



YAMPA RIVER LEAFY SPURGE PROJECT

“... working together to establish an effective program of integrated management for leafy spurge...”

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The Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project (YRLSP) and Friends of the Yampa (FOTY) would like to announce the Colorado Water Conservation Boards approval today of a grant for \$89,000 to research the effects of leafy spurge, a noxious invasive weed on the adjacent lands of the Yampa River. FOTY will be the fiscal sponsor for the YRLSP research grant. Kent Vertrees, President of the FOTY has commended the YRLSP for their efforts to improve the Yampa River “The YRLSP fits perfectly within the Friends of the Yampa's mission to protect and enhance the environmental and recreational integrity of the Yampa River and its tributaries.”

This \$89,000 approved by the YWGRT from their Basin Funds in July will be combined with \$76,572 in match to form the basis of this three year research project. The YRLSP thanks the YWGRT for their approval which YWGRT Chair Jackie Brown pointed out that “the YRLSP is an excellent example of collaboration showing that rivers (and weeds) know no boundaries. The YWGRT overwhelmingly supports this project as finding a solution to manage leafy spurge will be monumental for river corridors to remain healthy, for agriculture to continue producing, and to prevent a massive infestation that catches us all a day late and a dollar short. It is important to highlight the YRLSP partners including: Moffat and Routt County Board of County Commissioners, Moffat and Routt County Weed Programs, Bureau of Land Management, Dinosaur National Monument, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Community Agricultural Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado First Conservation District, Friends of the Yampa, and Routt and Moffat County landowners, who came together to create a scope of work that was manageable and achievable”.

The goal set by the YRLSP is to manage a leafy spurge infestation that started in Western Routt County and Eastern Moffat which has now spread along a 150 mile reach of the Yampa River to the confluence with the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument.

Leafy spurge which has infested almost 2,000,000 acres of agricultural lands in Montana and North Dakota could have a devastating effect on the riparian habitat of the Yampa and adjacent agricultural lands if not managed.

The proposed research will include: comprehensive mapping, a risk analysis of where the spread of leafy spurge is imminent based on experiences in western states, site tests of different management practices on specific riparian habitats to develop a Yampa River management plan, and introduction of leafy spurge beetles on sites to be used as a tool to educate citizens and youth to the long-term benefits of bio-control. The short term goal is to reduce the seed flow infesting the downstream river and agricultural irrigation systems. The long term goal is to develop best management practices for the riparian habitats of the Yampa River.

Professor Dan Tekiela, of the University of WY Plant Sciences Department will lead this study. Prof. Tekiela has described Wyoming's leafy spurge issues:

"1) Leafy spurge is a significant issue across Wyoming. Many of our populations have been well established for decades and have become a management challenge that will likely never end. It is only the management of populations that are recently established where successful management has been the outcome.

2) In some Wyoming counties the problem of leafy spurge has become bad enough that the economic cost of management seems unjustified by the benefits. Thus, these counties are seeking strategic ways to prioritize management of the worst populations and abandoning low priority populations where management has not resulted in a beneficial outcome."

Prof. Tekiela and the YRLSP understand that the leafy spurge infestations on the Yampa are not as far along as infestations in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. This early response will increase the chances of a successful management program.

The CWCB understands the importance of this effort. Jay Gallagher, Yampa Basin representative on the CWCB Board, said "this grant will enable investigators to map the infestation and to investigate and recommend methods to manage the infestation in the sensitive riparian corridor."

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For the Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project

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