



**For Immediate Release**

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### **National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week**

*10<sup>th</sup> annual event to focus on preserving our natural heritage from the ravages of weeds*

(LAWRENCE, Kansas) — Land managers, aquatic specialists, scientists, educators and public policy officials are gathering in the nation's capital February 22-27 for the 10<sup>th</sup> annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week (NIWAW) – a series of meetings focused on educating our federal policy makers and elected officials about the devastating impact of invasive weeds on the environment and economy.

Across the nation, the most significant invasive weeds are spreading at approximately 15% per year. This rate of spread will result in a doubling of infested acres in less than five years. According to a recent Cornell University report, the economic impact of invasive plants and weeds in the U.S. is estimated at \$34.7 billion annually.

National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week is coordinated by the Invasive Weeds Awareness Coalition, a broad-based group of public and private stakeholders concerned with the prevention and management of noxious and invasive weeds.

A highlight during this year's NIWAW events will be the first official meeting of the Healthy Habitats Coalition (HHC). Current federal efforts and budgets are inadequate to address the invasive species crisis effectively, and local and state interests alone cannot resolve invasive issues. The Healthy Habitats Coalition will provide training for concerned citizens and advocate for legislation and policies year-round that improve the prevention and management of invasive and noxious weeds, as well as other invasive pests and diseases.

"Invasive weeds can impair wildlife and fish habitats, reduce the diversity of our natural resources and dramatically reduce crop yields," said Lee Van Wychen, director of science policy for the Weed Science Society of America. "National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week gives land managers, scientists and educators a chance to share their knowledge and concerns with public policy makers so we can slow the spread of invasive weeds."

Featured sessions, presentations, and meetings include:

- Invasive species management and the federal budget process
- An overview of pending invasive species bills and policies
- The outlook for the new Administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress
- 2008 Farm Bill, biofuel and transportation programs
- Risk assessments and the impact of invasive plants on endangered species
- Federal and private grants for invasive species management
- The role hunters and anglers can play in halting the spread of invasive species

National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week will be held at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D.C., just blocks from the White House. The registration deadline for rooms at a group rate is January 28. (Call 1-888-627-8681 and ask for the NIWAW room block.)

The NIWAW registration cost is \$160 before January 28, 2009 and \$185 after. The NIWAW registration website is <http://niwaw.allenmm.com>.

### ***About the Weed Science Society of America***

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit professional society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, and fosters awareness of weeds and their impacts on managed and natural ecosystems. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).

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