Members of the Utah-Idaho Cooperative Weed Management Area recognized that one of the greatest threats to their landscape was new, small infestations of noxious weeds. So, they decided to take a new direction in their cooperative weed control activities. Using grants from the U.S. Forest Service they launched an attack on noxious weeds that exist in very few sites and cover small areas.

There are thousands of acres of dyer’s woad in their area but their ability to control it is limited and the costs are prohibitive. However, buffalobur, yellow toadflax, yellow starthistle and purple loosestrife are still in manageable populations that can be contained and eradicated. They targeted those plants.

To date they have released insects to control purple loosestrife at Pelican Pond in Cache County and treated nearby spots with chemical. Buffalobur, which existed in very few places in Cache County is eradicated in two sites and decreased in others. Yellow toadflax existed in two areas. After treatment, it has not been seen for two years. Yellow starthistle is treated at all sites. Some have been controlled with no recurring plants, other densities have been decreased. Monitoring has been an important part of the UICWMA project to track the success of their efforts and assure there are no new infestations of the weeds.

Helping the public understand the threat of these small infestations is a new challenge for the UICWMA. Residents easily recognize the need for work on large populations of weeds, but usually don’t understand the importance of eradicating small infestations of new invaders before they rage out of control. Working with partners, they have made presentations to interested groups and published brochures.

What is Early Detection & Rapid Response?

Early Detection and Rapid Response (ED&RR) is an approach to weed control that emphasizes controlling new, invading weeds while the populations are localized and small enough to be contained and eradicated. Costs for ED&RR are typically far less than the cost of containing and managing vast populations of weeds. This approach is more likely to totally eradicate weed infestations and prevent them from growing to unmanageable sizes.
Steps to Success:
◆ Combine efforts of five Utah and Idaho counties
◆ Sponsor two annual work days in each county
◆ Undertake professional education in order to recognize new species
◆ Communicate and cultivate relationships among the partners
◆ Share resources
◆ Actively inventory and monitor small infestations
◆ Maintain focus on Early Detection & Rapid Response
◆ Educate the public regarding the importance of ED&RR

Looking to the Future:
◆ Focus on efforts on rights-of-way and railroads
◆ Introduce more biocontrol in treatment areas
◆ Extend weed control to state and private lands
◆ Continue to engage the public
◆ Grant seeking and funding will continue to be an important component in the strategy to halt new invasions as they are sighted in the UICWMA.

What you can do:
◆ Report new infestations to your local county weed supervisor or Extension agent.
◆ Learn more about ED&RR on the web at utahweed.org

Crews spray for yellow toadflax in rough terrain in Cache County (top) and record the locations of noxious weeds (above) on a GPS unit. Cache County Weed Supervisor Joel Merritt (below) sees improvement at an area treated for toadflax.