Operational Activities: Invasive Species

Last Modified:

Nonnative species that cause harm are collectively known as invasive species. Human activity such as trade, travel and tourism have all increased substantially, increasing the speed and volume of species movement to unprecedented levels. Invasive species are often unintended hitchhikers on cargo and vehicles. Still more species are deliberately introduced as pets, ornamental plants, crops, food, or for recreation, pest control or other purposes.

Most nonnative species, including most of our sources of food and fiber, are not harmful; and many are highly beneficial. A small percentage of nonnative species cause great harm to the environment, the economy or human health. Invasive species may prey upon, displace or otherwise harm native species. Some invasive species also alter ecosystem processes, transport disease, interfere with crop production, or cause illnesses in animals and humans; affecting both aquatic and terrestrial habitats. For these reasons, invasive species are of national and global concern.

National Invasive Species Council

In 1999, Executive Order (EO) 13112 established the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), co-chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce. NISC members include the Secretaries of Transportation, State, Defense, Homeland Security, Treasury, and Health and Human Services; the Administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; as well as the Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Trade Representative. NISC was charged with providing coordination, planning and overall leadership for federal invasive species programs and reaching out to state, tribal, local and private partners. EO 13112 seeks to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. It identifies federal agency duties, establishes the NISC and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee and their duties, and provides for the development of the National Invasive Species Management Plan.

Wildlife Services' Invasive Species Work

Wildlife Services conducts invasive species activities in partnership with other federal and state agencies and others, to protect a wide variety of resources.

- Brown Tree Snake
- European Starling
- Feral Swine
- Nutria

In addition to the four species highlighted, WS provides assistance to the general public upon request to resolve damage caused by invasive species. Last Fiscal Year, WS provided direct control assistance to resolve damage caused by 14 of the 23 bird, mammal, and reptile species identified by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as being among the top 100 invasive species in the world. These species included brown tree snakes, giant toad, Coqui frog, red-vented bulbul, common myna, European starling, nutria, house mouse, roof rat, small Asian mongoose, feral swine, cats and goats.

Visit the National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC) for more information.

Print