



Policy Resolution 2022-11

Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management

A. BACKGROUND

1. Per Executive Order 13751, “invasive species” means “with regard to a particular ecosystem, a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human, animal, or plant health.” This definition can include aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals, forest and agricultural pests, and pathogens.
2. The introduction and spread of invasive species follow ecological conditions, not political boundaries, but questions of jurisdiction should not be ignored. Although effective management requires effective communications and collaborations between the political jurisdictions across those ecological conditions – including local, state, tribal, territorial, and federal entities – political boundaries should not be ignored in favor of a one-size-fits-all approach.
3. The 2017-2027 Hawai’i Interagency Biosecurity Plan defines biosecurity as “the set of measures taken to manage the risk from invasive species to the economy, environment, and health and lifestyle of the people.” This includes pre-border measures, border measures, post-border measures, and measures that increase public awareness about invasive species.
4. The Plant Protection Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106–224) defines “biological control” (biocontrol) as the use of biological control organisms as an “enemy, antagonist, or competitor used to control a plant pest or noxious weed.” When used properly, biocontrol is one tool that may be effective in efforts to manage and eradicate invasive pests.
5. States, tribes, territorial, and federal agencies may have different definitions of biosecurity, biological control and invasive species. They also may use regulatory and nonregulatory terms that are related to, but not synonymous with, the term invasive species, including pest, nuisance species, noxious weed, and injurious wildlife.
6. Invasive species have substantial negative effects on ecosystems, economies, and communities in the West. Studies have found that invasive species cost the U.S. more than \$120 billion every year, and the National Wildlife Federation estimates that 42 percent of threatened or endangered species are at risk due to invasive species. Invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass, medusahead, fountain grass, and ventenata pose a major threat to western rangelands by increasing the risk of wildfire, outcompeting native grasses, and diminishing soil and water quality. Aquatic nuisance species, including invasive quagga and zebra mussels, decrease water quantity and quality, impair native wildlife, harm hydroelectric and irrigation systems, and can impede maritime transport by fouling vessel hulls. Invasive pathogens such as Sudden Oak Death affect human welfare and health, and invasive species, can vector human diseases (e.g., Asian tiger mosquito). Invasive species damage multiple types of environments, from virgin forests to tidal marshes. Invasive

species, including the Cotton Seed Bug, Spotted Lanternfly, and European and Asian Gypsy Moths harm a wide variety of economies dependent on natural resources, including agriculture, ranching, tourism, energy production and transmission, and forest products. Invasive species threaten many native plants central to western life and the cultures of Native Americans, Native Hawai'ians, Alaska Natives, and other indigenous peoples.

7. Particular invasive species, especially plant species such as Tamarisk and Russian olive, contribute to drought and the overstressing of ecosystem services. These invasive species reduce flow rates, water quality, the availability of water, nutrients and habitat for native plants, and alter water temperature affecting native fish species, including native species which are threatened and endangered.
8. The spread of invasive species results from a combination of human activities, susceptibility of invaded environments, climate change, biology of the invading species, and dispersal. These characteristics are not dictated by geopolitical boundaries, but rather by ecosystem-level factors, which cross state and national borders. Continued warming of habitats, especially in coastal regions and areas with transitional ecoregions, will lead to further expansion of highly adaptable invasive species and reduction in native biodiversity levels. Scientists, private landowners, and state and federal land managers across the West have expressed the need to develop a more aggressive and cohesive strategy for invasive species management that includes prevention, monitoring, control, and eradication.
9. Direct, short-term impacts by invasive species stemming from human activities such as the overuse of recreation areas, an absence of responsible recreation practices, lack of education and signage, or poor watercraft decontamination compliance affect ecosystem health differently than long-term effects generated by climate change and should be addressed separately.
10. The impacts of invasive species on natural resources and human health and welfare are similar in scope and intensity to the threats posed by wildfire. Wildfire management on federal, state, tribal, and local land is coordinated through a sophisticated planning and response network, which includes the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), the National Incident Management Organization of the US Forest Service, and the Wildland Fire Leadership Council.
11. The proliferation of invasive annual grasses which outcompete native species to form monoculture habitats contribute to the increased severity, intensity, and frequency of destructive wildfires in the West. The cyclical nature of invasive annual grass fueled wildfires followed by invasions of burned landscapes – especially working lands, rangelands, and the wildland-urban interface – place at greater risk human health and safety, ecological stability, and western productivity. Wildfires fueled by invasive annual grasses especially impact sagebrush and bunchgrass ecosystems, and place at greater risk numerous threatened and endangered species including the Greater Sage Grouse, increasing the burden for state and federal resource managers.
12. Many invasive species were introduced, or their distribution was expanded, due to inadequate or antiquated federal and state regulations dealing with interstate transport, international trade and interstate commerce, a lack of communication and coordination

between land management agencies, and inadequate management of naturalized species which disturb intact native ecosystems.

13. Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) is a coordinated set of actions to find and eradicate potential invasive species in a specific location before they spread and cause harm. When early detection identifies a high-risk species, such as zebra or quagga mussels, use of an Incident Command System (ICS) is warranted. ICS is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management, including invasive species rapid response, by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
14. In the West, biosecurity and invasive species management is the responsibility of a wide network of state, federal, tribal, and local agencies. Federal agencies manage invasive species on federal lands and waters under a complex system of mandates and authorities.
15. Cooperative agreements, grants, and procurement contracts between federal agencies and state, tribal, and local invasive species management authorities are effective in establishing structured partnerships for collaborative invasive species management. The use of cooperative agreements lessens the burden on lead jurisdictions, while increasing the efficiency of invasive species management programs utilizing local collaborative goal setting. Additionally, cooperative agreements simplify project-based contracting utilizing the authorities of state and local government agencies. This can be extremely useful, especially where infestations extend across multiple landownerships or EDRR is the management objective.
16. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) allows states to enter into agreements with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM), permitting them to perform various land management activities on federal lands. These tools have been successfully used by forest and rangeland managers to achieve various land management objectives across federal, state and local government, and privately-owned lands.
17. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulation of interstate movement of commodities via airlines is focused on the protection of agricultural industries in the contiguous United States. This is particularly evident in Hawai'i, where baggage destined for the U.S. mainland is subject to federal inspection, while baggage moving from the mainland to Hawai'i is not.
18. Environmental DNA (eDNA) is DNA present in an environmental sample, as differentiated from traditional sampling of DNA directly from an intact organism. eDNA frequently is thought of as DNA in tissue and cells that have been shed by an organism but can also refer to DNA within an intact organism, if that organism is collected in the environmental sample. eDNA can be used to detect a wide range of organisms, including those that are endangered or invasive, and be used for both research and monitoring purposes. Detection of eDNA does not, in and of itself, constitute proof of detection that a water body contains live dreissenid mussels, but rather an indicator of likelihood that a water body was exposed to some level of live or dead dreissenid mussel eDNA (biological matter). The distinction between exposure to eDNA and the actual presence of a live organism is critical for resource managers both for communication of results and when determining when to initiate any response.

19. The West includes a number of highly important seaports on the U.S. mainland and across the Pacific region. Maritime vessels represent a primary pathway for the movement of aquatic invasive species. With the passage of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) in 2018, regulations regarding ballast water and other discharges are centralized under Section 312 of the Clean Water Act with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in coordination with states, setting environmental standards, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), in coordination with states, setting vessel requirements to meet those standards, and the USCG and interested states enforcing those requirements. In addition, states have authority to petition the EPA and the USCG to issue an emergency order or review any standard, regulation, or policy issued under VIDA.
20. State invasive species councils and invasive plant councils provide policy level direction, planning, and coordination for state-level biosecurity and invasive species prevention and management actions in the West. Councils are led by state agencies, non-profit organizations, industry, private landowners, and public-private partnerships. These groups empower those engaged in the prevention, detection, and eradication of invasive species, and serve as forums for invasive species education, communication, and strategic planning. Invasive species councils can collaborate on regional-level issues and benefit from mechanisms that help them to coordinate and solve cross-boundary, cross-jurisdictional challenges.
21. The eradication, control, or containment of invasive species is necessary for the preservation of ecosystem integrity, public health, and economic productivity across the west. While proactive management and the preservation of undisturbed habitat are preferable to post-invasion, resource-intensive activities, restoration efforts using native species are encouraged following management actions in order to prevent the reestablishment of invasive species and restore ecosystem services.
22. Prevention is a more cost-effective approach in defending areas of intact and unaltered native ecosystems than engaging in eradication control, or containment activities in habitats which have invasive species. Especially where terrestrial plant species are of concern, emphasis on the proactive maintenance of defensible cores is more viable than reactive efforts.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors intend to continue the charter of the Western Invasive Species Council (WISC) to help enhance coordination between existing state invasive species councils, improve communication and collaboration on regional biosecurity and invasive species control efforts, and to advocate for regional needs at the federal level. The WISC should be initially coordinated through the Western Governors' Association and should work to address cross-boundary and cross-jurisdictional challenges identified in this resolution.
2. Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration to support state, territorial, and tribal invasive species prevention, control and management programs and redouble efforts on federal lands. This should be accomplished through accountability and oversight of programs administered by the USDA, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Defense, the USCG, the EPA, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These programs provide valuable services in the prevention, detection and

elimination of invasive species, as well as coordination, public outreach, and communication.

