

WASHINGTON REPORT

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Infrastructure Bill Authorizes \$250 Million for DOT Invasive Plant Elimination Program

President Biden signed the infrastructure bill into public law (P.L. No. 117-58) on Nov. 15, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), [H.R. 3684](#). The House of Representatives passed the bill on a 228-206 vote on Nov. 5, while the Senate passed it on Aug. 10 with a 69-30 vote. The act allocates an estimated \$1.2 trillion in total funding over ten years, including \$550 billion in new spending during the next five years, divided between improving the surface-transportation network (\$284 billion) and society's core infrastructure (\$266 billion).

Several notable provisions for invasive plant and invasive species management are included in the new law, including:

- **SEC. 11522. Invasive Plant Elimination Program.** Federal-Aid Highways. **\$250 million** total, \$50 million per year for FY 2022 thru FY 2026. The Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT), through the Federal Highway Administration: *“shall carry out a program to provide **grants to States to eliminate or control existing invasive plants or prevent introduction of or encroachment by new invasive plants along and in areas adjacent to transportation corridor rights-of-way**”*.

The term **“invasive plant”** means a nonnative plant, tree, grass, or weed species, including, at a minimum: **cheatgrass, Ventenata dubia, medusahead, bulbous bluegrass, Japanese brome, rattail fescue, Japanese honeysuckle, phragmites, autumn olive, Bradford pear, wild parsnip, sericea lespedeza, spotted knapweed, garlic mustard, and palmer amaranth.**

- **SEC. 40804. Ecosystem Restoration.** Through the US Forest Service, **\$200 million** total for the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 shall be made available for ***invasive species detection, prevention, and eradication, including conducting research*** and providing resources to facilitate detection of invasive species at points of entry and awarding grants for eradication of invasive species on non-Federal land and on Federal land.
- **SEC. 40907. Multi-Benefit Project To Improve Watershed Health.** Through the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the BOR Commissioner, in consultation with the heads of relevant agencies, shall establish a competitive grant program to award grants to eligible applicants for the design, implementation, and monitoring of conservation outcomes of habitat restoration projects that improve watershed health in a river basin that is adversely impacted by a BOR water project by accomplishing 1 or more of the following:
 - (1) Ecosystem benefits.
 - (2) Restoration of native species.

- (3) Mitigation against the impacts of climate change to fish and wildlife habitats.
- (4) Protection against invasive species.**
- (5) Restoration of aspects of the natural ecosystem.
- (6) Enhancement of commercial, recreational, subsistence, or Tribal ceremonial fishing.
- (7) Enhancement of river-based recreation.

Budget Reconciliation Bill Stalled in Senate

On Nov. 19, the House of Representatives passed a \$1.75 trillion social and climate spending budget reconciliation bill, also known as the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376). However, the bill failed to advance in the Senate prior to the holiday break after Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) announced that he would not support the bill.

While it is uncertain whether the Senate will pass it (and, if so, in what form), the [National and Regional Weed Science Societies are continuing to engage in the ag research and infrastructure provisions](#) in the bill. The Nov. 19 House passed version of the bill contains \$2 billion designated for ag research and infrastructure, which includes \$210 million for the USDA AFRI competitive grants program and \$120 million for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

A Continuing Resolution for Entire FY 2022 Appearing More Likely

Congress passed a second continuing resolution that funds the government at FY 2021 levels until Feb. 18, 2022. Chatter from Capitol Hill indicates that a continuing resolution funding the government at FY 2021 levels for the entire 2022 fiscal year is an increasing possibility, especially if Congress passes the Budget Reconciliation bill. Operating under continuing resolutions creates uncertainties for agencies and limits their ability to plan for and initiate new programs such as those authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the 2020 Water Resources Development Act.

Bonnie Confirmed as USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation



On Nov. 16, the Senate voted 76 – 19 to confirm Robert Bonnie as the USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation. In this role, he is now charged with the oversight of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Bonnie, who has served as Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's deputy chief of staff and senior climate adviser, is expected to play a key role in USDA's climate initiatives. Bonnie also served as the USDA Undersecretary for natural resources and environment in the Obama administration. In his work, Bonnie has written reports on climate change that included proposing the use of the Commodity Credit Corporation, USDA's line of credit at the Treasury, to address climate change problems.

