

Missoula County

Invasive Species Strategic Plan

- March 17th, 2022 -

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Missoula County Weed Board hereby adopts the following Invasive Species Strategic Plan to:

- 1.** Comply with the County Noxious Weed Management Act, Title 7, Chapter 22, Sections 7-22-2101 through 7-22-2153, Montana Codes Annotated,
- 2.** Provide a framework for rational and effective invasive species management in Missoula County, Montana; and,
- 3.** Relate the management of invasive species in Missoula County to the broader management goals of the state of Montana and our local, state, tribal, and federal partners.

MISSOULA COUNTY MISSION

To provide quality public service to protect and enhance the wellbeing of the people, communities, and environment of Missoula County.

MISSOULA COUNTY VISION

Missoula County is a trusted community leader enhancing quality of life so people can thrive and realize individual and collective potential.

MISSOULA COUNTY CORE VALUES

Integrity: We are accountable, ethical, and transparent.

Innovation: We choose to develop sustainable solutions that pursue opportunity and foster creativity.

Teamwork: We are a diverse interdependent organization that supports collaboration to work effectively.

Community: We honor diversity and respect people, heritage, culture, and natural resources.

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

To promote and maintain healthy plant communities by minimizing the ecological and economic impact of invasive species through public education, technology transfer, and monitoring, and by facilitating involvement of landowners and land/resource agencies in the management of invasive species for the promotion of beneficial terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. To carry out our mission, the Missoula County Weed Board emphasizes increased understanding and participation in invasive species management, prevention, detection, rapid response, containment, and control.

EMPHASIS ON COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT ACROSS COUNTY AND STATE LINES

Missoula County Weed District will actively promote and encourage cooperation with local, state tribal, and federal partners beyond the boundaries of Missoula County to support research and education projects that advance the management of invasive species and promote desirable aquatic and terrestrial plant communities in Missoula County, the state of Montana, and the Northern Rocky Mountain region.

DEFINITIONS

Invasive Species: any nonnative plant, animal, or pathogen species that causes, or is causing, harm to natural or cultural resources, recreational opportunities, the economy, or human health. The authority of the Missoula County Weed Board extends to nonnative plant species.

Management: the correct identification of an invasive species; recognition of its biological and environmental needs; assessment of its damage, injury, or nuisance to ecosystems, industry, or the public interest prior to selecting and implementing any integrated or individual control methods to reduce, prevent, or suppress such damage, nuisance, or injury; and evaluating the effects of these control methods.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Missoula County encompasses approximately 2600 square miles (~1,675,000 acres) of western Montana. Mountainous terrain makes up 85 percent of the county. The valley floor contains three major rivers, numerous small streams, and lakes. Soils are generally alluvial sediments, glacial lakebed sediments and tertiary gravel. Annual precipitation ranges from 13 inches in the valleys to 80 inches in the mountains. Eighty-five percent of the county's population occupies less than 4 percent of the land. Because of its mountainous terrain, the majority of the county is utilized for timber production and recreation. The narrow valley floors, once used for commercial agriculture, have been subdivided into small acreage lots better suited to recreational agriculture. Interstate, state, and county roads, along with railroad and an international airport, dissect the valley floor. Numerous walking and biking trails also exist. Approximately 74.5 percent of the county's land area is managed by corporations and agencies such as federal, state, local governments, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, The Nature Conservancy, Weyerhaeuser, and utility companies. The remaining 25.5 percent of the land area is divided among smaller companies and 120,560 residents.

OWNERSHIP*	ACRES	% of COUNTY
U.S. Forest Service	901,201	53.8%
Private	427,620	25.5%
State Trust Land	115,978	7.0%
Tribal Land	96,742	5.8%
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks	40,133	2.4%
Weyerhaeuser Company	33,735	2.0%
Bureau of Land Management	42,825	2.5%
The Nature Conservancy	5,773	0.3%
City of Missoula	5,384	0.3%
Missoula County	4,242	0.3%
Montana University System	1,076	0.1%
Total	1,674,709	100.0%

*Acreage numbers as of 2/17/2022

AUTHORITIES RELEVANT TO THE MISSOULA COUNTY INVASIVE SPECIES STRATEGIC PLAN

MCA Chapter 21. County Weed Control

Section 7-22-2102 Weed Management Districts Established.

A weed management district shall be formed in every county of this state and shall include all the land within the boundaries of the county, except that a weed management district may include more than one county through agreement of the commissioners of the affected counties.

MCA Chapter 26. County Control of Invasive Species (Aquatics)

Section 7-26-2601 Invasive Species Ordinances.

(1) Subject to subsection (2), counties located within the Columbia River basin may adopt ordinances and resolutions regarding the prevention or control of invasive species, as defined in 80-7-1003, within the county.

