



April 9, 2025

The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
Hart Senate Office Building  
120 Constitution Ave NE, Suite SH-316  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
261 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Neguse  
2400 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Hurd  
1641 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Members of the Colorado Congressional Delegation:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us at the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in March. During our congressional meetings, we committed to providing you with specific local examples of how federal funding freezes and cuts are affecting our communities. We write to you today to provide one example that affects both Routt and Moffat Counties.

For many years, Routt and Moffat Counties have worked together on issues of shared importance. One example of this partnership is the Yampa River Leafy Spurge Project (YRLSP). The YRLSP was created in 2015 by a group of organizations and individuals in Moffat and Routt Counties to combat leafy spurge infestations along the Yampa River corridor.

Leafy spurge is an extremely invasive, deep-rooted, and non-native perennial plant that adapts to a wide variety of habitats. It competes with native and other desirable species for food, space, and water. In Colorado, county commissioners are statutorily required to adopt noxious weed management plans for unincorporated lands within their jurisdiction, as outlined in the Colorado Noxious Weed Act (35-5.5-105). Leafy Spurge is a List B noxious weed species. As such, we have a statutory requirement to manage it with a current goal of containment to reduce continued impacts and to protect our lands for future generations.

Some of the impacts to lands infested by leafy spurge include decreased agricultural productivity, displacement of wildlife habitat and food sources, toxicity to cattle and horses, and degradation of riparian areas and water quality, to name just a few.

In our region, the infestation, which was once concentrated in a 15-mile stretch of the Yampa River riparian areas in western Routt County and eastern Moffat County, has now spread along the Yampa River and into Dinosaur National Monument. It is in Little Yampa Canyon as well as

along irrigation ditches and tributaries of the Yampa River. The goal of the YRLSP is to combat the leafy spurge infestation throughout Yampa River Watershed.

Both Routt and Moffat counties have provided financial support to the YRLSP for many years. In 2023, the federal government committed to this project, providing \$539,174 over seven years. The “Green/Yampa River Inundative Biological Control Strategy Project (IBCS)” was funded through a grant received by Dinosaur National Monument (along with Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park) as part of a larger National Park Service Colorado River Invasive Species initiative, using federal Inflation Reduction Act dollars. Our counties saw this federal investment as an opportunity to increase the program’s effectiveness by advancing two main goals:

- Releasing 50,000–100,000 biocontrol agents (i.e., beetles) each year to target leafy spurge in the Yampa and Green River basins
- Establishing self-sustaining “natural insectaries” to provide a local source of beetles for land managers and landowners to collect from and release on their lands

This popular public-private partnership program relies on the use of voluntary participation from willing landowners and deploys volunteers to maximize financial efficiencies. It is precisely the type of program that must continue if we are to meet our obligations under Colorado law to manage leafy spurge. We ask that you help us in our efforts by advocating for continued federal funding through The Green/Yampa River Inundative Biological Control Strategy Project (IBCS).” We stand ready to support you in those advocacy efforts.

Sincerely,



Sonja Macys, Chair  
Routt County Board of County  
Commissioners



Melody Villard, Chair  
Moffat County Board of County  
Commissioners