

Pull buffelgrass, help save our desert

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Time to get out and pull a few weeds. National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week, which begins today, is a ripe opportunity to help stop the invasive buffelgrass that threatens our community.

Non-native buffelgrass is a state-listed noxious weed originally introduced to control erosion, according to the 2006 Greater Tucson Region Indicators Report produced by the Pima Association of Governments. Buffelgrass, if allowed to grow unchecked, threatens to displace our region's native plants. In addition, it can "convert fireproof shrublands characterized by saguaro cactus and other desert shrubs and cacti into a highly flammable and monotonous grassland," according to PAG press materials.

Thousands of acres of desert are infested with aggressive buffelgrass, from urban vacant lots to parkland such as Sabino Canyon. Buffelgrass threatens "the wildlife that uses native plants for food, ground cover, nesting and hunting perches in Sabino Canyon," Heidi Schewel, public information officer for the Santa Catalina Ranger District, said in the Feb. 1 Star.

In addition to a negative impact on our desertscape and wildlife, PAG notes that the weed can affect the economy. "The tourism and hospitality industry, and its associated tax base, are especially threatened if the buffelgrass invasion continues undeterred."

For information on how you can help, go online to buffelgrass.org/

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