

Residents play role in fighting invasive weeds

By Wendy West

Invasive weeds raise seasonal fire danger and threaten lake water quality. Preventing the introduction of invasive weeds is the best way to protect the Lake Tahoe Basin from the damage and impacts of these invaders.

By identifying new infestations early and controlling them quickly, landowners can protect their properties and the lake, and avoid the expensive control costs associated with larger infestations.

Late summer and fall are the perfect time to identify and report terrestrial – on land – invasive weeds. The Lake Tahoe Basin Weed Coordinating Group has a new online tool to make it easier. The new website provides maps of known invasive weed sites and allows landowners, concerned citizens and land managers to report sightings of new infestations. Users will also find extensive weed identification tools and photos to help recognize the area's priority invasive plants. All reports are verified by a LTBWCG team member.

Group members then determine the best way to control the weeds before they become established.

Left unchecked, invasive weeds can damage forests, roads, trails, parks, neighborhoods and natural areas. Once established, weed infestations are difficult and expensive to control and can reduce land values, damage water quality and clarity, contribute to soil erosion, displace native plants and degrade wildlife habitat.

Area residents can help stop the spread of invasive weeds by making sure they are not moving seeds or plant parts that can

start new weeds in uninfested areas. Hikers, bikers and fisherman should remove all plant parts and seeds from their boots, clothing and equipment before leaving an area to prevent weed spread.

Vehicle undercarriages and tires should be checked before moving from a weed-infested area and seeds and plant parts should be removed, bagged and placed in a garbage receptacle.

By taking a few simple steps to prevent introduction and report new invasive weed sites, concerned citizens, land managers and landowners can help protect the Lake Tahoe Basin. Prevention and early detection are always the most effective and least expensive options when managing invasive weeds.

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