

INVASIVE SPECIES MITIGATION FUND



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

Cheatgrass

bromus tectorum



Photo credit: Utah State University Extension

Cheatgrass, also commonly known as downy brome, is an annual growing up to 2 feet tall. It germinates in the fall, or early spring, flowers in early summer, matures and dies by midsummer. It has tiny soft hairs on leaves and sheaths and forms clusters of drooping flowers at the stem ends. Flowers can be greenish, red or purple. It grows in various climates and elevations, and is especially well adapted to the arid West. Because it forms many seeds and a large root system, it can completely replace native plants, creating huge populations of dense cover.



Utah's War on Cheatgrass

In August 2008, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food awarded \$2 million in Invasive Species Mitigation Funds to 10 different projects to control cheatgrass infestations throughout the state. The weed has fueled catastrophic wildfires throughout Utah and the West.

Cheatgrass makes a perfect wildland fuel – growing in early spring, forming dense cover, maturing and drying by midsummer, ready to flare with the first spark or lightning strike. Worse, after a fire, large areas of land are left devoid of vegetation and ready for even greater cheatgrass populations or other noxious weeds. This fact sheet highlights one of many projects throughout Utah aimed at reducing cheatgrass in vulnerable wildland areas.

Milford Flat Fire

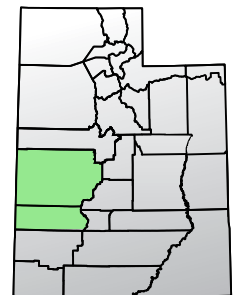
In July 2007, the Milford Flat wildfire burned fast and hot, consuming over 363,046 acres in Beaver and Millard counties before it was contained. Cheatgrass, sagebrush and dense piñon-juniper stands fueled the fire, the largest in Utah history.

Now the BLM Cedar City Field Office is working with partners to create green strips seeded with fire-resistant plants to break up the fire cycles that plague the area. Land managers emphasize that planting fire-resistant vegetation does not guarantee plants will not burn, but it may slow the spread of fire, so fire crews can contain it sooner.

The green strips are being planted along roads from Lynndyl to Milford. Using large Ely chains to loosen the soil, aerial seeding and rangeland drills, over 19,700 acres are being planted on public and private lands.

Partners in the project are the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Forestry Fire and State Lands, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rocky Mountain Power, conservation districts and private landowners.

Paul Briggs of the BLM explained that the project has been a great partnership effort. Utah Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands has managed contracts and other fiscal matters, while the BLM has provided equipment, personnel and gasoline. The Invasive Species Mitigation Fund contributed \$542,756 to the project. The BLM contributed \$720,450.



A successful reseeded of an area damaged by the Milford Flat wildfire.