

## Fiscal Highlights

### **Invasive Species Mitigation Allocation Process To Be Tweaked** - Ivan D. Djambov

During the 2012 General Session, the Legislature appropriated \$1 million from the General Fund to the Invasive Species Mitigation restricted account administered by the Department of Agriculture and Food. In June 2012, the department distributed the FY 2013 funding as follows: 90% for 31 invasive species mitigation projects and 10% for administration. However, the department's Project Ranking Criteria did not include all the criteria identified in UCA 4-2-8.7(4) when the grants were awarded.

#### **Evaluation Process**

At the request of the department, the 2013 Legislature made changes to UCA 4-2-8.7. The evaluation criteria for the next round of grants was sent to potential applicants before the end of the 2013 General Session, therefore they did not reflect these changes. The Damage Reduction category of the department's ranking criteria (worth 10 points of the total 100) contains items that were eliminated from the statute during the session. The criteria states: The project will have a positive impact to reduce damage to at least one of the following: air pollution, flooding, reduced visibility on a highway, increasing encroachment of an invasive species, soil erosion, degraded water quality, release of carbon, a local economy, habitat for wildlife or livestock. Air pollution, reduced visibility on a highway, degraded water quality, release of carbon, and a local economy were eliminated from the statute.

The statute currently reads:

(4) In giving a grant, the department shall consider the effectiveness of a project in preventing at least one of the following:

- (a) encroachment of an invasive species;
- (b) soil erosion;
- (c) flooding;
- (d) the risk of catastrophic wildfire; or
- (e) damage to habitat for wildlife or livestock.

The department administration will revise the criteria to reflect the language in the statute before the grant information is sent to potential applicants in 2014.

#### **Funding Distribution**

The 2012 Legislature appropriated \$1 million ongoing from the General Fund to the Invasive Species Mitigation restricted account to be used in FY 2013. The grants' funding for FY 2013 was distributed as follows: 73% for 13 large watershed projects and 17% for 18 smaller-scale projects. Almost all the funded projects were proposed by county weed departments or CWMA's (Cooperative Weed Management Area).

The 2013 Legislature added another \$1 million ongoing from the General Fund to this account, and starting in FY 2014, the total funding for invasive species mitigation is \$2 million. In June 2013, the

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department allocated \$1.3 million to fund 31 projects for FY 2014. The figure below provides the list of all the funded projects for both FY 2013 and FY 2014.

The remaining \$700,000 for FY 2014 was set aside for the following purposes: \$200,000 for administration and monitoring expenses, and \$500,000 for catastrophic fire mitigation projects (which have not yet been identified).