts.

Out of that summit, and the input and recommendations from hundreds of citizens and invasive species professionals, we have drafted this report: The Montana Invasive Species Framework. This is a living document positioned to be flexible based on emerging threats and needs. It is

intended to serve as a roadmap for better collaboration in Montana’s efforts to prevent and manage invasive species.

Thank you,

*Members of the 2014-2016  
Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council*

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<b>Thompson Smith</b>	CHARLO	Natural Resource Organizations, Flathead Basin Commission
<b>Virgil Dupuis</b>	PABLO	Tribal Government



# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Framework is to provide a road map for identifying goals to prevent and limit the negative effects of invasive species. The goals and objectives will be accomplished by implementing the tasks listed in the Framework. Implementation of the Framework will require collaboration and participation from invasive species stakeholders. Entities responsible for implementation should use this document as a guide for planning, collaborating, and executing invasive species work. The tasks outlined in the Framework are the synthesis of a shared vision drawn from the Assessment and Summit and subsequent Listening Sessions held across Montana in September and October, 2016.

The Framework has been organized around the focal areas of coordination, prevention, detection, rapid response, and control. The objectives that the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council recommends in the Framework are:

## Coordination .....6

- Respond to invasive species as a shared responsibility and a common priority across the state by integrating and strengthening Montana’s management.
- Engage in and support regional efforts to manage invasive species at the local, watershed, and regional levels to allow effective resource sharing, staff expertise, and perimeter defense.
- Build sustainable funding for a statewide, all-taxa invasive species program with common priorities while recognizing the authorities and resources of diverse partners.

## Prevention .....9

- Reduce the transport of invasive species into and within Montana by fully engaging existing entities and resources.
- Develop a shared, statewide set of priority invasive species to exclude from Montana based on their threat to economic, environmental, or cultural values.
- Increase involvement in preventing the spread of invasive species by engaging new audiences, motivating those who can interact with invasive species pathways, and supporting existing stewards.

## Detection ..... 11

- Identify invasive species and responsibly share the locations of high priority invasive species across jurisdictions in Montana to focus and improve management.
- Increase and improve search efforts for invasive species with an emphasis on newly establishing invasive species to contain their populations to a smaller area.
- Improve monitoring for invasive species populations and control efforts to ensure that management is measured, analyzed, and evaluated for effectiveness.

## Rapid Response ..... 13

- Develop a generalized rapid response plan for emerging invasive species.
- Improve the capacity to respond to new invasions of high priority invasive species to contain their spread, limiting the damage they cause.
- Prepare natural resources managers to effectively use all tools available to improve the outcomes of rapid response actions.

## Control ..... 15

- Grow both capacity and expertise in managing invasive species in Montana to improve program effectiveness.
- Expand collaborative working relationships with enforcement agencies to increase compliance with existing regulations for invasive species.
- Ensure that invasive species control restores the desired ecological, economic, and cultural values to the land that is being managed.



# COORDINATION

Coordinate invasive species efforts, focusing on common priorities, and sharing information regarding management outcomes to build a successful invasive species program.

## OBJECTIVE

**Respond to invasive species as a shared responsibility and a common priority across the state by integrating and strengthening Montana’s management.**

**TASK:** Extend the term of the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council for the purpose of increasing communication, engaging stakeholders, and implementation of our shared goals and priorities.

- Utilize the Council to communicate priorities for invasive species funding to state and federal leaders
- Improve coordination among agencies tasked with managing invasive species through working subcommittees of the Council that identify gaps, overlap, and maintain focus on common statewide priorities
- Identify a legislative liaison for invasive species issues
- Strengthen internal, regional, and international coordination

**TASK:** Expand the sense of stewardship expressed by Montanans to include a responsibility to identify and manage invasive species that harm economic, environmental, or cultural values.

- Engage legislators through a biennial invasive species field day or provide an invasive species day at the capitol

- Identify leaders who will provide education on invasive species within their organizations
- Engage landowners through evaluated, consistent messages and outreach efforts
- Build stewardship among anglers to contain the distribution of introduced sport fish and aquatic invasive species
- Identify and engage with new audiences

**TASK:** Evaluate the need for a comprehensive Montana Invasive Species Act that sets minimum priorities for state agency management of invasive species. The regulatory framework review should address the following:

- Identify regional regulatory tools for managing invasive species for their utility to Montana
- Identify and develop approaches to unify state statutes relating to invasive species
- Clarify relationships between principal government agencies and county weed districts
- Identify enforcement authority and gaps
- Examine the utility of developing a statewide invasive species coordinator position that functions as a single point of contact for this issue

**TASK:** Conduct a statewide all-taxa risk assessment and develop a cost benefit analysis that creates a comprehensive, prioritized list of invasive species for Montana. Use a cost-benefit analysis to identify species that should be top candidates for management and create a process for regulated parties to review and respond to revised control mandates.

