

1. *What prompted the Forest Service to develop this Invasive Species National Strategy?*

There are approximately 750 million acres of forested land in the United States, about one-third of the total land area. National Forest System lands cover 191 million acres of forested land. Second only to direct habitat destruction, invasive species are the greatest threat to native forest species and rangelands. The accelerated spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species costs the United States billions of dollars each year in economic damages and control measures. The Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has identified invasive species as one of four major threats to natural resources. Realizing our significant role in addressing invasive species threats at the local, state, national, and international levels, the Forest Service decided to develop a National Strategy to focus in a cohesive fashion on the many and varied invasive species activities already underway across the agency.

2. *Who does the Forest Service work with?*

The Forest Service works collaboratively with other agencies involved in invasive species including Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the other government departments in the National Invasive Species Council including tribal governments. In addition, the Forest Service works with State Foresters, State departments of agriculture, universities and international partners.

Invasive species know no boundaries, and the process that has proven most successful against these insidious invaders is the ‘team approach’. The Forest Service is committed to collaborating with other groups (including nongovernmental organizations) and agencies in the battle against invasive species. As the Forest Service implements the Strategy and increases its activities against invasive species, it will need partners from all levels and interests. The Forest Service recognizes that much of the knowledge base and skills needed to win the battle against invasive species will be found outside of the agency. The Strategy is a public document that will help guide Forest Service programs to reach the goal. We welcome and encourage participation in its implementation.

2. *How was the National Strategy developed?*

A multidisciplinary team developed the Strategy and set the pace for an invasive species program. The Strategy is based on science to prioritize work, increased collaboration on the solutions to invasive species problems, and improved systems of accountability to ensure the most efficient use of limited resources at all levels of the organization.

3. *How will this Strategy improve the invasive species work of the Forest Service?*

The National Strategy builds on existing successful activities that the Forest Service conducts against invasive species and joins them together in a cohesive fashion within four program elements and associated common themes that support all program activities in the agency. Under the Strategy, invasive species work will focus on one common goal: “Reduce, minimize, or eliminate the potential

for introduction, establishment, spread, and impact of invasive species across all landscapes and ownerships.” In addition, the Strategy provides not only broad strategic guidance for operations, but also priority (short term) actions to help advance action at the local level and improve long term success across the agency.

4. *What programs are included in the National Strategy?*

The Strategy emphasizes expanding partnerships and collaboration in all of the four program elements: (1) Prevention, (2) Early Detection and Rapid Response, (3) Control and Management, and (4) Restoration and Rehabilitation. Common to each program element is the refinement of existing leading edge technology and development of new ones being undertaken by Research and Development. Examples of other aspects of the Strategy that will improve Forest Service work against invasive species include streamlining processes and procedures for environmental analyses, improving the budget structure and flexibility for invasive species program work, establishing and distributing additional guidance on best management practices, and increasing our support and coordination with local, state, tribal, national, and international organizations.

6. *Will the strategy focus only on National Forests and Grasslands?*

No. Forest Service responsibilities extend across the United States from Alaska and Hawaii to the Caribbean and New England on all public and private forested lands. National forests and grasslands are found in 44 states and Puerto Rico with offices in over 650 communities nationwide. We have established relationships in thousands of communities across the country and to be successful against invasive species will require us to work across all jurisdictions and land ownerships, including working with our international neighbors. National Forests and Grasslands are a major component of the landscape comprised of 191 million acres of forests and rangelands. The Forest Service provides assistance to States and private forest landowners through their respective State Foresters and Departments of Agriculture.

7. *What are the next steps after the Forest Service releases the National Strategy?*

The National Strategy includes a set of priority actions for implementation across the agency. Some of those activities are the responsibility of the National Program offices to implement, others will be addressed at the regional or station level. One of the first steps will be to organize regional level invasive species issue teams consisting of representatives from different disciplines and programs. In the case of the National Forest System invasive species program, key next steps include developing a national policy for invasive species management, improving the budget formulation structure for the program, completing the development of invasive species information systems and data management applications, and increasing our activities to market and expand our partnerships at the local, state, and national and international levels.

8. *Is there a research component to the National Strategy?*

Yes, the intent of the strategy is to base all management actions on a sound science base. There is a need for continuing research to improve prevention strategies, provide new techniques for early detection and rapid response, design effective control and management strategies and provided a framework for restoration and rehabilitation of affected lands. Current research activities address pathways of spread for invasives species, genetic

techniques to detect invasive organisms, biocontrol agents and breeding for resistance to invasive pests.

9. *What are recent Forest Service activities involving invasive species?*

- The Early Warning System Steering Committee met this week to begin work on strategic direction for the EWS as described in Title VI of the HFRA.
- The Invasive Issues Team will hold a national conference on invasive species in October 2005.
- The Forest Service has developed a charter for the Early Warning Assessment Center in Prineville, Oregon and work has begun to do the same for a similar Center to be located in Asheville, North Carolina.

10. *What are some of the 2004 accomplishments using the authorities of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act?*

- Using the authorities under Title IV the Forest Service has six landscape scale research projects planned on nearly 3,000 acres. The purpose of the projects is to conduct landscape-scale applied research to address insect infestation and diseases.
- Using the authorities under Title VI the Forest Service established the EWS and created the Prineville Center and work has begun for establishing an eastern Center in Asheville, North Carolina.

11. *What will the Prineville Threat Assessment Center do?*

- Serve the needs of land managers in the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Tribes, state agencies, industry, and the public at large.
- Support the development of science-based policy to protect wildlands in the West from severe disturbance agents such as invasive plants, insects and diseases, fire, and weather including drought.
- Generate and integrate knowledge and information to provide credible prediction, early detection, and quantitative assessment of environmental threats in the western United States.
- Develop effective policy for and management of potential and existing environmental threats to western wildlands with the following desired outcomes:
 - Reduced likelihood of severe impacts caused by insects, diseases, fire, weather and other agents through better informed management strategies.
 - Improved treatment priorities to optimize results from FS capital investments.