Bonnie has also worked at the Environmental Defense Fund for 14 years and holds a master's degree in forestry and environmental management from Duke University, and a bachelor's from Harvard College.

Connor Confirmed for Top Army Civil Works Post



Michael Connor, former commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, was confirmed on Nov. 4, by a 92 – 5 vote in the Senate, to be the next Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, which oversees all civilian work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Connor held the number-two position at Interior from 2014 to 2017 during the Obama administration. Before that, he was commissioner of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, from 2009 to 2014. Connor was a partner in the law firm Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP prior to his nomination. He also worked on Capitol Hill from 2001 to 2009, as counsel to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Stone-Manning Confirmed as BLM Director



On Sep. 30, 2021, Tracy Stone-Manning was confirmed by a Senate vote of 50-45 to be the next Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Her nomination proved controversial because a friend of hers, in 1989, was involved in tree spiking in Idaho's Clearwater National Forest. At the friend's behest, Stone-Manning wrote an anonymous letter to federal officials, informing them of the tree spiking and warning that "a lot of people could get hurt" if logging were to continue. In a 1993 federal court testimony, Stone-Manning admitted that she had retyped, edited, and mailed the letter. She received prosecutorial immunity in order to testify against her friend, who was found guilty and sentenced to 17 months in prison.

Stone-Manning was born in VA and earned a B.A. in radio, television, and film from the University of Maryland and a M.S. in environmental studies from the University of Montana. From 1999 to 2006, she was the director of the Clark Fork Coalition in Missoula, MT and then worked for Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) from 2007 to 2012. Stone-Manning served as the director of the MT Department of Environmental Quality and then as chief of staff for MT Governor Steve Bullock between 2013 and 2017. Since 2017, she has worked for the National Wildlife Federation before being nominated by the Biden administration to serve as BLM Director.

BLM manages over 244 million acres, mostly in the western U.S., and is the largest federal land management agency. Unfortunately, over 79 million acres of BLM land is infested with noxious and invasive weeds, yet BLM only spends \$15 million per year to manage invasive species, which equates to a paltry 6 cents per acre! Let's hope the new BLM Director can direct a little more of the agency's \$1.3 billion towards a pro-active integrated weed management plan.

U.S. Register of Introduced and Invasive Species (US-RIIS) Now Available

See: <https://www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/6144f1ccd34e0df5fb95b5cb>

Abstract: Introduced (non-native) species that become established may eventually become invasive, so tracking introduced species provides a baseline for effective modeling of species trends and interactions, geospatially and temporally. The United States Register of Introduced and Invasive Species (US-RIIS) is comprised of three lists, one each for Alaska (AK, with 532 records), Hawaii (HI, with 6,075 records), and the conterminous United States (L48, with 8,657 records). Each list includes introduced (non-native), established (reproducing) taxa that: are, or may become, invasive (harmful) in the locality; are not known to be harmful there; and/or have been used for biological control in the locality.

To be included in the US-RIIS, a taxon must be non-native everywhere in the locality and established (reproducing) anywhere in the locality. Native pest species are not included. Each record has information on taxonomy, dates of introduction (where available; currently for 38%), invasion status (invasive or introduced), and citations for the authoritative sources from which this information is drawn. The US-RIIS builds on a previous dataset, A Comprehensive List of Non-Native Species Established in Three Major Regions of the U.S.: Version 3.0 (Simpson et al., 2020, <https://doi.org/10.5066/p9e5k160>).

There are 15,264 records in the master list and 12,981 unique scientific names. The list is derived from 5,951 authoritative sources, was reviewed by or based on input from 30 invasive species scientists, and continues to be updated. Publication of version 2.0 of the US-RIIS is anticipated (but not guaranteed) in approximately 12 months.

Citation: *Simpson, A., Turner, R., Blake, R., Liebhold, A., and Dorado, M., 2021, United States Register of Introduced and Invasive Species: U.S. Geological Survey data release, <https://doi.org/10.5066/P95XL09Q>*

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