



Canada thistle

Invasion by nonnative, plants is changing the face of the Smith River— affecting the environment and the people who live, work, and play in the Smith River corridor.



Purple loosestrife

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH INVASIVE PLANTS?

Most problematic invasive plants—or weeds—found in North America were transported here from other continents. When invasive plants like Canada thistle (which is native to Europe) become established, they often spread to dominate the vegetation.

By altering plant communities, invasive plants can lead to changes in

- habitat and food opportunities for wildlife
- abundance and quality of agricultural lands and livestock forage
- soil and water quality
- ecosystem processes and species biodiversity
- visual quality and aesthetic value of the landscape

INVASIVE PLANTS YOU MAY FIND ON THE SMITH

A number of invasive plant species are known to occur on the Smith River. The four plant species shown on the left are of particular concern due to their abundance and impacts on Smith River ecosystems.

The Smith River is continually under threat from invasion by new, nonnative plant species. For example, plants such as saltcedar and purple loosestrife have had devastating effects on other waterways in the United States.

At least 20 additional plant species have been identified as problem plants in Montana, and more are on the way!



Leafy spurge



Spotted knapweed



Hounds tongue



Dalmatian toadflax



Biological control agents like these flea beetles evolved with their plant hosts and help to keep leafy spurge (an invasive plant) in check. Look for these insects feeding on leafy spurge plants along the river.



What is being done about invasive plants on the Smith River?

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

Nature regulates plant populations with natural pressures such as disease, insects, wildlife grazing, and disturbance (such as fires or floods).

Land managers also use a combination of pressures to control plant populations by

- releasing insects or pathogens (biological control agents)
- grazing with livestock
- burning and flooding
- manually removing plants
- applying chemicals (herbicides)



WORKING TOGETHER

Invasive plants do not respect fences or property lines and the problems caused by invasive plants are shared between many neighbors. The responsibility of managing invasive plants within the Smith River corridor is shared by over 100 different private landowners and public land management agencies.

The Smith River Habitat Project partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Forest Service, and County Weed Districts to facilitate the formation of the Smith River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA).

Through the framework of a CWMA, private and public landowners can develop and implement strategic invasive plant management as a unified group.

PREVENTION - YOU CAN HELP!

Invasive plants spread to new areas when their seeds or other reproductive structures are transported by wind, water, birds, wildlife, livestock, vehicles, and people. The Smith River hosts over 4,500 recreational users every year and is home to wildlife, domestic livestock, and numerous private residences. With so many visitors and residents moving through and within the canyon, controlling the spread and introduction of invasive plants can be difficult.

See the back of this flyer to learn about some things you can do to help avoid spreading invasive plants to, from, and within the Smith River corridor.





Improving wildlife habitat and rangeland along the Smith River corridor through invasive plant education, research, and cooperative management

About the Smith River Habitat Project

The Smith River Habitat Project (SRHP) was formed in 2003 to protect the Smith River's diverse agricultural, recreational, cultural, and natural resources from the threat of invasive plants. Guided by a volunteer board of directors that represents a cross-section of the communities that care for and use the Smith River, SRHP works to improve wildlife habitat and rangeland productivity by addressing invasive plant issues.

SRHP is a private, nonprofit organization that operates on charitable donations, special grants, and the help of volunteers. Your 100% tax deductible contribution will help us to improve and protect the Smith River's unique resources and opportunities.

PLEASE MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

What we do:

- educate and raise awareness among floaters, landowners, outfitters, policy makers, and the general public about invasive plant issues
- promote and share invasive plant research, management, and assessment efforts
- collaborate with Smith River users, private landowners, and public land managers to develop invasive plant management strategies that are integrated, cooperative, cost-effective, and sustainable

Ways You Can Help

- 1 **Clean your clothing, gear, and boats before and after your river trip to avoid transporting seeds to and from the river.**
- 2 **Learn to recognize the invasive plants you might find during your visit to the Smith River.**
- 3 **Avoid passing through infestations where you might pick up seeds on your clothing.**
- 4 **Learn more about invasive plant issues on the Smith River and in other areas. Spread the word by sharing your new knowledge with others.**
- 5 **Let your legislators know that you are concerned about invasive plants.**
- 6 **Support invasive plant management, research, and assessment efforts. MAKE A DONATION TO THE SMITH RIVER HABITAT PROJECT!**

To learn more, contact

Meagher County Weed District
406/547 2196

Cascade County Weed District
406/454 6920

Helena National Forest
406/266 3425

Lewis & Clark National Forest
406/547 3361

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
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Photo credits:
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Invasive Plants
Changing the Face of the Smith River

