



**For Immediate Release**

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## **National Invasive Species Awareness Week to Focus on Harmful Nonnative Species**

**LAWRENCE, Kansas** – February 23, 2011 – A broad coalition of stakeholders will gather next week to spotlight harmful invasive species that cause a multibillion-dollar annual drain on our nation’s economy. They will be participating in activities for National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW), scheduled for February 28-March 4 in Washington, D.C.

“The Federal government manages around 650 million acres of land, and an estimated 50 million acres are infested by invaders,” says Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D., science policy director for the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA). “These nonnative species can destroy wildlife and aquatic habitats and cause major losses in agriculture, forestry and other segments of our nation’s economy. Coordinated, efficient and effective prevention and management is imperative.”

WSSA is among the many public and private stakeholders working with the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) to organize education and awareness events. WSSA will host a seminar on Capitol Hill featuring Dr. Richard Mack from Washington State University. Mack will present research on how invasive grass species contribute to rangeland fires in the Western U.S.

“Instead of continuing to spend public funds indefinitely to clean up after the last fire and brace ourselves for the next one, a concerted effort is needed to radically change much of our research and restoration efforts so that we can permanently reduce the role of these devastating invasive grasses,” Van Wychen said.

The weeklong program also will include state and regional workshops, briefings on regional invasive species outbreaks and an announcement of a new national agenda for invasive species control. Educational programs and events are scheduled at the Department of Interior, USDA, the U.S. Botanic Garden and the National Aquarium.

For more information and details on free registration, visit <http://www.nisaw.org>.

### **About the Weed Science Society of America**

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).