**TASK:** Establish a biennial summit to share knowledge, measure progress, improve collaboration, and share success. Create a forum to address the following:

- Assess the state's highest priorities for invasive species management
- Provide a forum for researchers and managers to collaborate on invasive species research
- Assess and measure Montana's progress towards accomplishing Framework objectives and tasks
- Align invasive species management priorities with research opportunities through better collaboration among managers and researchers

**TASK:** Review existing plans that include invasive species and create a comprehensive all-taxa management plan that builds on existing authorities, resources, and experience.

## OBJECTIVE

**Engage in and support regional efforts to manage invasive species at the local, watershed, and regional levels to allow effective resource sharing, staff expertise, and perimeter defense.**

**TASK:** Encourage the establishment of cooperative invasive species management areas and support local coalitions in managing invasive species.

**TASK:** Promote cooperative invasive species management agreements (e.g. the Western Regional Panel, 100<sup>th</sup> Meridian Initiative, the Western Weed Coordinating Committee, Pacific Northwest Economic Region, invasive species councils, and other collaborations). Support Memoranda of Understanding among neighboring states, tribes, and provinces, and at all levels of government and private land owners to address Montana’s priority invasive species.

**TASK:** Build a shared clearinghouse for invasive species management tools (trainings, bulletins, etc.).

## OBJECTIVE

**Build sustainable funding for a statewide, all-taxa invasive species program with common priorities while recognizing the authorities and resources of diverse partners.**

**TASK:** Assess funding mechanisms for an all-taxa invasive species trust fund and fully fund the established aquatic invasive species trust fund.

**TASK:** Create a funders roundtable to coordinate state and federal grant programs and disbursements to focus on the highest priority invasive species.

**TASK:** Evaluate the current distribution of funding and consider shifting the distribution to strengthen prevention and outreach efforts, evaluate the need for new funding and align with priorities.

**TASK:** Increase the impact of existing funding by improving efficiency of existing grant programs:

- Improve consistency between grant programs with similar goals by using the same criteria
- Compile multiple small grants through cooperative agreements between state and federal funding agencies to reduce administrative costs while creating transparent fund distribution to maintain accountability
- For small, reoccurring grants that are carried out under existing agreements, develop a simplified form and reporting process

**TASK:** Develop sufficient and sustainable revenue for invasive species management that is linked to land and water uses.







# PREVENTION

Protect Montana's natural resources and reduce the future burdens of invasive species impacts by restricting the introduction of harmful species.

## OBJECTIVE

**Reduce the transport of invasive species into and within Montana by fully engaging existing entities and resources.**

- TASK:** Identify pathways that introduce invasive species into Montana and assess the resources and cooperation needed to reduce the likelihood of introductions.
- TASK:** Strengthen our perimeter defense system beginning with high-priority taxa for which prevention can be strengthened most quickly, efficiently, and effectively, while analyzing whether and how the program could include other taxa.
- TASK:** Assess funding levels required to meet enforcement goals and request authorization of stable funding levels for enforcement consistent with invasive species prevention objectives.
- TASK:** Develop pathway-specific regulations.
- TASK:** Assess the need to revise and create regulations addressing known pathways.
- TASK:** Fully implement and enforce existing pathway-specific regulations.
- TASK:** Consistently enforce existing penalties for the introduction and spread of invasive species.

## OBJECTIVE

Develop a shared, statewide set of priority invasive species to exclude from Montana based on their threat to economic, environmental, or cultural values.

**TASK:** Expand authority to an all-taxa list of invasive species.

**TASK:** Assess and periodically reassess priority species to exclude from Montana.

**TASK:** Support research on invasive species under changing climate and other environmental conditions to predict future risk.

## OBJECTIVE

Increase involvement in preventing the spread of invasive species by engaging new audiences, motivating those who can interact with invasive species pathways, and supporting existing stewards.

**TASK:** Expand the role of the existing state weed education program to include all taxa.

**TASK:** Research, evaluate, simplify, and share the messages and methods proposed for communicating about Montana's invasive species and take advantage of regional collaborations when appropriate to enforce and provide consistency in messaging.

**TASK:** Draft a statewide communication and outreach plan that is inclusive of non-traditional partners (e.g. Department of Education). Use this new document as a resource for identifying existing materials (clearinghouse) and experts who can provide technical support.

