

July 28, 2023

The Honorable Tom Cole (OK)

Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development & Related Agencies
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Schatz (HI)

Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development & Related Agencies
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 200510

The Honorable Mike Quigley (IL)

Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development & Related Agencies
2083 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith (MS)

Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development & Related Agencies
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Quigley, and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to request that the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies **appropriate \$10 million for the Invasive Plant Elimination Program** so that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) can establish a pilot program. The Invasive Plant Elimination Program, as defined in Section 11522 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58) was **authorized at \$50 million annually** for fiscal years 2022 through 2026, however no funding has been appropriated to date.

The Invasive Plant Elimination Program directs the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a program to **provide matching grants to states** to eliminate or control existing invasive plants along and in areas adjacent to transportation corridor rights-of-way (ROWs). Projects that utilize revegetation with native plants and wildflowers, including those that are pollinator-friendly will be incentivized by only requiring a **25% match** from the state. All other projects will require a **50% match** from a state. The program also limits the states' use of the funds to 10% for purchasing equipment and 5% for administrative and indirect costs.

Invasive species are a top threat to the nation's biosecurity, and federal agencies are unified in recognizing the importance of efforts to stop their spread. **Invasive plants are the leading cause of native biodiversity loss and a major factor in Endangered Species Act listings.** Transportation corridors such as roads, highways and railroads provide numerous opportunities for the movement of invasive plants and their propagules. Road maintenance and construction equipment can expose ROWs to rapid expansion of existing infestations and introduce new invasive plants into native ecosystems. **University field studies found that over 500 different invasive plant species can be spread by vehicles.**¹

As far back as 1896, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognized the threat that weeds in ROWs posed by noting in their report to Congress, "*Next to the railroad yards and the waste lands in cities and villages, the roadsides are the most important avenues for the introduction of new weeds and for the propagation of old ones.*"²

In the 2007 U.S. DOT publication *Roadside Weed Management*, the Federal Highway Administration concluded that “...**because of increased commerce, human habits, well-traveled tires, wind gusts and runoff, we intuitively know that weed seeds move to and from highway corridors with added speed.**”³

Integrated roadside vegetation management, where different weed management tactics are used in combination to increase effectiveness and safety, has made significant strides in recent years for managing invasive plants. In addition, the creation of roadside pollinator habitat has become an important focus. These pursuits require funding, and as the National Highway Research Program concluded, “**Inadequate funding is the primary obstacle faced by state DOTs and others trying to control invasive species.**”⁴

The U.S. DOT must become an active partner in mitigating invasive plant threats. The creation and financial support of an Invasive Plant Elimination Program will greatly assist the states and Tribal authorities, in addressing these transportation corridors which have been rapidly increasing the spread of invasive plants.

The undersigned organizations respectfully request that the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies **appropriate \$10 million in FY 2024 for the Invasive Plant Elimination Program**, as defined in Section 11522 in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, so that the U.S. DOT can establish a pilot program.

Sincerely,

Alabama Invasive Plant Council

Alabama Vegetation Management Society

American Mushroom Institute

Aquatic Plant Management Society

Arkansas Department of Transportation

Big Horn County (Wyoming) Weed and Pest Control District

California Invasive Plant Council

California Specialty Crops Council

Colorado Department of Agriculture - Noxious Weed Program and Conservation Services

Colorado Weed Management Association

CropLife America

Frankfort/Franklin County (Kentucky) Joint Task Force on Invasives

Kansas Department of Agriculture

Kansas Department of Transportation

Kentucky Invasive Plant Council

Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council

Midwest Invasive Plant Network

Mississippi Vegetation Management Association

Montana Weed Control Association

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

National Roadside Vegetation Management Association

Nevada Department of Transportation

North American Invasive Species Management Association
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Oklahoma Invasive Plant Council
Oklahoma Invasive Plant Species Council. Tribal Alliance for Pollinators
Oregon Department of Agriculture
Park County (Wyoming) Weed and Pest Control District
RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)
Rosebud County (Montana) Weed District
Sheridan County (Wyoming) Weed and Pest Control District
Southern Weed Science Society
State Weed Coordinators Alliance
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Teton County (Wyoming) Weed and Pest Control District
University of Arkansas
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Weed Supervisors Association
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
Weston County (Wyoming) Weed and Pest Control District
Wildlife Forever
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Wyoming Department of Transportation
Wyoming Farm Bureau
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Weed and Pest Council

Cc: The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, United States Department of Transportation
Shailen Bhatt, Administrator, Federal Highway Administration
Richard Darden Ph.D., Ecologist – Program Mitigation Team, Federal Highway Administration
Daniel Buford, Ecologist, Federal Highway Administration

References:

- 1 Taylor, Kimberly; Mangold, Jane; Rew, Lisa. Weed Seed Dispersal by Vehicles. MontGuide MT201105AG. Montana State University Extension. Montana State University. 2011.
- 2 Dewey, L.H. 1896. Legislation Against Weeds. Bulletin No. 17. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Botany.
- 3 Roadside Weed Management / edited by 1. Bonnie L. Harper-Lore, Federal Highway Administration. 2. Maggie Johnson, Environmental Protection Agency. 3. Mark W. Skinner, Natural Resource Conservation Service.
- 4 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2006. Control of Invasive Species. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14020>.