



Grant to Help Inyo Keep Invasive Weeds at Bay

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Inyo County recently received \$88,000 to manage invasive weeds along the Lower Owens River.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board approved \$5.2 million in Proposition 84 grant awards last week to assist Sierra ranchers and farmers in 18 counties with conservation measures designed to protect California's most important watersheds. The funding award includes \$88,249 for weed control in Inyo and Mono counties, which will be used along the Lower Owens River Project.

Inyo County Agricultural Department Program Coordinator Nate Reade said that a long-standing weed management agreement between Inyo County and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power that called for eradication of non-native invasive weeds throughout the Eastern Sierra expired last year.

Currently, Inyo County has agreed to provide up to \$50,000 for weed management on the LORP, and with the \$88,000 from the SNC, Reade said the county Ag Commissioner's Department hopes to be able to hire two seasonal staffers to track down and eradicate invasive weeds on the LORP.

"For the most part, we're off City of L.A. lands (with the exception of the LORP) but we help out here and there with some of the local growers and agencies," Reade said, explaining that weed management crews are available to help residents dealing with tough invasive plants such as perennial pepperweed.

But a majority of the funding will go towards keeping weeds off the LORP, he said.

"We have very few invasive weeds in the LORP because we've worked very hard to keep them out of there," Reade said. "We got funding in 2007 and developed a strategy that has worked well that we're going to use on the LORP." Reade said that strategy, as described in the SNC grant application, is "Shock and Awe."

"We attack the population while it's still manageable, and the goal is that it will take less work over time" because the invasive species will not be able to get a foothold in the area, Reade said.

The main focus for the Ag Department is making sure the hard-to-kill and fast-growing perennial pepperweed doesn't take root on the LORP. He also said crews will continue ongoing surveys of the LORP to ensure that other species don't begin to crop up.

"The LORP is still a recovering area after rewatering, and the native plant communities are still recovering," Reade said. "These opportunistic weeds prevent the native vegetation from growing there. Our goal is to protect the local agricultural producers, and we're concerned about protecting the environment and our natural resources."

With the completion of this round of grants, the SNC said it has awarded \$52 million to nearly 300 projects in the Sierra in the past five years to fund a wide variety of projects, including those to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire, protect landscapes and improve watershed health.

"These working landscapes have a rich and important place in our region, so preserving that heritage is critical to our future," said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. "These lands provide not only economic benefits, but substantial natural resource benefits as well. These projects will help conserve or restore land and water resources valuable to



A crew member from Inyo County Weed Abatement works to clear a patch of noxious weeds on LADWP land. The Inyo County Ag Department recently received an \$88,249 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for weed abatement efforts this year. Photo courtesy Nate Reade/Inyo County Ag Department

those living downstream.”

The SNC said it chose to fund projects that will result in reduced erosion, meadow and stream restoration, conservation easements, ranch infrastructure development, invasive species removal and pre-project environmental work.

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