- Identify gaps in the current education effort and solutions to support invasive species education
- Support a K-12 curriculum element on invasive species and include funding for youth education in invasive species management
- Increase discussion and understanding of invasive species impacts as a way to engage the public in preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species
- Create and fund a comprehensive outreach campaign for invasive species and evaluate the effect on behavior and invasive species management





# DETECTION

Search for new populations of invasive species, monitor existing populations, and communicate findings so the risk they pose can be assessed and appropriately managed.

## OBJECTIVE

**Identify invasive species and responsibly share the locations of high priority invasive species across jurisdictions in Montana to focus and improve management.**

**TASK:** Host a statewide invasive species inventory workshop and develop a collaborative plan for ongoing efforts to collect, protect, and share invasive species data.

**TASK:** Evaluate hiring a statewide data coordinator to address sharing data about invasive species while protecting the privacy of landowners.

**TASK:** Identify, develop, and encourage citizens to contribute to a uniform database and create incentives to share reports of invasive species.

**TASK:** Promote citizen science to document invasive species records. Develop a specific focus for target audiences around invasive species identification, distribution, or control.

## **OBJECTIVE:**

**Increase and improve search efforts for invasive species with an emphasis on newly establishing invasive species to contain their populations to a smaller area.**

**TASK:** Assess and adopt a statewide list of existing and emerging invasive species priorities on an ongoing basis to inform policy, detection, management, and research.

**TASK:** Identify areas at risk of invasion by species that are established elsewhere, both within and beyond state borders.

**TASK:** Develop training and educational programs to improve our ability to identify species that are spreading from landscaping and gardens.

**TASK:** Establish dedicated early detection teams and funding to improve the likelihood of identifying newly establishing invasive species in Montana.

## **OBJECTIVE**

**Improve monitoring for invasive species populations and control efforts to ensure that management is measured, analyzed, and evaluated for effectiveness.**

**TASK:** Provide invasive species tools and resources to the public for improved knowledge and identification of invasive species.

**TASK:** Share and evaluate monitoring protocols and reporting of results in a way that is accessible and protects sensitive landowner data.

**TASK:** Require standardized monitoring as part of state-grant-funded invasive species activities and report results to create a shared adaptive management approach for invasive species.





# RAPID RESPONSE

Build capacity to eradicate, control, or contain populations of invasive species that have newly invaded and pose a risk to Montana.

## OBJECTIVE

Develop a generalized rapid response plan for emerging invasive species.

**TASK:** Review existing plans, summarize existing authorities, and assess gaps in regulatory tools that facilitate rapid response.

**TASK:** Identify planning needs to improve rapid response capacity.

**TASK:** Prioritize areas with high-value resources at risk of invasive species introductions.

## OBJECTIVE

Improve the capacity to respond to new invasions of high priority invasive species to contain their spread, limiting the damage they cause.

**TASK:** Develop necessary regulatory tools for rapid response to invasive species.

**TASK:** Draft formal agreements that reflect the resources needed to carry out generalized rapid response plans.

**TASK:** Map sensitive areas subject to restrictions on management actions that could limit the type of invasive species control efforts required by a rapid response.

**TASK:** Develop a cost-benefit analysis that creates a comprehensive, prioritized list of invasive species for rapid response in Montana.

**TASK:** Develop a dedicated rapid response fund and mechanism for approving rapid response actions that includes all-taxa.

**TASK:** Establish a process for revising priority rapid response, all-taxa invasive species lists.

## **OBJECTIVE**

**Prepare natural resources managers to effectively use all tools available to improve the outcomes of rapid response actions.**

**TASK:** Commit to the use of Incident Command System for invasive species rapid responses.

**TASK:** Develop and support carrying out joint exercises and training for managers working with invasive species.

**TASK:** Train staff in preparation for a rapid response.

**TASK:** Develop and maintain a directory of specialists (e.g. taxonomic experts, ecologists, enforcement, commercial pesticide applicators, policy and regulatory experts) in anticipation of multi-partner teams.





# CONTROL

Reduce the negative impact of established invasive species to Montana's economy, environment, and culture.

## OBJECTIVE

Grow both capacity and expertise in managing invasive species in Montana to improve program effectiveness.

**TASK:** Connect current research with managing invasive species through discussions, funding, and cooperative projects on priority invasive species.

**TASK:** Increase funding for cost-share with private landowners, tribes, and other stakeholders and use incentives to manage invasive species.

**TASK:** Identify a library of best control practices as well as uniform standards to train partners managing invasive species.

**TASK:** Identify, train, and support personnel who can provide invasive species control expertise (for species other than plants).

**TASK:** Hire full-time county weed coordinators or combined county coordinators and provide these staff with training on grant writing and property weed assessments.

