



Policy Resolution 2025-08

Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management

A. **BACKGROUND**

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. Often called invasive, injurious, or noxious, these species represent an ever-present and increasing threat to the habitats and economies of the West. Cheatgrass degrades native grasslands home to at-risk native species and reduces the value of forage for ranchers. Invasive freshwater mussels clog irrigation pipes, disrupt nutrient dispersal, and physically injure recreators. Pests not caught at ports of entry endanger the framework of western agriculture and forestry. Since the Biosecurity and Invasive Species initiative, Western Governors have advocated for partnerships, strategies, and technologies which can protect the West from invasive species.

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 and subject matter experts, improve communication and collaboration on regional biosecurity and invasive species control efforts, and advocate for regional needs at the federal level. The WISC should be 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 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of the Interior, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Commerce. 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' lifecycle potential and 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- and sea-grant universities and National Laboratories 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. EPA, USDA, and

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should likewise pursue opportunities to streamline the approval of new pesticides and biocontrol species as they are developed and become available. 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 introductions of non-natives, responding rapidly to new introductions, leveraging federal funds with locally matched funds, and working together to find creative regional approaches for protecting and restoring natural, agricultural, recreational, and cultural resources and power and water conveyance infrastructure. Federal agencies, in coordination with associated states, territories, and tribes, should continue to build on the U.S. Geologic Survey's Siren System and the National Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Framework to support a more centralized biosecurity and invasive species management network.
5. Congress and the federal government should ensure that invasive species funding, including support for emergency response, is sustainable, timely, flexible in financial and technical assistance match requirements, 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 locally led biosecurity and invasive species management projects.
6. Western Governors call upon Congress to promote locally- and regionally-directed programs to combat invasive species. Regional leadership and locally- and regionally-directed programs provide place-based solutions tailored to the unique conditions in western land and aquatic ecosystems. The federal role should be one of partnership and policy making that strengthens jurisdictions' 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 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 and agreement participants 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 and applicable federal authorities should consider using Good Neighbor Authority on certain federal lands for cross-boundary collaborative invasive species control, management and eradication programs.

8. Federal actions should support locally and regionally led biosecurity and invasive species management efforts by ensuring timely information sharing and the approval of local and regional policies and permits for biosecurity, quarantine, biocontrol, and rapid response actions to prevent the establishment of new species. 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 subject matter experts 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 invasive species pose to western landscapes and communities are serious and should be met with a sophisticated, coordinated, timely, and sustained 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, and among federal agencies. Federal agencies should increase inspection, documentation, timely identification, and reporting to state agencies, and maintain adequate staffing levels at ports of entry. Additionally, the use of innovative biosecurity prevention and detection programs, such as electronic manifesting in interstate shipments for the purposes of inspection and the use of canine detection resources, should be increased.
12. Western Governors support the EDRR Framework as an effective approach to eliminate new introductions and limit 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 Incident Command System (ICS) should be strongly considered for use in instances of newly-introduced or 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. Federal agencies can support these efforts by working with western states to create training and exercise resources for invasive species rapid response. The Executive Branch can support jurisdiction-led rapid response programs by:
 - a) increasing federal funding for jurisdiction-led invasive species rapid response programs, including those that provide mechanisms for flexible, long-term support of jurisdictional early detection and rapid response efforts;
 - b) streamlining federal permitting and approval processes for treatment and management actions for new invasive species detections;
 - c) creating a single federal authority for aquatic invasive species treatment permitting and approval in freshwater systems; and
 - d) simplifying reporting on new invasive species infestations by creating a single federal point of contact for new species detections.

13. Federal agencies should support state, territorial, 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 aquatic invasive species such as quagga, zebra, and golden mussels in 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, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management, should be vested with clear authority and sufficient funding to manage watercraft upon their departure from infested waterbodies under federal jurisdiction. Western Governors also urge the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and Congress to support state agencies in their efforts to fund state-operated watercraft inspection and decontamination stations through funds collected through vessel registration and numbering fees.
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 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 alone is insufficient to meet detection standards for classifying a water body as positive for Dreissenid and Mytilid mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Jurisdictions should respond to eDNA results as deemed appropriate by the state regulatory

agency and share information externally following combined decision making by regulatory and management agencies. Additionally, state, tribal, federal, and local agencies and regional coordinating groups should develop agreements or memoranda of understanding to document best practices, roles, responsibilities, and communications processes for 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 state-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 continue to expand the taxonomic scope of the Lacey Act to benefit U.S. biosecurity.
19. As directed by the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, USCG and EPA 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 Act authorized Governors to petition EPA to review any standard of performance, regulation, or policy when new science becomes available. EPA's 2024 final rule further solidifies the authority for Governors to petition EPA proposing an enhanced standard of performance or other requirements. USCG should continue and expand consultation and collaboration with interested states on the development of national enforcement standards. USCG, EPA, and states 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 marine resources, economy, and diversity of habitats in western states and Pacific territories is best accomplished by working with states that have the greatest knowledge of their ecosystems and invasive species risks. Western Governors encourage federal agencies to collaborate and provide technical assistance to states and territories that seek to develop and improve their own ballast water and biofouling programs in the form of consultation and best practices guidance.
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 through data sharing agreements between relevant jurisdictional managers, and increase the accessibility and interoperability 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, contributes to the increased severity, intensity, and frequency of destructive wildfires and other ecosystem impacts in the West. Western Governors support proactive and adaptive management and planning, including landscape scale approaches, voluntary treatments on private lands, fuel treatments, and defensive protection of intact cores as critical components of invasive annual grass management regimes. Western Governors also support linking these activities with state climate and resilience planning to strengthen the West's ability to build more resilient landscapes and agricultural systems.

22. Historically, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service provided national level coordination and served as the lead federal agency for aquatic invasive species issues through the NOAA Aquatic Invasive Species Program (AISP). AISP was defunded over a decade ago, though the services provided by AISP are still needed to support marine aquatic invasive species prevention and management efforts. Western Governors support the reactivation and full funding of the services provided by AISP.

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 2028. 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.