(2) If an Indian reservation is located within the boundaries of the county, the board of county commissioners shall consult with the governing body of the tribe or tribes of the Indian reservation prior to adopting an ordinance pursuant to this section.

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING & PARTICIPATION IN INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Facilitate invasive species efforts focused on improving beneficial aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and share information regarding invasive species management to build successful invasive species programs in Missoula County.

- Maintain a county-wide geospatial database of known invasive species infestations for all jurisdictions within Missoula County.
- Share general information on the status of invasive species infestations in Missoula County through a website, social media platforms and print materials.
- Engage local school districts by networking with teachers, providing education materials, giving presentations to classes, leading field trips and collaborating on demonstration projects.
- Publicize success stories of landowners and watershed groups and celebrate the accomplishments of outstanding individuals.
- Improve public access to educational and technical materials, programs, and information regarding invasive species, including the development of new materials or programs if not available.
- Assist in identifying and applying for funding opportunities for the management of invasive species in Missoula County.
- Actively engage in local, state, and regional organizations relevant to research, movement and/or management of invasive species in Missoula County.
- Support and participate in research relevant to the management of invasive species in Missoula County, as well as facilitate interactions between land managers and the research community for the development of needed research.
- Pursue funding through grants, donations, and other sources to support weed district projects and programs.
- Facilitate collaborative efforts between land managers, both public and private, for the management of invasive species within Missoula County.
- Provide service-learning opportunities to youth in natural resource and conservation areas through jobs, internships, and volunteering.
- Support the efforts of the Missoula County Aquatic Invasive Species District for the management of aquatic invasive plants identified as high priority species in Missoula County.

PREVENTION OF NEW INVASIVE SPECIES POPULATIONS

Protect Missoula County's natural resources and reduce the future burdens of invasive species impacts by restricting the introduction of harmful species.

- Work with partners to identify priority new invader species and potential pathways to target for prevention and review annually.
- Identify and monitor sites or activities within Missoula County with the greatest risk for invasive species introductions.
- Implement best management practices to prevent invasion through identified routes.
- Manage and promote a weed free materials certification program that includes forage and gravel.
- Support state and regional invasive species prevention efforts when applicable to Missoula County.

DETECTION OF NEWLY INTRODUCED INVASIVE SPECIES POPULATIONS

Search for new populations of invasive species, monitor existing populations and communicate findings so the risk they pose can be assessed and properly managed.

- Coordinate the initial and long-term mapping of new invader species locations with local, state, and regional partners.
- Provide invasive species identification trainings for people living, working, and recreating within Missoula County.
- Collaborate with partners to develop and implement joint monitoring programs for new invaders.
- Promote and support local group efforts to identify new invader infestations and concentrate staff efforts on areas not covered by existing groups.
- Initiate rapid response.

RAPID RESPONSE TO NEWLY DISCOVERED INVASIVE SPECIES POPULATIONS

Upon the detection of newly introduced invasive species populations, build capacity to eradicate, control, or contain populations of invasive species that have newly invaded and pose a risk to Missoula County.

- Develop a generalized rapid response plan for high priority new invader species not present in Missoula County that include the following components:
 - Necessary regulatory tools for response,
 - Potential funding and resources available,
 - Stakeholder roles and responsibilities,
 - Watershed specific information pertinent for a response.
- Initiate routine tabletop exercises to refine response plan as necessary.
- Actively engage state and regional rapid response efforts that are pertinent to Missoula County.
- Encourage staff and partners to participate in rapid response trainings and exercises.

CONTAINMENT AND CONTROL OF ESTABLISHED INVASIVE SPECIES POPULATIONS

Reduce the negative impact of established invasive species to Missoula County's economy, environment, and culture.

- Assist private landowners and local, state, tribal, and federal agencies in the development and implementation of integrated vegetation management plans.
- Provide vegetation data management and mapping support for all land managers working within Missoula County.
- Set annual management goals and annually review the results of those management actions to gauge their efficacy.
- Evaluate and monitor rates and patterns of spread of invasive species in Missoula County.
- Increase capacity for restoration and revegetation of infested systems and encourage partners and managers to focus on desired plant communities as their primary goal.
- Coordinate the distribution, monitoring, and release of biological control agents in Missoula County, as well as support the coordination of biological control efforts in Montana and the United States.
- Support commercial and private pesticide applicator programs by providing education programs that increase safety and efficacy as well as meet licensing requirements.
- Identify future needs for invasive species management and support research efforts that improve our ability to successfully manage plant communities within Missoula County.
- Where possible, utilize demonstration sites to showcase successful vegetation management.