



**CITY OF
TUCSON**

OFFICE OF THE
MAYOR

ROBERT E. WALKUP

February 9, 2010

Sarah Smallhouse, Chair
Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center
1955 E. 6th Street
Tucson, Arizona 85719

Sarah
Dear Ms. Smallhouse,

The City of Tucson is pleased to support the proposed Fiscal Year 2011 Congressional Appropriations request for buffelgrass control on federal lands in Southern Arizona. Tucson is surrounded by federal lands and all of our control efforts are negated unless this becomes a high priority for those agencies that control the various federal parcels.

The Buffelgrass invasion has serious consequences for our environment and our economy as the two are very closely linked in this region. The Sonoran Desert is a major economic driver for Tucson and all of Southern Arizona. People come to this region from around the country and the world for the climate and unique scenic beauty this landscape has to offer. Buffelgrass, by out-competing the native vegetation, is changing the ecology of the region irreparably. Also as the land becomes dominated by buffelgrass, native animals loose food and habitat. Soon the landscape will change from the iconic paloverde-saguaro habitat to a desert grassland.

As unfortunate as this ecological conversion would be, the greatest threat to native plants and animals, as well as to the human population, is fire. Buffelgrass was introduced to this region from the African Savanna where it thrives in drought conditions and experiences fire on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the Sonoran Desert is not adapted to fire and the plants and animals cannot survive a buffelgrass fire. Tests done in the Tucson Ayra Valley have shown that it burns at over 1,600°F. Native plants cannot survive the heat and native animals cannot outrun the fast-moving fire front.

Time is critical. It has been determined from current research that we are in the exponential growth phase of the invasion. As each season passes and the grass spreads, the costs rise and feasibility of eradication declines. In ten years, our ability to control it will be lost. We need to stop the spread now.

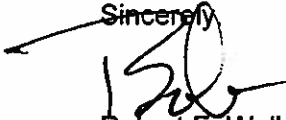
Tucson has several important buffelgrass mitigation programs, including the use of crop dusters to spray herbicide on buffelgrass on Water Department property, pulling and spraying on Sentinel Peak and hours of labor by volunteers organized by Tucson

Clean and Beautiful. For these efforts to be successful long term, we need cooperation and action from the adjacent federal landholders.

Federal agencies in this region have shown a willingness to cooperate and coordinate their activities with state and local jurisdictions fighting buffelgrass. Funding the agencies (Forest Service, National Park Service, Department of Defense) for these projects is critical for the region to respond to this extreme threat. Each agency needs the resources, money and personnel to address this issue over an extended period of time.

The City of Tucson applauds the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center for bringing this project forward with our congressional delegation, and we fully support the proposal.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Walkup', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Robert E. Walkup
Mayor