

# National Association of Conservation Districts

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April 15, 2016

Senator Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

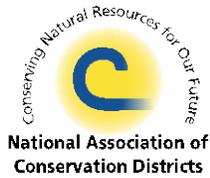
On behalf of the nation's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) urges you to bring up and move favorably out of committee, S.2240 the "Federal Lands Invasive Species Control, Prevention and Management Act" so it can be considered by the full Senate.

Established under state law, conservation districts are local units of government charged with carrying out natural resource management programs created or adjusted based on local needs. Conservation districts are directly connected to local populations and landowners. They are legally obligated to conserve and restore range, forest, and wetlands, improve wildlife habitat, control and prevent soil erosion, further the conservation and beneficial application of water, and to reach out to communities and schools to teach them the value of natural resources and encourage conservation efforts. However, in the absence of effective interagency coordination and communication under the current federal invasive species management practices, districts' ability to address and manage invasive species concerns has been severely hampered. Without addressing and taking steps to adapt the current federal invasive species policy, districts' work will continue to be at a disadvantage and will not be able to properly address this critical area of natural resource concern.

Proper management is essential to the success and overall health of both private and public land. The issue of invasive species is not one that has a quick and easy answer; it is a problem that is multifaceted and will continue to cause new and growing management challenges in the face of a rapidly globalizing world. The impact of invasive species is one that can be felt and seen everywhere—from chestnut blight that has led to the near obliteration of the American Chestnut tree, to the spread of Emerald ash borers which are devastating ash trees, to white nose syndrome which has been attributed to at least 5.7 million North American bat deaths, to zebra mussels choking our nation's fresh water systems. Invasive species push out native species, add undue stress to the ecosystems, and harm local communities' economic and human health. In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that invasive species cost the U.S. more than \$120 billion a year. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management published a report estimating that invasive plants have been spreading across public lands at a rate of 4,600 acres a day. There simply is no time to wait on enacting change to the federal government's invasive species management practices.

NACD applauds and supports the following steps taken by S.2240:

- A requirement that seventy-five percent of currently allocated funds for addressing or including invasive species management be used for "on-the-ground control and management of invasive species."
- Inclusion of Categorical Exclusions for use in high-risk invasive encroachment scenarios.
- US Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior collaboration with state/local/tribal experts to develop new invasive species management plans.



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- Understanding of the importance of cooperative agreements and MOUs as effective ways to ensure widespread use of the new management plans.
- Target goal of a five percent annual reduction in invasive species.

NACD recommends including in the final version of the bill, the Secretary of Defense under the legislation's definition of term "Secretary concerned." The Secretary of Defense has an equal level of responsibility as their fellow Secretaries when it comes to federal efforts to control and manage invasive species on federal land. The Department of Defense controls many properties in and outside the United States, with air and marine ports of entry into and within the country that should be considered high risk of invasive species migration.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you as we continue to serve the nation through natural resource conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee D. McDaniel". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light gray rectangular box.

Lee D. McDaniel  
NACD President