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## RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

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### **Three States' Invasive Species Councils Meet for First Time**

Olympia – Representatives from the national, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington invasive species councils will meet Aug. 20 in Seattle to share experiences and look at coordinating approaches to battling highly destructive invasive wildlife.

The councils will meet at 10:30 a.m., Aug. 20, in the Center for Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington, 3501 N.E. 41 St., Seattle.

Invasive species are non-native plants, animals and other species that once established, choke out native wildlife, often causing significant damage environmentally and economically. For example, Eurasian watermilfoil enters lakes on boats and forms dense canopies that often shade out native plants. It alters water quality by raising the acidity, decreasing oxygen and increasing temperature. Watermilfoil becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes and interferes with boating and swimming. In Washington, private and government sources spend about \$1 million a year to eradicate it.

“Washington is blessed to be one of America’s most biologically diverse states – an important source of our economic strength,” said Bridget Moran, chair of the newly formed Washington Invasives Species Council. “We’re in danger of losing much of that diversity because of invasions by non-native wildlife. Plant and animal invaders displace indigenous species and multiply rapidly if there are few predators to keep them in check. They are considered one of the top two threats to global biodiversity.”

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Invasive species hitchhike to new locales in a variety of ways, such as in a ship's ballast water. The source of their introduction can be as innocent as cleaning out an aquarium and dumping plants and animals into a stream, or moving a boat from lake to lake without cleaning the hull. Deliberate introductions have been made with the hope of solving a specific problem. Kudzu, "the weed that ate the South," was introduced into the United States in 1876 as a forage crop and for soil stabilization. It is responsible for estimated losses of \$500 million a year in land productivity and control costs in the eastern United States. Four plants, covering less than 1,000 feet, were discovered on in Washington in 2001. It was successfully eradicated.

At the August meeting, the three councils will discuss their respective state goals and lessons learned, and seek opportunities to work together as a region. Lori Williams, representing the National Invasive Species Council, will discuss the national perspective and activities.

The Washington Invasives Species Council was created by the Legislature in 2006 and tasked with providing policy direction, planning and coordination on invasive species issues. The council also was asked to develop a statewide strategic plan to control the spread of harmful invasive species and prevent the introduction of new invasive species. That plan is due to the Legislature in June 2008.

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