**TASK:** Encourage land trusts and other established coalitions to work with landowners to manage invasive species.

**TASK:** Expand communication with landowners to improve understanding of existing regulations and science, and to encourage invasive species management through established programs and industry partners.

**TASK:** Establish a process for revising lists of priority invasive species that landowners are required to control, which informs and engages stakeholders, allows time for review and adoption, and clarifies compliance goals.

## **OBJECTIVE**

**Expand collaborative working relationships with enforcement agencies to increase compliance with existing regulations for invasive species.**

**TASK:** Provide more capacity and consistency of enforcement to implement invasive species regulations that currently exist.

**TASK:** Explore forming a regulatory oversight forum to provide a venue to tribal, state, federal, and local government to address enforcement issues that arise.

**TASK:** Provide counties with more authority to fully utilize and enforce existing weed laws including a tiered approach based on species priority level.





## OBJECTIVE

Ensure that invasive species control restores the desired ecological, economic, and cultural values to the land that is being managed.

**TASK:** Study the impact of invasive species on productivity, wildlife, or other values to demonstrate where invasive species management reduces harm.

**TASK:** Draft management plans to support control of established invasive species where reducing their impact provides measurable benefit.

**TASK:** Expand local expertise and capacity to carry out planning and environmental compliance for invasive species management.

**TASK:** Identify incentives for encouraging required control work.

**TASK:** Monitor the impacts of invasive species control efforts on non-target organisms.

**TASK:** Increase capacity for restoration and revegetation.

**TASK:** Celebrate success stories and make demonstration sites available to showcase how invasive species can be managed successfully.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Organizations who participated in the development of the Framework:

- Alberta Invasive Species Council
- Anaconda/Deer Lodge Weed District
- Avista
- Beaverhead County Weed District
- Bonneville Power Administration
- Broadwater Conservation District
- Broadwater County
- Broadwater County Weed Board
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management Dillon Field Office
- Bureau of Land Management Havre Field Office
- Bureau of Land Management Miles City Field Office
- Bureau of Land Management Butte Field Office
- Butte-Silver Bow County
- Carbon County Weed District
- Carter County
- Cascade Conservation District
- Clearwater Resource Council
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Creative Strategies LLC
- Crop Production Services
- Crow Tribe
- Customs & Border Protection
- Five Valleys Land Trust
- Flathead Basin Commission
- Glacier National Park
- Hanson Environmental
- Idaho Invasive Species Council
- Integrated Ag. Services Inc.
- Invasive Species Action Network
- Jefferson County Weed District
- Lakeland Restoration Services, LLC
- Legislative Fiscal Division—Montana
- Lewis & Clark Conservation District
- Madison County Weed Board
- McCone County
- McCone County Conservation District
- Milk River Watershed Alliance
- Milton Facilitation & Mediation
- Missoula County Weed District
- Missouri River Conservation Districts Council
- Montana Association of Conservation Districts
- Montana Catfish Association
- Montana Conservation Corp
- Montana Department of Agriculture
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana Department of Livestock
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Montana Noxious Weed Education Campaign
- Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund
- Montana State University
- Montana State University Extension
- Montana Trail Rider News
- Montana Trout Unlimited
- Montana Weed Control Association
- Montana Weed Management Services
- Monture Creek Land Management, Inc.
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- Northwestern Energy
- Oregon Invasive Species Council

- Pondera County
- Powell County Weed District
- Primum Terrae LLC
- Ravalli County
- Representative Janet Ellis
- Representative Mark Noland
- Representative Mike Cuffe
- Representative Ray Shaw
- Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable
- Rocky Mountain Research Station-USFS
- Rosebud County
- Salish Kootenai College
- Senator Jon Sesso
- Senator Pat Connell
- Sun West Ranch POA
- Sweetgrass County Weed District
- Teton County Weed District
- The Nature Conservancy
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- University of Montana
- USDA, APHIS, PPQ
- USDA, APHIS, VS
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USGS
- Valley County
- Washington Invasive Species Council
- Walleyes Unlimited
- Weed Management Services
- Wheatland County Weed District
- Yellowstone National Park

## Thank you to the following individuals who provided photographs:

- Alexis Bonogofsky
- Bryce Christiaens
- Caryn Miske
- Floyd Thompson
- Gary Adams
- Ian Foley
- Jane Mangold
- Jasmine Reimer
- Jon Siddoway
- Kyle Martens
- Patricia Gilbert
- Stephanie Hester
- Steve Tyrrel
- Steven Bekedam
- Thompson Smith
- Tom Boos





Funding for the Montana Invasive Species Strategic Framework provided by the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the Western Integrated Pest Management Center.

