

Testimony on the Oregon Department of Forestry's Invasive Species Work Plan (Proposed Issue 8)

The Nature Conservancy
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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit membership organization operating in all 50 states and more than 30 countries.

The Nature Conservancy is a committed partner in the battle against invasive species. The Conservancy considers invasive species to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in North America and Oregon. In Oregon, we have been pioneering techniques and tools that are working to halt the spread of invasive species, including a system of pocket computers and satellite technology to map and track them. We also piloted a volunteer-based Early Detection and Rapid Response network called 'Invasives Watch' to prevent the establishment and spread of key invasive species, and we devote hundreds of hours each year to treating and containing current infestations on and around our preserves throughout the State.

The Nature Conservancy has been a long-time supporter of the efforts of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), and we are appreciative of the leadership and hard work of the Director and staff to address the threat of invasive species across our state's forests. We applaud your initiative because it will take all of us working together to save Oregon and Oregon's forests from invasive species.

Oregon Public Broadcasting's (OPB) documentary 'The Silent Invasion' premiered last week on Earth Day. It presents all of us with a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the tremendous damage invasives cause on Oregon's economy, environment, and forests -- and to move to solutions. We are coordinating with Ted Lorenson and with OPB to get copies of the documentary for Board Members who are interested, and we encourage all of you to watch it.

The lasting effects of invasive species on forests are tragic. To cite two examples:

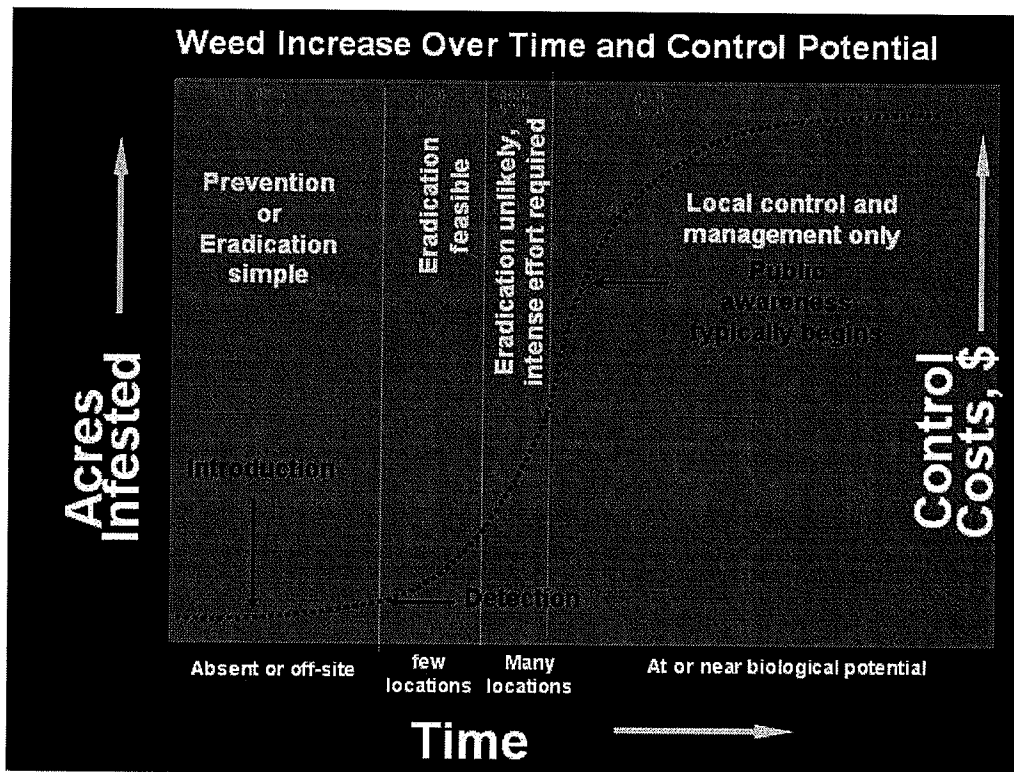
- The Emerald Ash Borer was first discovered near Detroit, Michigan in 2002. Since then it has killed more than 30 million ash trees in SE Michigan alone and has been detected in seven states.
- Every year since 1980 the Gypsy moth has defoliated more than 1 million acres of hardwood forest, and in 1981 the Gypsy moth defoliated a record 12.9 million acres, an area the size of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. The Gypsy moth is now in Oregon.

We believe that your efforts are crucial to protect Oregon's forests, and the Invasive Species Work Plan (Proposed Issue 8) is an excellent approach. To help with this effort, we want to emphasize a couple of key points – and offer our support on these priorities:

- **Review Current Programs and Regulations.** We support the Work Plan's initial focus on an overall assessment. Objective 1 (a review of invasive species responsibilities and programs of other agencies and organizations) and Objective 2 (a review of statutes and rules) are both

necessary to identify gaps, opportunities and redundancies in the State's effort to address invasive species which will help clarify roles for the Oregon Department of Forestry.

- **Coordinate with the Oregon Invasives Species Council.** Coordination with the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC) is a key for success. OISC plays a valuable coordinating role because too often the responsibility for a species does not clearly fall within one Agency. We applaud ODF's new seat on the Council.
- **Engage in Invasives Summit.** We urge the Board of Forestry and the Department of Forestry to engage in the Invasives Summit planned for this summer. Governor Ted Kulongoski is helping to lead this Summit, which will include Public Agency directors, elected officials, invasive experts, private property owners, OISC members, and the public. The summit will help advance OISC's 2009 Legislative Agenda, including concepts to increase funding to address invasive species.
- **Ensure Adequate Funding.** A Strategic Plan to address invasives is only as good as its ability to be implemented: funding is necessary. For example, the Oregon Department of Agriculture drafted the Oregon Noxious Weed Strategic Plan in 2001 – an excellent plan that unfortunately still lacks resources to be fully implemented.
- **Focus on Prevention, Early Detection and Rapid Response.** Prevention & Early Detection-Rapid Response are the most cost-effective strategies to prevent the establishment of new invasives and the spread of existing ones. The following chart illustrates the typical nature of establishment of an invasive species, and it highlights the importance of Early Detection and Rapid Response.



Finally, we want to reiterate how appreciative we are to have the Board of Forestry taking a leadership role on this effort. The time to save Oregon is now.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your efforts.