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## Volunteer to beat back buffelgrass

By Dennis Dickerson

*SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR*

Buffelgrass, a weed that is quickly and vastly invading Southern Arizona, must be controlled. The greater community needs to get involved and the next opportunity to do so is on Saturday, Feb. 7, Beat Back Buffelgrass Day.

This is the second annual volunteer event coordinated by Pima Association of Governments. Last year, more than 200 people volunteered and removed more than 4,000 plants. Although dents are made in the buffelgrass invasion, the weed continues to spread across the region.

Once you know what buffelgrass looks like, you will be amazed at how it has spread along our roadsides and into the foothills.

This is a serious threat to the ecology of the desert since buffelgrass burns in excess of 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit — enough to char any saguaro or other native vegetation that is surrounded by buffelgrass. The natural Sonoran Desert environment normally does not burn.

Buffelgrass, in fact, is creating a new ecosystem, one that will eventually be absent of saguaros and other cactus if buffelgrass is not controlled.

Buffelgrass cannot be eliminated overnight, but the progress made on Beat Back Buffelgrass Day will restore some areas and inspire others to take up the challenge.

We really have few opportunities to personally change the world or to save an ecosystem — but this is one opportunity that is staring back at you as you drive around in your neighborhood or hike a trail in a local park.

A small but growing number of volunteers have worked on weekends over the past year to remove buffelgrass. The difference where plants were removed was striking. Cactus that had been swamped by buffelgrass became visible, restoring the natural setting in which they thrive.

You can help make a difference by volunteering on Feb. 7.

### On the Web

Visit [www.buffelgrass.org](http://www.buffelgrass.org) to learn more about volunteer efforts and register to help preserve the Sonoran Desert by helping to root out buffelgrass.

Write to Dennis Dickerson at [ddickerson@pagnet.org](mailto:ddickerson@pagnet.org)

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