

FIRST STATEWIDE INVASIVE SPECIES STUDY TAKES OREGON'S PULSE

Public awareness study conducted on behalf of the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC)

Key Preliminary Findings

Oregonians are concerned about invasives and pleased to be asked their views.

- Almost a quarter of those surveyed (225) took time to respond to an open-ended question with detailed, written answers (only 4–5 were negative about survey and/or importance of invasive species).

"I like that someone is asking the public what it is they think of this. . . . Thank you for allowing me to take this survey and voice my concern." "Glad the state is doing a survey about this topic." "Thanks for the information and concern for our environment."

Oregonians have some understanding and appear willing to learn more.

- More than three-quarters (79%) know what an invasive species is and many are concerned about the issue.
- Sixty-five percent thought that the most serious outcome associated with non-native plants and animals in Oregon was harm to native plants and wildlife.
- The general population's understanding is most similar to that of anglers, boaters, and hunters; Master Gardeners and Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) members were more knowledgeable and likely to be aware of or to have participated in invasive species activities.
- Many (65%) are willing to learn more.

"Making more people aware by using any and all means to get their attention and educate them will help control the problem of invasive species." "I will be interested to learn more, and will watch for future outreach."

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Despite some understanding and concern, Oregonians see real barriers to tackling the issue.

- They lack information about details of prevention (what, where, when, how) and who is responsible (state, county, local), and the majority perceive that city and county governments are no better than "slightly effective" in preventing or halting invasives. (Yet most weed control efforts, for example, are at the county level.)
- They are not clear about which species are problems. For example, 20% don't know if wheat is; few know about quagga mussels and feral pigs (the term "feral" is not well understood) and fewer still about yellow-flag iris.
- A majority felt that their own actions and those of their family / friends would be no better than "slightly effective" in preventing and stopping invasives. They hesitate about committing to collective effort: fewer than 30% said they would "Join a group that takes action (through education and outreach) to stop the spread of non-native plants and animals."

"Part of the reason why I don't get involved with being active in this problem is that I do not feel I can make a positive contribution. After all, I can remove ivy from my local park, but the entire state is plagued . . . How can that possibly help?"

Oregonians are looking for leadership.

- State agencies, NGOs, OPB, OSU Extension, hobby clubs, and newspapers are seen as useful sources of environmental information.
- Those surveyed see institutions as essential actors. A majority said these entities could be "very" or "moderately" effective in the fight against invasives (in approximately descending order): state agencies, federal agencies, NGOs, and hobby clubs.
- Early indications are that a majority of the public is aware of and giving attention to the "Stop the Invasion" media campaign and related informational efforts. (We hope to deepen our understanding with a follow-up study.)

Study details and contact information on reverse

Study Details

Collaborative Effort

- The study was a foundation for OISC's invasive species awareness and action campaign; partnership between OPB, SOLV, and The Nature Conservancy.
- The survey was supported by Oregon Sea Grant and OISC members; the focus group study was supported by Oregon Sea Grant.

Two Research Approaches:

- The 17-question OISC statewide survey on invasive species awareness was conducted online and through postal mail during February and March 2008. It was led by OSU faculty Lynn Dierking, Samuel Chan, and Joseph Cone, and administered by OSU's Survey Research Center.
Six stakeholder groups were surveyed (general population, OPB members, boaters, anglers, hunters, and Master Gardeners).
(n=922; adjusted response rate 23.8%)
- The focus group study on knowledge, attitudes, and barriers toward invasive species prevention was conducted in summer and fall 2007 by OSU master's student Gwenn Kubeck.
Participants were from four stakeholder groups (boaters, anglers, hunters, and Master Gardeners).
(n=40)

Oregon Sea Grant is a marine research and education program based at Oregon State University. Sea Grant is a unique partnership with public and private sectors, combining research, education, and technology transfer for public service.

Learn More about the Study

- The full survey report will be available in fall 2008; an executive summary of the focus group study is available through Samuel Chan (contact information below).

- For more information about the study, contact:

Lynn D. Dierking

Sea Grant Professor in Free-Choice Learning
Department of Science and Mathematics
Education

Oregon State University

235 Weniger Hall

Corvallis, OR 97331

541.737.1823

dierkinl@science.oregonstate.edu

Samuel Chan

Assistant Professor

Watershed Health Educator/ Aquatic Invasive
Species Specialist

Sea Grant College Program and Extension Service
307 Ballard Hall

Oregon State University

Corvallis, OR 97331

503.679.4828

samuel.chan@oregonstate.edu

Joseph Cone

Assistant Director

Oregon Sea Grant

322 Kerr Admin. Bldg.

Oregon State University

Corvallis, OR 97331

541.737.0756

joe.cone@oregonstate.edu