3. Western Governors support research as needed to provide understanding of invasive species life potential range distribution, and to develop geographically-appropriate control measures. Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration to support much-needed research on biosecurity and invasive species, including programs under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and to facilitate funding mechanisms that enable land grant universities to conduct research and development of new pesticides. Institutions conducting research on biosecurity, biocontrol and invasive species control methods should look for opportunities to pool funding resources and exchange information across administrative lines. Invasive species managers and policymakers should be encouraged to develop new decision-making tools and economic analyses, as well as build and improve upon the decision-making tools and analyses currently in use. Invasive species managers should strive to incorporate economic analyses and regional-level, science-based decision-making tools into management decisions.
4. Western Governors strongly encourage expansion and creation of partnerships – such as invasive species councils with representation from local weed and pest districts, conservation districts, county governments, non-profit and industry organizations, local stakeholders, state, territorial, tribal, federal, regional and international groups and agencies – committed to preventing the spread of invasive species, averting new unauthorized introductions, responding rapidly to new introductions, and working together to find creative regional approaches for protecting and restoring natural, agriculture, power and water conveyance infrastructure, and recreational and cultural resources. Federal agencies, in coordination with associated states, territories, and tribes, should build a more sophisticated and centralized biosecurity and invasive species management network, including a National Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management Center based on the model of the NIFC.
5. Congress and the federal government should ensure that invasive species funding, including support for emergency response, is sustainable, timely, flexible and able to be maximized by federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local agencies with pooled resources and collaborative funding mechanisms. Federal funding, cooperative agreements grants, and procurement contracts for state and local biosecurity and invasive species management should be structured in a deliberate and transparent way that allows for the greatest amount of flexibility and long-term planning. When possible, federal agencies should look for collaborative projects and funding opportunities that multiply state resources and support jurisdiction-led biosecurity and invasive species management projects.
6. Western Governors call upon Congress to promote jurisdiction-directed programs to combat invasive species. Regional leadership and jurisdiction-directed programs provide place-based solutions tailored to unique regional or local conditions in land and aquatic ecosystems. The federal role should be one of partnership and policy-making that strengthen jurisdiction' on-the-ground efforts and mitigates risks associated with the movement of invasive species between jurisdictions.
7. Federal agencies are encouraged to expand the use of cooperative agreements with state territorial, tribal, and local governments and should ensure that they are approved in a

timely manner and in collaboration with implementing jurisdictional agencies. Federal agencies can also support invasive species management efforts by encouraging contract recipients to coordinate with state, territorial, tribal, and local invasive species management agencies, regulatory programs, and cooperative weed and invasive species management areas. State invasive species managers should consider using Good Neighbor Authority on USFS and BLM lands for cross-boundary collaborative invasive species control, management and eradication programs.

8. Federal actions should support jurisdictional biosecurity and invasive species management efforts by ensuring the timely approval of jurisdictional permits for biosecurity, quarantine, biocontrol, and rapid response actions. Federal agencies should consult with Governors early and substantively regarding biosecurity or invasive species management decisions that affect state resources and state actions.
9. Federal agencies should identify individuals within district and region offices that can be contacted and assist in the planning and implementation of local cross-boundary invasive species management programs.
10. The threats that invasive species pose to western landscapes and communities are serious and should be met with a sophisticated and coordinated response commensurate with the level of their impacts.
11. Prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective method of invasive species management. Effective biosecurity, prevention, and containment methods can mitigate the need for more expensive and burdensome control and eradication programs. Prevention strategies should be coordinated across state, national, and international lines. Jurisdictions should increase the use of innovative biosecurity prevention and detection programs, including increased use of electronic manifesting in interstate shipments for the purposes of inspection, and the use of canine detection resources.
12. Western Governors support the EDRR framework as a method to limit or eliminate new introductions and existing species expansion. Programs for the containment, control and/or eradication of invasive species must result in more on-the-ground prevention, management and eradication. The ICS should be strongly considered for use in instances of fast-spreading invasives and used as part of rapid response; state, territorial, tribal, federal, and local agencies should opt to practice and implement the ICS as part of rapid response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency can support these efforts by working with western states to create an ICS training module for invasive species rapid response. The Executive Branch can support jurisdiction-led rapid response programs by: 1) increasing federal funding for jurisdiction-led aquatic invasive species rapid response programs, including those that provide mechanisms for flexible, long-term support of jurisdictional early detection and rapid response efforts; 2) streamlining federal permitting and approval processes for treatment and management actions for new mussel detections; 3) creating a single federal authority for aquatic invasive species treatment permitting and approval in freshwater systems; and 4) simplifying reporting on new invasive mussel infestations by creating a single federal point of contact for new mussel detections.
13. Federal agencies should support state, territory, and tribal efforts to identify, study and approve the use of biological control organisms. Federal permitting models should be

