

Invasive Weeds Threaten Rare Toad and a Small Town's Economy

In 1994, residents near Nevada's Oasis Valley learned that a native amphibian, the Amargosa Toad, had been nominated for the endangered species list. As the only habitat where the small, rare toad resides, Oasis Valley is home to the one of the few wet portions of the United States' longest underground river, the Amargosa. The 12-mile stretch of river provides shallow, clear water that the toad needs to live and reproduce. Increasing infestations of invasive weeds threaten this water supply and its unique inhabitant.



Rare Amargosa Toads call the Oasis Valley home.

Challenge:

Located near the town of Beatty, Nevada, the Oasis Valley area has a long history of ranching and mining. Placing the Amargosa Toad on the endangered species list would put many residents' livelihoods at risk. Caught between the desire to save the Amargosa Toad from extinction and the need to protect the area's economic well-being, residents needed to act quickly to find a viable solution for all involved.

Solution:

Today, two groups are working to protect the Amargosa Toad – the Beatty Habitat Committee (created by Beatty's Town Advisory Board in 2000) and the Southern Nye County Cooperative Weed Management Area. Together, the groups are implementing a habitat restoration plan to preserve the toad's water supply in the Oasis Valley.

With a grant from the National Association of Counties (NACO), the groups are implementing a comprehensive weed management plan to re-establish a natural habitat and educate the community about the situation. In particular, the plan is targeting two non-native weeds – saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), and Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) – that stand out as the greatest threats to the river's water supply. These two invasive weeds can crowd out native vegetation and consume massive amounts of water. One acre of living saltcedar trees consumes 977,553 gallons of water per year. Focusing primarily on reducing the density of saltcedar, the weed management plan has been successful. The area is today being re-vegetated with native willow trees. The next step will be to use aquatic herbicides to control invasive plants closest to the river.

Result:

Thanks to the community's efforts, the Amargosa Toad has escaped the endangered species list, with improvements continuing on the stretch of river that serves as home to the rare toad. With a new appreciation for their valley's native habitat, Beatty-area residents can continue their way of life while protecting the area's unique habitat.



Saltcedar is a serious threat to the Amargosa River water supply.



Learn More:

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