

PRESIDENT CLINTON EXPANDS FEDERAL EFFORT TO COMBAT INVASIVE SPECIES

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USDA: Andy Solomon (202) 720-4623
Interior: Tim Ahern (202) 208-5089
Commerce: Matt Stout (202) 482-6090

PRESIDENT CLINTON EXPANDS FEDERAL EFFORT TO COMBAT INVASIVE SPECIES

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3, 1999 President Clinton today is signing an executive order to coordinate a federal strategy to address the growing environmental and economic threat of invasive species, plants and animals that are not native to the United States.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, and Commerce Under Secretary James Baker told a news conference that the order creates an Invasive Species Council. The Council will develop a comprehensive plan to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts of invasive species and determine further steps to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species. The Council, to be chaired by Glickman, Babbitt, and Commerce Secretary William Daley, will work in cooperation with a variety of groups, including states, tribes, scientists, universities, environmental groups, farm organizations, shipping interests, and the business community.

"This is a unified, all-out battle against unwanted plant and animal pests that threaten to wreak major economic and environmental havoc," said Glickman. "Asian long-horned beetles destroy trees. Leafy spurge reduces the productivity of grazing land by 50 to 75 percent. Zebra mussels clog water intake pipes, shutting down electrical utilities. These are serious threats."

"There are a lot of global bioinvasive hitchhikers, and now is the time to take action," said Babbitt. "The costs to habitat and the economy are racing out of control. New resources are needed now, and this order opens the door to accomplish just that."

"This executive order is good news for our ongoing fight against the invasion of marine alien species. The ocean serves as a highway in transporting these invasive species into U.S. waters," said Baker. "Every minute 40,000 gallons of foreign ballast water is dumped into U.S. harbors -- this water contains a multitude of non-indigenous organism which could alter or destroy America's natural marine ecosystems."

President Clinton's budget for fiscal year 2000, released on Monday, proposes an increase of more than \$28.8 million in funding to combat invasive species. This includes new funding for combating exotic pests and diseases as well as accelerating research on habitat restoration and biologically-based integrated pest management tactics.

Many ecologists believe the spread of exotic species constitutes one of the most serious, yet least appreciated, threats to biodiversity. Invasive plants inflict a heavy toll on American agriculture, reducing the quality and raising the cost of food, feed, and fiber. Experts estimate that invasive plants already infest over 100 million acres. Three million acres, an area twice the size of Delaware, is lost to invasive plants each year. The total economic impact of invasive species on the U.S. economy is estimated to be about \$123 billion annually. Some examples

The zebra mussel can shut down electrical utilities by clogging water intake pipes and threatens to cause an estimated \$5 billion in damages by 2002, if left unchecked.

Leafy spurge causes more than \$144 million in livestock forage damage each year in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Invading sea lampreys caused the collapse of lake trout and other Great Lakes fisheries, costing the U.S. and Canada \$13 million annually to control.

The brown tree snake has caused over 200 snake bites, 1200 electrical outages and the extinction of most native forest birds on Guam.

When the Asian long-horned beetle infested Brooklyn, New York, more than 2000 trees had to be destroyed, costing the federal and state government more than \$5 million. A similar infestation now plagues Chicago.

Today's announcement signals an expanded effort to combat invasive species. The President's order directs federal agencies to use their authority to prevent the introduction of invasive species and to restore native species. It directs the new interagency Council to come up with an detailed invasive species management plan within 18 months.

Federal officials were joined at today's announcement by eminent Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson. Other scientists who have led calls for stronger federal action to combat invasive species include James T. Carlton of Williams College; Don C. Schmitz of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Daniel Simberloff, the Nancy Gore Hunger Professor of Excellence in Environmental Science at the University of Tennessee; and Phyllis N. Windle, author of a Congressional report on invasive species.

Aggressive federal actions are already underway, including measures to prevent entry of invasive species, eradicate invasive species before establishment, control invasive species once established, and conduct outreach and education for the general public. These actions include

To prevent entry of invasive species, USDA has over 1300 inspectors stationed at more than 90 ports of entry inspecting shipments moving into the U.S. The inspectors are assisted in some ports by the Beagle Brigade, a group of dogs trained to sniff out prohibited agricultural products.

USDA has prohibited the importation of untreated wood packing material from China, which have previously carried the Asian long-horned beetle into the United States and is considering extending this ban to other countries.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will build a barrier this spring in the Chicago Ship Canal to prevent the spread of invasive species between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basins.

The Interior Department is spending \$4.5 million annually to prevent the spread of the brown tree snake from Guam.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other federal and state agencies are working to restore the natural ecology of the South Florida and Everglades ecosystems. As this massive replumbing gets underway, NOAA has made it clear to its Federal and state partners that safeguards must be taken to ensure that the new water flows do not become highways for exotic species to be transported through Florida's fragile environment.

NOAA is sponsoring research on new technologies for treatment of ballast water to reduce the treat of foreign organisms being discharged into U.S. waters.

The Department of Defense is an active participant in a comprehensive effort to control the brown tree snake on Guam and to prevent its further spread. Key elements are an extensive control program on Guam, continued support of research efforts to develop new control measures, and participation in Oahu's island-wide surveillance and response plan.

The Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds collaborated on research and publication of a comprehensive fact book on invasive plants.

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GLICKMAN CREATES USDA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY
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Media Contact: Andy Solomon (202) 720-4623
andy.solomon@usda.gov

Public Contact: Maria Bynum (202) 720-5192
maria.bynum@usda.gov

GLICKMAN CREATES USDA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON, March 19, 1999 Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today announced that he is creating a new USDA panel to review agricultural biotechnology issues. The Advisory Committee on Agricultural Biotechnology will also advise the Secretary on policy related to the creation, application, trade and use of agricultural biotechnology.

"Agricultural biotechnology presents complex questions and issues that need to be discussed in an active, public dialogue," said Glickman in remarks to the first in a series of USDA-sponsored panel discussions on challenges facing American agriculture in the 21st century.

Glickman continued, "This advisory committee will examine the effect of biotechnology from every conceivable angle its creation, application, marketability, related trade and inspection implications, and more. The new panel will also explore the impact of biotech on the small and medium-sized farmer. In an increasingly top-heavy and concentrated farm economy, some worry that biotech might further tilt the playing field against the small operator."

In his remarks today, Glickman indicated that he wanted to see "everyone who has a stake in the future of biotech - research scientists, social scientists, farmers, and consumers represented on the panel." The panel will be appointed by the Secretary at a later date.

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