

An Online Workshop for Wildland Weed Managers

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UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING PLANT INVASIONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR PRIORITIZING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



Introduction

The Center for Invasive Plant Management offers an online workshop on ecologically-based weed management for wildland weed managers.

The goal of the online workshop is to provide:

- An introduction to ecological principles and processes to better understand and assess weed populations
- An adaptive management framework for developing and prioritizing weed management strategies in conjunction with land-use goals
- A platform for exchanging information and ideas among land managers, and between land managers and scientists

Online Workshop Nuts and Bolts

General Information

- Facilitated by five weed ecologists from three western universities
- Eight weeks in length (Jan-Mar 2006)
- \$225 registration fee
- Continuing education units available
- Prerequisites: basic computer skills and completion of a hands-on weed course or equivalent experience
- Six hours per week time commitment

Weekly Module Topics

1. Principles of ecologically-based adaptive management
2. Invasion process
3. Risk assessment
4. Monitoring
5. Terminology (invasive & impact)
6. Break & self-assessment quiz
7. Management options & actions
8. Space/time scales & management

Group Interactions Occur Through:

- Online asynchronous discussions
- Online real-time chats
- A web conference (computer and phone)

Project

Participants draft an ecologically-based adaptive weed management plan for an area they manage.

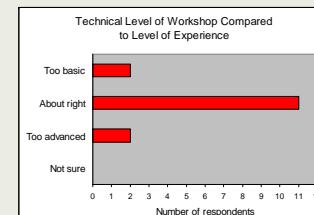
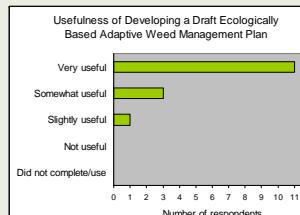
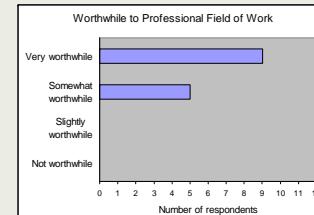
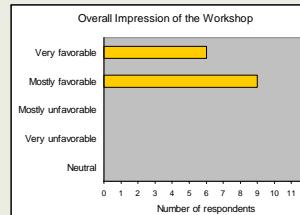
2006 Participants

Twenty-one individuals affiliated with government agencies and private organizations from 14 states and 1 province enrolled in the 2006 workshop. Eleven of the 21 registered for continuing education units through Montana State University.



How Valuable is the Online Workshop to Land Managers?

The 2006 online workshop was well received by land managers. Of the 21 participants, 15 (71%) successfully completed the workshop and 16 provided anonymous responses to a web-based evaluation.



Most Effective Aspects of Workshop

- Developing draft weed management plan and receiving instructor feedback.
- Online discussions were helpful and raised interesting questions. Good way to share information and thoughts. Networking.
- Lecture and papers were informative. Quality teaching materials. Inspired to rethink management approaches.
- Multiple instructors with range of expertise. Instructor participation/feedback.

Participation Decline in Workshop

The primary reason given was competing work-related demands. Other reasons include the challenges of the online learning format and computer/technical problems.

Summary

The online workshop:

- Assists land managers in increasing their science-based knowledge and in applying that knowledge to their management situation
- Brings together land managers and scientists from diverse backgrounds who share a wealth of ideas and experiences (greatly contributes to collaborative learning)
- Offers a new opportunity for professional development

Individuals most suited to the online learning format:

- Have time management skills
- Are self-motivated
- Like to share ideas/experiences
- Communicate well through writing
- Have patience to occasionally deal with quirky computer issues ;-)