structured to ensure biocontrol can be utilized by jurisdictional entities in a safe and timely manner. Biocontrol research is encouraged at a regional level, with biocontrol research information being encouraged to move freely between institutions and across state lines. Invasive species managers in the West would benefit from the creation of a new, state-of-the-art biological control facility, as well as a collaborative, multi-agency plan for maintaining and staffing new biocontrol facilities at a level that more adequately meets the expanding needs of the region. Furthermore, effective biocontrol, biosecurity, and invasive species research depends upon a highly skilled workforce. Jurisdictional entities should collaborate with universities to support programs essential to biosecurity and invasive species management, such as botany, zoology, plant pathology, taxonomy, systematics, and related fields.

14. The containment of invasive quagga and zebra mussels at infested waters in the West depends upon the collaboration and mutual effort of federal, state, tribal and local agencies. Many jurisdiction-led management programs benefit from federal cooperation and funding, and jurisdictions should be encouraged to sustain and expand these effective partnerships as necessary. However, to adequately protect the West from the movement of aquatic invasive species, federal agencies must be able to act as full partners in invasive species containment efforts and must have the funding and authorities necessary to contain invasive species within lands and waters under their jurisdiction. To this end, federal agencies, including the National Park Service and BLM, should be vested with clear authority to manage watercraft upon their departure from infested waterbodies under federal jurisdiction.
15. Integrated pest management, biocontrol, outcome-based grazing, and targeted grazing can be effective tools to control the spread of invasive annual grasses. Federal, state, territorial, tribal and local agencies should view invasive annual grasses as a regional threat and strive to identify and implement cross-boundary projects to control invasive annual grasses at a regional level. Such projects should include those utilizing alternative management techniques such as outcome-based grazing.
16. Agricultural industries in the Pacific states and territories need to be similarly protected from the risk of interstate movement of invasive species from the contiguous U.S. mainland. USDA quarantines and commodity inspections should incorporate the priorities of the West, including non-contiguous states and territorial islands in the western region. This includes maintaining federal quarantines on pests that have not yet reached the West, like the emerald ash borer, and adopting policies that adequately protect Pacific states and territories, such as inspection of baggage moving from the contiguous U.S. to non-contiguous areas.
17. Detection of eDNA, in and of itself, is insufficient to meet detection standards for classifying a water body for the presence of dreissenid mussels. States should respond to and share eDNA results as they deem appropriate. Additionally, state, federal and local agencies and regional coordinating groups should develop and implement a set of best practices for conducting eDNA monitoring and incorporating positive detection results into rapid response strategies.
18. To effectively prevent, contain, and control invasive species, federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local invasive species managers need federal laws that support on-the-ground action.

Western Governors support a states-led review of federal biosecurity and invasive species statutes, including the Lacey Act and the National Invasive Species Act, to evaluate how they support on-the-ground management, identify any gaps in their application, and ensure that their structure and implementation are able to address 21st century biosecurity and invasive species challenges. Of particular interest are opportunities to expand the taxonomic scope of the Lacey Act to benefit U.S. biosecurity.

19. As directed by the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency shall consult with Western Governors and work closely and collaboratively with states on the implementation of that act to ensure that state and regional aquatic invasive species and water quality resource protection needs are met across the West and the Pacific. The U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency shall consult and collaborate with interested states on the development of evidence-based risk assessments and shall work together to assess the efficacy of policies and tools that may be used in mitigating the impact of various types of vessel discharges. Western Governors believe that protecting the diversity of marine habitats in western states and Pacific territories is best accomplished by working with states that have the greatest knowledge of their ecosystems and invasive risks.
20. Accurate, standardized, and accessible geospatial data is essential to biosecurity and invasive species management in the West. Western Governors support efforts to standardize and centralize invasive species occurrence data, streamline the exchange of data between the nation's major invasive species data aggregators, and increase the accessibility of data to federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local land and resource managers.
21. The proliferation of invasive annual grasses which outcompete native species to form monoculture habitats contribute to the increased severity, intensity, and frequency of destructive wildfires in the West. Western Governors support proactive and adaptive management, including landscape scale approaches, fuel treatments, and defensive prevention of intact cores as critical components of invasive annual grass management regimes.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

This resolution will expire in June 2025. Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a semiannual basis. Please consult <http://www.westgov.org/resolutions> for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.