



For Immediate Release
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CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

“Don’t Let it Loose” Invasive Species Media Contest

PORTLAND, Oregon –Wherever you look, animals and plants that evolved somewhere else are showing up where they’re not wanted. Here in Oregon, things are no different. On the “front lines,” the Oregon Invasive Species Council (OISC) and Oregon Sea Grant’s Watershed and Invasive Species Education or “WISE” Teacher Program are announcing their **Don't Let It Loose Media Contest** today, a new outreach campaign to stop the tide of non-native species into the Pacific Northwest. Scientific and educational professionals see student-led efforts as highly beneficial in spreading the economic and environmentally important message.

High school students are invited to design and submit posters that will encourage good environmental citizenship by discouraging the public from releasing invasive species into our watersheds. “Don't Let It Loose” is a theme that resonates within the classroom and home alike, challenging students, teachers and parents to examine their connection with wildlife species.

One of the existing pathways in the spread of harmful invasive species is the release of purchased and captured animals and plants. Teachers and students, unaware of their impact, dispose of unwanted live study specimens of fish, plants, snails, crayfish, frogs or turtles into local waters, letting them go down storm drains, or flushing them down the toilet. When these and other species are released inadvertently or intentionally, they threaten the integrity of our local ecosystems through competition and habitat degradation.

Participating high school students will be asked to create either a static piece of artwork (poster) or a movie that is original, aesthetic and successfully conveys the “Don’t Let it Loose” message. For details about how to enter the contest, visit the Oregon Invasive Species Council’s website: www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org

Prizes will include scholarship money and a year’s membership to the Native Plant Society of Oregon. “We are hoping that the chance to express themselves artistically and win public recognition for their efforts, as well as win prizes, will draw students to the Don't Let It Loose Contest,” says Thea Hayes, OISC Member and retired public school teacher.



The Oregon Invasive Species Council

www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org

The Council is comprised of representatives from six state agencies: Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State University (Sea Grant), Portland State University (Center for Lakes and Reservoirs), Oregon Department of Forestry, and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The remaining nine seats are members-at-large from government agencies, universities, industries, organizations or individuals having an interest in invasive species.

Oregon Sea Grant Watershed and Invasive Species Education Program (WISE)

<http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/invasive-species/wise>

The WISE program is dedicated to helping teachers learn about emerging watershed issues by engaging teachers and classrooms in learning about the science of watersheds. We offer teacher trainings, a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Based curriculum, and community building through outreach, social media, blogs, and local events.