



# Invasive Plants – Engaging the Public and Policy Makers

---

Gordon Brown  
Department of the Interior  
National Invasive Species Council Liaison

# Strange Days on Planet Earth

---

- Impacts are accelerating: global change and biofuels don't help
- Natural areas increasingly at risk – will restoration succeed?



# Invader Fuels a Fiery Cycle

By TOM KENWORTHY  
Washington Post Staff Writer

ELKO, Nev. The wildfires began in early August with almost unimaginable speed and fury.

On the night of Aug. 4, 8,275 lightning strikes were recorded in one 12-hour period in northern Nevada, and by the next day some 300,000 acres of rangeland were on fire or already burned. Within just five days, more than 1 million acres had been burned. By the end of the month, more than 1.5 million acres in Nevada had been charred—an area 40 times as large as the District.

Fire has always been a natural part of the Great Basin, the massive basin and range country between the Rockies and Sierras that includes most of Nevada, western Utah, southern Idaho and southeast Oregon and that appears to motorists hurtling between Salt Lake City and Reno as a desert wasteland. Of the major plant communities that exist here—sagebrush, salt desert shrub and pin-

study and manage the land here, the fires that now occur far more frequently and burn far more of the landscape are a stark reminder of an ecological crisis affecting much of the Great Basin.

The big villain here is cheatgrass, *Bromus tectorum*, an annual bromegrass native to Eurasia. Introduced into this country around the turn of the century, cheatgrass quickly found a niche in the West, where overgrazing by cattle and sheep in the late 1800s had weakened native perennial bunchgrasses. Today, cheatgrass occupies millions of acres of land in the West, and it has fundamentally altered the normal fire timetable.

"Before we had

rel tail, indian rice grass and idaho fescue—"are all pretty well adapted to fire," said Bob Means, a fire ecologist with the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which

oversees 75 million acres in the Great Basin.

In the low-precipitation areas where cheatgrass thrives, the invasion has dramatically shortened the intervals between fires and opened up the landscape for opportunistic noxious weeds such as knapweed and rush skeletonweed. "Cheatgrass has totally changed the fire regime, from 50- to 100-year intervals to 5- to 10-year intervals," said Means. "It burns, and each time it burns it pushes farther into



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FEDERAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER

# EO 13112 – balancing commerce & conservation

---

- History – tragedy of the commons, spoke & wheel
- Policies and people – how to enrich social networks
- Taking credit for success – mobilizing citizens for science
- Forecasting and technology – iPhones and Facebook
- Global change and biofuels – actors in search of a play
- National Centers for Invasive Species



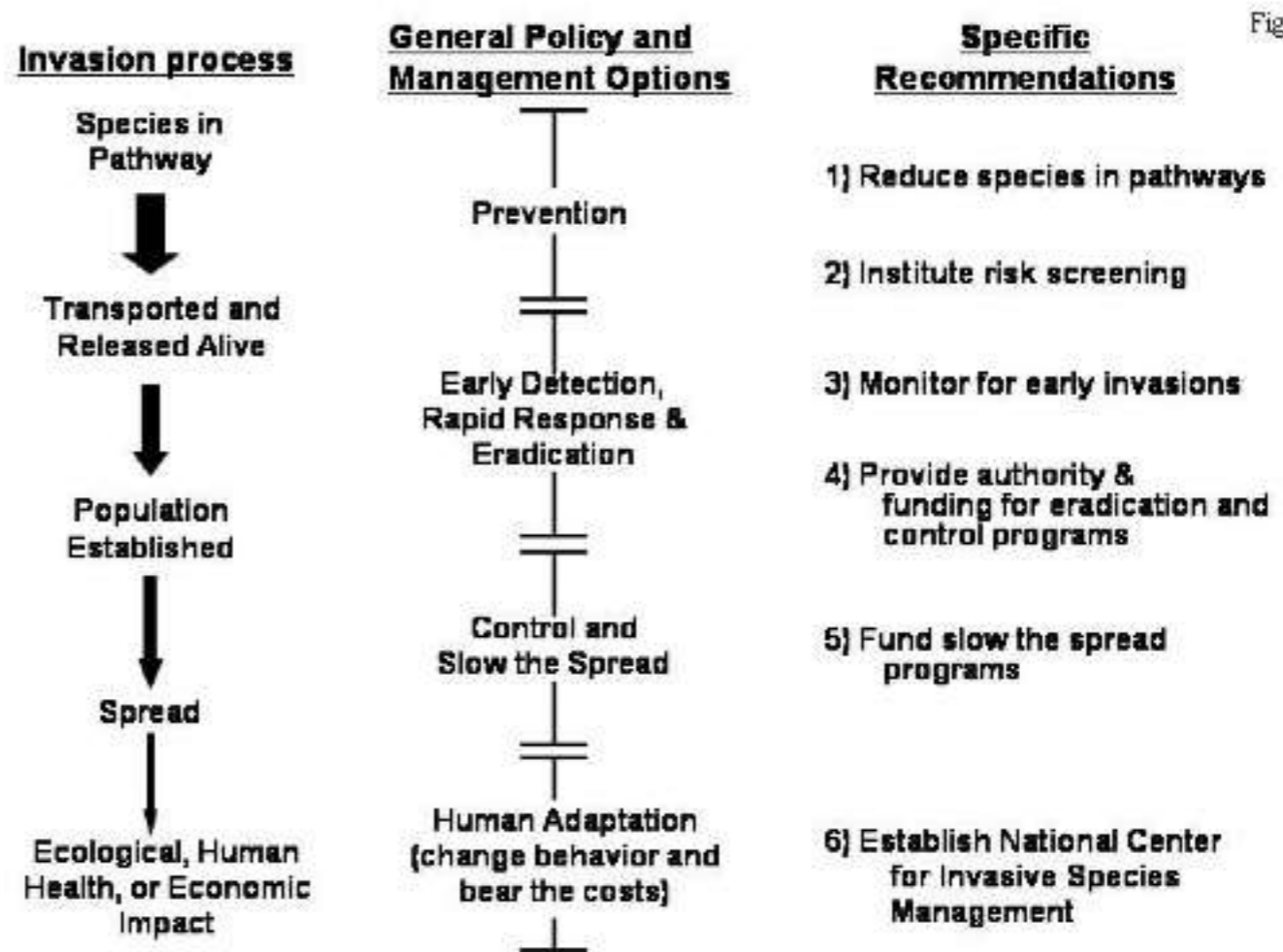
# Section 2 & World Policy

---

- Weed management areas – radical democracy
- Kirstenbosch declaration & St. Louis protocol
- Social marketing – Hummers & Habitattitude™
- Do no harm – accountability and performance
- CBD, IPPC, OIE, NAPPO, CEC, and Weeds Across Borders
- ISAC – our stakeholder entry point for spreading the word
- Definitions white paper / EDRR fund / Crosscut budget



# Lodge et al. -- ESA





Now what???

People & degrees of relation

# Kinds of 'harm'

---

Industry reps...just joking!  
Restoration as 'the goal'  
Native and non-native species  
Save the last of the least  
Focus on federal land overlays  
Defend the least invaded  
Congressional tours & the press







Team Tamarisk – the evolution of an idea – now starring beetles!

# New Administration

---

- Program support for government at all levels
- Outreach - [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov)
- Grants for science & outreach
- Citizen science - handhelds
- NGO sponsorship for ads
- Jobs stimulus - “Invasicorps”



# More questions?

---

- Gordon Brown, DOI Invasive Species Coordinator
- [a\\_gordon\\_brown@ios.doi.gov](mailto:a_gordon_brown@ios.doi.gov)
- 202-354-1879

