



Yellow starthistle

PREVENTION MOS

Julie Kraft

Imagine hiking a favorite trail in Wyoming. Birds are chirping, a slight breeze is carrying the smell of wildflowers, an elk is lounging in the shade of an aspen grove. Then, OUCH! You recoil as something pokes your leg! “Ugh, another thistle,” you grumble and continue on your way.

Now imagine a Wyoming without those pokey thistles (which are so thick in some places people can barely walk through them). What if settlers had been able to prevent their introduction all those years ago?

The Wyoming Weed and Pest Council is promoting “PlayCleanGo: Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks,” a program to disrupt the link between invasive species and outdoor recreation and other ways they are spread.

PlayCleanGo provides outdoor recreationists with a call to action to become aware, attentive, and

accountable for stopping the spread of invasive plants and animals.

Some invasive species, like Canada and musk thistles, will never be eradicated; however, with integrated management, they can be kept in check. But what about new invasive species threatening entry into Wyoming? We can prevent zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, yellow starthistle, and others from invading our favorite recreation sites, but we all have to work together.

Preventing invasive species from establishing is the cheapest and most effective way to manage them. What can we do to prevent invasive species from being brought here and moved from place to place? We can PlayCleanGo!

PlayCleanGo was recently adopted as the national education campaign by the North American Invasive Species Management Association. PlayCleanGo encourages

VEHICLES, SHOES, ANIMALS — INVASIVE SPECIES HAVE

Were your shoelaces and socks full of seeds when you returned to the trailhead from your favorite hunting spot?

Seeds from the noxious weed houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and the invasive grass species cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) stick to clothing and animal fur. The simple step of Come Clean, Leave Clean will prevent taking new species into and out of your favorite backcountry spots. Remove the seeds and dispose of them in the trash.

Seeds, seed heads and even entire plants can be moved in the wheels and tracks of utility or all-terrain vehicles. The seed heads of Spotted knapweed

THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD TO STOP INVASIVE SPECIES

recreationists to get out and enjoy the outdoors and clean their gear before moving to a new location.

Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks by implementing these four steps:

- Remove plants, insects, and mud from boots, gear, pets, and vehicles.
- Clean gear before entering and leaving a recreation site.
- Stay on designated roads and trails.
- Use certified hay and local firewood.

You can be sure **Julie Kraft** follows her own advice. She is the Sublette County Weed and Pest assistant supervisor and marketing and outreach committee chair of the North American Invasive Species Management Association. She can be reached at (307) 367-4728 or jewelryjoe@hotmail.com.

How to get involved

The North American Invasive Species Management Association invites you to join those working to preserve Wyoming's natural resources by becoming a partner at Playcleango.org. There are over 200 partners, including government agencies, nonprofits, and private businesses.

The Wyoming Weed and Pest Council and PlayCleanGo are also on Facebook and Twitter. Follow them for updates, giveaways, and information. In Wyoming, PlayCleanGo is supported by the Governor's Taskforce on Forests, Wyoming State Forestry Division, USFS State and Private Forestry, and the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council.

LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAVEL THE WORLD

(*Centaurea maculosa*) and black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), for example, can become stuck in the mud on vehicles and move to new areas. Come Clean, Leave Clean by having clean equipment.

Staying on designated trails decreases soil disturbance and, if you happen to be carrying a weed seed, it will be left on the trail or road where invasive species professionals have a better chance of implementing early detection and rapid response management. Weeds transported off trail are less likely to be found by someone surveying the area for weeds.

