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BACK grounder

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Invasive Plants on Crown Land in British Columbia

What are invasive plants?

- Invasive plants are non-native plant species that may threaten existing ecosystems, causing economic or environmental harm. Some invasive plants include Scotch broom, oxeye daisy, spotted knapweed and Canada thistle.

Why are invasive plants spreading?

- Most invasive plant species are hardy, reproduce easily and have no “natural predators” to control them. As well, climate change and increased soil disturbance due to roads developed for pine beetle salvage logging and oil and gas exploration may contribute to their spread.

What legislation governs invasive plant management on Crown land?

- The primary pieces of provincial legislation governing management of invasive plants are the Forest and Range Practices Act, the Weed Control Act and the Integrated Pest Management Act. The links between these acts are not currently consistent or clear.

Who is responsible for addressing invasive plants on Crown land?

- The ministries of Forests and Range; Agriculture and Lands; Environment; and Transportation, as well as regional districts, private land owners and others – the Invasive Plant Strategy for BC identifies more than 90 possible signatories to the strategy.

How widespread is the problem of invasive plants in British Columbia?

- In 1995, an estimated 100,000 hectares of grassland and open forest were infested with a variety of invasive plant species, and at least another 10 million hectares of Crown land were susceptible to invasion, but no comprehensive survey has been conducted to determine the area and distribution of invasive plants in B.C.

How are invasive plants controlled?

- **Cultural Control:** Includes hand pulling, hoeing, cutting, burning, mulching, or girdling. Effective for removing small patches of scattered plants, and in sensitive – such as riparian – areas.
- **Mechanical Control:** Includes use of power-driven machinery such as chain saws, bulldozers, seeders, and disk-ploughs. These techniques are intrusive and cause soil disturbance, which may promote the further spread of invasive plants.
- **Chemical Control:** Herbicides can be used only when it has been determined that human or area ecosystem health will not be adversely impacted. Herbicides can't be applied unless a pest management plan has been submitted, and a permit issued by MOE.
- **Biological Control:** Includes use of insects and pathogens to reduce invasive plant populations and, once established, becomes self-regulating. Biocontrol must first be approved by an international review panel.

What is the board recommending to improve management of invasive plant species?

- The Inter-Ministry Invasive Plant Committee should review and consolidate the invasive plant and weed lists into a single list for the province.
- MOFR should identify which invasive plants should be managed as priorities at the district level, so coordinated treatments can be applied. In addition, MOFR invasive plant inventories should include all species listed in the FRPA Invasive Plant Regulation so that licensees are aware of their presence when they prepare operational plans.
- The linkage among FRPA, the Weed Control Act, and the Integrated Pest Management Act needs to be clarified so that government agency, licensee, and private landowner responsibilities are clearly understood by all parties. Government should develop policy or legislation that integrates invasive plant responsibility among acts to provide this clarity.
- MOFR should develop training courses for licensees to increase skills in plant identification and control measures, as well as the use of the Invasive Alien Plant Database.
- MOFR should give consideration to amending section 26 of FRPA to include invasive plants. This would enable government to require strategies to address invasive plants in appropriate areas on both Crown and private land.