WAGING WAR ON INVASIVE GRASSES
Preventing—Not Just Controlling—Rangeland Fires in the West

Washington, D.C., for immediate release — The featured speaker at a February 28 National C-FAR "Lunch~N~Learn" hill seminar on invasive species research will be Dr. Richard Mack, Washington State University.

"Instead of continuing to spend public funds indefinitely to clean up after the last fire and brace ourselves for the next one, a concerted effort is needed to radically change much of our research and restoration efforts so that we can permanently reduce the role of these devastating invaders," says Dr. Mack.

“We are pleased to help facilitate the necessary discussions about how multidisciplinary research and education can help attain long-term solutions for pressing agricultural and natural resource issues,” says Chuck Conner, President of the National Coalition for Food & Agricultural Research (National C-FAR). “This presentation is an excellent example of how federally funded food and agricultural research can produce the scientific outcomes and outreach needed to meet 21st century challenges and opportunities.”

Dr. Mack’s presentation will be available at http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp. This research seminar is being held in concert with National Invasive Species Awareness Week.

SUMMARY: Wildfires in the West’s grasslands are becoming increasingly large and costly to fight. Costs to restore (“patch up”) these grasslands are also accelerating in addition to the costs of property loss. Three non-native, highly invasive grasses cause much of this damage: cheatgrass, medusahead and buffel grass. Instead of continuing to spend public funds indefinitely to clean up after the last fire and brace ourselves for the next one, a concerted effort is needed to radically change much of our research and restoration efforts so that we can permanently reduce the role of these devastating invaders. Although scientific research can never guarantee a successful solution, identification of a clearly defined strategy (true restoration of these grasslands), tested, flexible tactics (thorough reclamation of each site targeted for management), and new tools (e.g. exploration of microbial biological control agents coupled with detailed genetic characterization of the invaders and their pathogens) seems apparent. The western grasslands form a huge legacy of the Nation’s natural resources, and their value needs to be restored and maintained through successful, sustained campaigns against these invasive grasses.

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NATIONAL C-FAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. National C-FAR’s Hill Seminar Series, now entering its sixth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series and Success Profiles help demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average. Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Chuck Conner are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.