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**Review of *Biological Control of Invasive Plants in the United States* Edited by Eric M. Coombs, Janet K. Clark, Gary L. Piper, and Alfred F. Cofrancesco, Jr.**

Andrew Norton

Colorado State University, [Andrew.Norton@colostate.edu](mailto:Andrew.Norton@colostate.edu)

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**Biological Control of Invasive Plants in the United States.** Edited by Eric M. Coombs, Janet K. Clark, Gary L. Piper, and Alfred F. Cofrancesco, Jr. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004. viii + 467 pp. Photographs, figures, references, index. \$45.00 paper.

As pointed out in the volume's introduction, biological weed control is an increasingly important tool for managing invasive plants on public and private lands at a time when this strategy is under increasing scrutiny over real (and perceived) threats to native plants and ecosystems. The volume updates and expands upon *Biological Control of Weeds in the West* (1996) and should be considered an essential reference for policy makers, land managers, students, and researchers involved with biological weed control throughout North America.

Sixteen short chapters written by some of the leading experts in the field comprise an extensive section on the theory and practice of biological control, ranging from foreign exploration and host specificity testing of biological control agents to economic benefits and the role of private industry. Of particular use to both the practitioner and the researcher are two chapters on the ecology of biological control (Shon S. Schooler, Peter B. McEvoy) and on non-target impacts (Eric M. Coombs) and one on monitoring in biological control systems (Bernd Blossey). Though necessarily brief, all three succeed in providing an introduction to these topics, pointing out not only the state of current knowledge but also gaps. Blossey in particular provides a compelling argument for increased funding and research for post-release monitoring and evaluation.

The remaining two-thirds of the book are devoted to detailed descriptions of targeted weeds and their biological control agents. Following a brief description of the biology of the weed host, each agent that has been through the permitting process is described in two to three pages summarizing its life history, its impact on target and non-target plants (when known), and its release history. High quality photographs of the targeted weed and agents are included for each. Brief descriptions of biological control projects currently in progress are also included.

The first section alone is worth the book's purchase price and should be required reading for anyone contemplating the use of biological control for weed management. In addition to offering guidance in the design of release strategies, post-release monitoring protocols, and documentation, this section provides essential information on the ecology of biological weed control as well as the current status of required host specificity testing and the permit process. Before anyone releases an exotic organism to manage a weed population, it would be wise to have an appreciation of the potential risks and benefits of this action. Coupled with the second section on weed and agent biology, this book becomes an essential reference for anyone involved with biological control. **Andrew P. Norton**, *Department of Bioagricultural Sciences and Pest Management, Colorado State University*.