

Pima Association of Governments

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March 1, 2007

Governor Janet Napolitano
State Capitol
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Subject: Buffelgrass Summit and Sense of the Summit Resolution

Dear Governor Napolitano:

On February 9, 2007, over 120 community leaders and scientists participated in a Buffelgrass Summit held at the J.W. Marriott Starr Pass Resort in Tucson (www.buffelgrass.org). The purpose of the summit was to highlight the need for urgent and concerted action to respond to the growing threat posed by the spread of buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*), arguably the most problematic invasive species in the southern half of our state. The summit was sponsored by Pima County, the University of Arizona, Pima Association of Governments, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the City of Tucson and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

As you know, buffelgrass is a fire-prone African perennial grass that is spreading rapidly across the desert landscapes of southern and central Arizona. This plant is expanding into new areas and intensifying its presence - *both the expansion and the costs of control are doubling every year* – resulting in the need for immediate action. If adequate control measures are not taken in the near term, buffelgrass will become dominant throughout much of the Sonoran Desert – eventually replacing native cactus with an unsightly grassland, with dormant plants most of the year that are prone to fire.

The Buffelgrass Summit provided an opportunity for agency representatives and community leaders to start preparing a comprehensive plan to combat this invasive plant. Effective control requires prioritization, public support, careful planning, and timely execution of control and eradication efforts. One outcome of the Buffelgrass Summit was the development of a comprehensive action plan and the initiation of region-wide coordination efforts.

The Buffelgrass Summit focused attention on this challenge and is serving as a catalyst for action. Participants at the Summit overwhelmingly endorsed a "Sense of the Summit Resolution" which declared:

"The establishment of buffelgrass throughout central and southern Arizona is a serious and long-term threat that must be addressed in as comprehensive, effective and expeditious a manner as possible. A Buffelgrass Management Plan, initially focused on public lands and rights-of-way, is urgently required. Successful mitigation of buffelgrass impacts over the region will require that citizens, agencies and all levels of government cooperate across jurisdictional boundaries to counter this threat."

Key members of your administration and members of the Legislature, including Sen. Tim Bee and Rep. Olivia Cajero Bedford, attended the forum and benefited from the shared sense of urgency and commitment. In the formal presentations and subsequent breakout discussions, several Summit participants noted that our Buffelgrass Action Plan, being integrative and multi-jurisdictional, could provide a template for managing other invasive species in Arizona and the West.

Shortly after the Summit, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution supporting the goals of the Buffelgrass Summit. Enclosed is a copy of that resolution and of an earlier resolution (2005-265) that identified a series of actions that the county is now pursuing.

Your recently announced intention to renew the work of the Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council is an important step forward. As we move forward to implement the Summit's action plan, we invite your collaboration and thank you in advance for supporting efforts to control and reverse the further spread of buffelgrass.

Respectfully,

(original signed by)

Gary G. Hayes
Executive Director

cc: C. H. Huckelberry, Pima County
Kerry Baldwin, Pima County
Dr. Julio Betancourt, USGS
Christine Conte, Arizona Sonora Desert Museum