

Why should you care about invasive plants? According to the California Invasive Plant Council:

- Nationally, invasive species are the second-greatest threat to endangered species, after habitat destruction.
- Invasive plants crowd out crops and rangeland forage. They can be low in nutrition or even toxic to livestock.
- Invasive plants can make swimming, hiking, boating, and biking difficult, and impact photography and wildlife viewing.

Much of the Merced River Canyon is still free of these pests. The Watershed Council and the Bureau of Land Management have partnered for several years to stop the spread of yellow starthistle in the river canyon. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has awarded the Watershed Council a grant to continue its ongoing attack on yellow starthistle, which now includes managing Italian thistle as well.

The targeted area for this project (as in years past) is the Briceburg Road and the Wild & Scenic Trail to the North Fork of the Merced River. Hand pulling and mowing in earlier projects have proved effective in reducing a targeted yellow starthistle infestation. This grant provides the funding to hire crews to continue this method of invasive weed management.

Beginning at the end of April, the crews have spent several weeks combing the steep hillsides and drainages for Italian thistle and are just now finishing up with yellow starthistle removal. This will wrap up the weed work for this year.