

Cobblestone Buffelgrass Eradication Effort Update
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*“Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) is the archenemy of the Sonoran Desert - the invasive grass most likely to cause significant damage to the native ecosystem.”* National Park Service.

Why is buffelgrass considered destructive and dangerous?

Buffelgrass robs Sonoran Desert vegetation of moisture. Then it dries and becomes a **highly flammable carpet that fuels wildfire**. These fires surround the saguaros and kill them, and can convert a rich desert ecosystem into a barren grassland almost overnight.

Healthy desert fires burn at a crawl, in a spotty mosaic, and at low temperatures to which native desert plants have adapted. Buffelgrass carpets burn hot, travel fast, and will carry fires broadly.

Buffelgrass is such a threat to public safety that Pima County Code, Title 7, Chapter 33 provides for regulation and mandatory abatement.

What does this have to do with Cobblestone?

Native to Africa, buffelgrass was introduced to our area as cattle forage and erosion control. It has no natural enemies here. As a result of the 2021 monsoons, long dormant seeds germinated, creating dense swaths in the Coronado National Forest to our north, and within our own private lots. If left untreated it will proliferate exponentially, creating a dangerous wildfire hazard to our community.

What is being done to control buffelgrass?

Buffelgrass on federal and state lands such as the national forest, Sabino Canyon, and Saguaro National Park has long been the target of eradication efforts. With the explosion of wildfires throughout the west, federal budgets have been overwhelmed with fire suppression and have been inadequate for fire-fuel (forest, chaparral, and grass) reduction planning and mitigation. Many non-profit organizations have tried to fill the budget gap through fundraising and volunteer efforts, but a dearth of labor to fill crews in both the public and private sectors has thwarted mitigation efforts. It is hot, dangerous work and constraints range from recruitment and pay, to insurance coverage.

How has your Board responded so far?

Your Board is working with federal and non-profit range managers. We are part of a partnership that has been formed among Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, University of Arizona, National Forest Foundation, and federal rangeland managers. A Cobblestone financial contribution is in place and has been matched by other grants and federal funding to tackle new growth above us as it “greens up” whenever the rains come. To be effective, herbicide application must occur while the plants are green and photosynthesizing. The partners are working closely with the private sector to provide crews.

What is my responsibility as a Cobblestone property owner?

A transmittal was sent to all property owners last summer describing the problem, and how to identify and treat on your private lots. Many of you responded quickly. Several problem infestations remain and will be the subject of further communication soon.

At the bottom of this message are several information links including instructions for treatment, and identification guides.

What happens next?

Notification will be sent to the community when treatment in the national forest is scheduled. Please examine your own property for new growth of buffelgrass. Be aware treatment must be a multi-year effort to be effective, and the infestation will spread to your neighbors' lots if left untreated. This could expose you to progressive county enforcement action.

Also be aware there are many other destructive highly invasive non-native plants we must control. They include fountain grass, mistletoe, and desert broom. Please identify and remove these as well. Links below describe these and other problem plants. The Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum and the University of Arizona have excellent online information. Help identifying problem species is available by contacting our management company.

Links To Valuable Information:

[Buffelgrass and other Grassy Desert Invaders - \(Pima County Dept. of Environmental Quality\)](#)

[Invasive Plants \(The Arizona Native Plant Society - 2022\)](#)

[Field Guide for Managing Buffelgrass - 2014](#)

[Killing desert broom - 2008](#)