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Working Together for Healthy Landscapes and Quality Lifestyles

PRESS RELEASE

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Bugs You Can Love

The increased moisture of the 2009 season not only gave northeastern Nevada lush vegetation, it also increased Elko County's noxious weed problem. However, a coordinated plan was in place to implement a biological weed control project designed to increase weed abatement activities by releasing natural insect enemies against two noxious weed species, leafy spurge and Canada thistle.

Volunteers along with landowners, ranchers, agency personnel, and 4-H members released over 80,000 Leafy Spurge flea beetles and 2,300 Canada thistle stem mining weevils between July 17th and 24th, 2009. There were approximately 50 release sites located within a 46,000 acre project area along the west-facing foothills of the Ruby Mountains from Harrison Pass to Secret Pass on federal, state, and private lands. Ed Sarmon of the Lamoille Soil Conservation District "would like to thank the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group for their efforts in procuring the leafy spurge beetles. We were excited to get so many beetles to release on the spreading infestation of spurge. The beetles are another tool to use in conjunction with other control methods in our attempt to keep native plant communities working in the Lamoille Valley and the Ruby Mountains."

Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group coordinated financing and implementation of the project. A \$4500 grant to help fund the project was gained from the National Forest Foundation (NFF). The Elko Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation and the Jiggs, Lamoille, and Starr Valley Conservation Districts also contributed a total of \$5700 in funds. Enthusiastic participation from area residents, local 4-H clubs, area ranchers and landowners, US Forest Service, Nevada Division of Forestry, South Fork State Park, and Conservation District members ensured implementation success. The partners of the 2009 Biological Control project will be monitoring release sites for success, and making ongoing plans to contain weeds. Interest is growing in biological control methods, making additional projects a likelihood.

According to *Biological Control of Invasive Plants in the United States* (Coombs et al), the aim of biological control is to reunite natural enemies with the target invasive plant to reduce the weed's impacts and restore at least a part of the ecological balance in our native ecosystems. Once established at a site, biological control agents are self-perpetuating and will continue to attack the target weed year after year, making them a cost-effective weed management tool.

Weeds interfere with private property values, they reduce production of forest and rangeland sites, affect the proper functioning of riparian zones, and diminish wildlife habitat. Weed abatement is everyone's issue and challenge. For more information on this project, please contact Teven Perkins at 775-777-1437.

Nolan Cumming of the Mound Valley 4-H Club releases weevils in a Canada thistle patch.