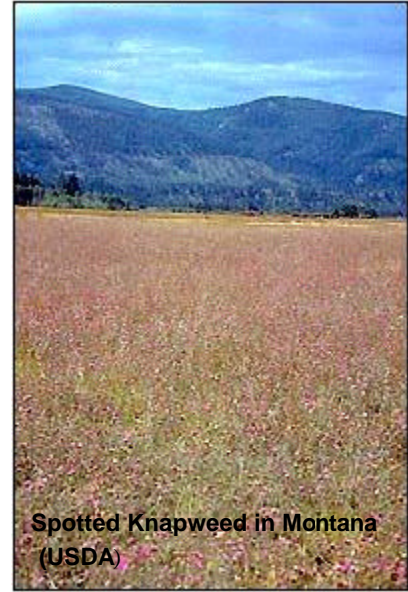


# INVASIVE SPECIES IN MONTANA

## What is an invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, or other organisms that are introduced to a given area outside their original range and cause harm in their new home. Because they have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction, they usually spread rampantly. Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity and impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health.

- The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at **\$137 billion** annually.
- Exotic weeds infest over 8 million acres of lands in Montana.
- Grazing losses from leafy spurge infestations in Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas amount to \$129 million and represent the potential loss of 1,433 jobs



## Invasive Species in Montana: A Quick Look

Montana has been invaded by a number of harmful exotic plants and animals. Here is a quick look at some of the worst current and potential invaders:

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Spotted Knapweed	Plant	Europe	Over 5 million acres in MT	Displaces native plants, reduces forage value, increases erosion; losses to Montana's livestock industry projected to be \$42 to \$155 million
Leafy spurge	Plant	Eurasian, brought to U.S. in late 1800s	Over 600,000 acres in MT	Irritant "latex" in plant causes blisters and blindness; cattle will not graze in areas with >20% cover by spurge.
White Pine Blister Rust	Fungus	Probably Asia, entered U.S. in 1910 on infected pine seedlings from Europe	Glacier NP and Bob Marshall Wilderness	The rust has reduced inland Northwest white pine stands by 90 to 95 percent, has killed half of white pines in Glacier NP.
Purple Loosestrife	Aquatic Plant	Europe and Asia; introduced in 1800s as an ornamental and medicinal plant	475,000 acres in 42 states, including 10 MT counties	Displaces native wetland plants; has less food and habitat value for waterfowl and other wildlife
Salt Cedar	Shrub/ Small tree	Asia, introduced as ornamental and windbreak in 1800s	Over 1 million acres of southwestern streambanks	Lowers stream flows and water tables, increases soil salinity, displaces native species and wildlife habitat
New Zealand Mud Snail	Mollusk	New Zealand, first discovered in Snake River in 1987	Established in Madison River and every drainage in Yellowstone	Can reach densities of 700,000 snails per square meter. Outcompete native wildlife and provide poor food source for fish.

Name	Type	Origin	Extent	Damage
Whirling disease	Parasite	Europe, introduced accidentally in 1950s	Found in 20 western states, infects 95 water bodies in MT	Disease affects trout and salmon; Madison River has seen 80% declines in wild trout

## What Congress Can Do:

### A. Make Prevention Our Top Priority

- Reverse current U.S. policy on the intentional import of live plants and animals, that is, switch from a “dirty” to a “clean” list approach that requires screening for invasiveness before import and which keeps out or limits import of species so as to prevent harm to native species or ecosystems – and make the legislative changes to do so.
- Substantially cut the unintentional introduction of aquatic invaders by overseeing federal standard-setting on the discharge of ballast water in the United States, supporting the development of technology to meet these standards; ensuring that agencies monitor and enforce compliance; and reauthorizing the 1996 National Invasive Species Act in the strongest and most comprehensive form.
- When considering, reviewing, or approving trade agreements, rigorously address invasive species, e.g., by allowing for restriction of imports of non-native species that are invasive elsewhere and by identifying pathways by which inadvertent introductions travel so that they may be interrupted.

### B. Make Federal Agencies More Effective

- Use oversight authority to ensure that all federal agencies immediately and strongly implement that part of Executive Order 13112 that asks them to identify and reduce actions that introduce or spread invasive species in the United States or elsewhere.
- Appropriate adequate funds so that federal agencies have the resources to address invasive species problems promptly and comprehensively over the long-term.
- Strengthen the structure and leadership of the National Invasive Species Council and prompt more aggressive implementation of its National Management Plan.
- Oversee the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure that the agency and its Administrator are committed to protecting biological diversity as well as agriculture.
- Evaluate the serious problems with border inspection for pests, weeds, and pathogens, e.g., in staffing and cross-department coordination, exacerbated by moving these functions into the Department of Homeland Security and amend its authorizing legislation if needed.

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