



WEEDS: the root of the problem

Many pollutants like trash, fertilizers, and oil wreak havoc on our water supply in the Truckee Meadows, but did you know that weeds also impact our water quality? That's right - weeds. Weeds may not seem to be a very hot topic at the moment, however, they cause much more damage than you would think. Noxious weeds - as in weeds that have been identified by the state of Nevada to be harmful to agriculture, the general public, or the environment - can cause countless problems aside from damaging the aesthetic value of communities. Other ways in which noxious weeds can impact our community include:

Decreased Water Quality

Weeds can impact water quality in a number of ways. Erosion leads to increased sediment in our waterways, increased sediment leads to higher temperatures and thus lower oxygen levels, and the potential use of herbicides on weeds near riverbanks can drain into waterways and can cause algae blooms.

Displaced Wildlife and Native Plants

Nutrients can be hard to come by, especially when you're competing with an invasive weed. Weeds will out-compete other plants for nutrients, sunlight, and space, leaving native flora in the dust. While the native plants are suffering, so are the local animals. The native fauna had adapted to co-exist with certain plant species, and when those plants are out-competed by weeds, the animals have lost their source of food and shelter.

Reduced Recreation Potential

The presence of weeds affects the aesthetic value of properties as well as the health of native species. Higher levels of sedimentation in our waterways, increased risk of erosion and flash floods as well as fewer sightings of native flora and fauna will lead to a lack of opportunity for recreational activities.

Increased Fire Danger

Once weeds have gone dry they become an extreme fire hazard. Invasive species such as Cheatgrass and Medusahead are quite common as well as flammable.

In an attempt to stop weeds in their tracks and to pay for damages caused by weeds, the United States pays up to \$137 billion every year.

Spread the Word, Not the Weed

Other than eradication, there are many other ways that you can help slow the spread of invasive weeds. Some easy steps you can take and practice every day are:

- Come Clean: Before leaving home, take time to inspect and remove dirt, plants, and bugs from clothing, boots, gear, pets, and vehicles.
- Leave Clean: Before leaving the trail, campsite, etc, inspect your belongings and remove any dirt, plants or bugs. Also, check your pet's paws and fur!
- Stay on designated trails: Stay on the designated trail when walking, hiking, running, biking, or riding your horse or OHV.
- Be informed: Learn about invasive species that are a problem in your area. Learn about and use native plants that grow well in your area. Visit [KTMB.org](http://ktmb.org) for more information!

To learn more about noxious weed identification and eradication, please visit Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful's website at ktmb.org and refer to our latest blog post: "Weeds: the root of the problem"

Source: http://agri.nv.gov/Plant/Noxious_Weeds/Noxious_Weed_List/

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SPONSORED CONTENT



Participants in last year's Poetry Out Loud Nevada semifinals perform at the Nevada Museum of Art. COURTESY/THE HOLLAND PROJECT

Speaking volumes

Poetry Out Loud

The power of the written word—especially when it comes to the often heightened emotion of poetry—can be tangible when it's spoken out loud. It's compelling to see, especially when the words really mean something to the speaker.

That's the idea behind Poetry Out Loud, a national initiative for students that encourages them to perform poems aloud as part of a competition. The latest round of this event for Nevada students will take place Feb. 29 at the Nevada Museum of Art.

The event taking place at the museum will feature readers from all over Washoe County. Students read two different poems that they've chosen from the Poetry Out Loud website, which has hundreds of them ranging from modern writers to classic authors.

Poetry Out Loud's semifinals are co-sponsored by The Holland Project, and one of its biggest supporters is Shaughn Richardson, a social studies teacher at Washoe Inspire Academy and Holland board member for four years. He first got involved with Poetry Out Loud as part of his own work with the Spoken Views Collective, the longtime performance poetry group that often performs at the venue. Spoken Views also has POL workshops and has formed an offshoot youth group, from which several members are a part of the POL event.

"I think poetry is an outlet for students who are more quiet and who need an outlet to vent their personal feeling and thoughts," Richardson said. "They may have so much going on that they have to write as a way to process their feelings and find their place in the world. It might seem trivial to other people in the world, but it's deeply meaningful for them, and they

can learn from it and then find a sense of themselves."

Richardson, who has judged POL before, said that the students are rated on accuracy of the words as well as performance elements. The top three students at the Reno event go on to the state finals in Las Vegas later this year.

"The judging takes place live, and it's kind of nerve wracking when you have to do it," Richardson said. "There's only so much time you have to judge and score them before the next performer comes up."

Richardson said that the competition has led to some participants writing poems of their own.

"A student might start out reading poetry in class as a freshman or sophomore, and then after they compete they continue to write and perform, whether it's slam poetry or whatever they want to pursue," Richardson said. "Some of have gone on to UNR and started their own poetry collective and collaborated with Spoken Views."

Kira Temple, an English teacher at McQueen High School who is also active in Poetry Out Loud, gets her students involved through information that the Nevada Arts Council sends the school district. She said all of the English teachers at McQueen ask their students to find a poem and read it. From there, they can then decide if they want to participate in a school-wide competition, which has been hosted by Grace Church.

While Temple said she hasn't witnessed many of her students take up poetry later in life, she did add that the performance aspect has a positive effect on her students.

"It's more fun to see a Shakespeare performance than to read it quietly at your desk," Temple said. "You don't have to read poetry alone in a sterile environment. They are with their friends, and there's definitely more learning through doing and through absorbing." □

The Poetry Out Loud statewide semifinals take place at 11 a.m. Feb. 29 at Nevada Museum of Art, 160 W. Liberty St. Admission is free. Get more details at nevadaart.org.