

# Trouncing Tansy Ragwort in Flathead Valley



Soon after fire swept through Flathead Valley in northwestern Montana, tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) – a non-native and state-listed noxious weed – began to grow in the valley’s Little Wolf area. Land management professionals from the USDA Forest Service noticed the infestations popping up in four counties. By 1995, more than 25,000 acres were thickly infested with the weed.



*The collaborative efforts of the Forest Service and the Montana Department of Agriculture have helped restore Montana’s valuable rangelands.*

## Challenge:

Tansy ragwort’s rapid spread and establishment led land managers to believe it would take the collaboration of multiple agencies to successfully conquer the infestation. It is a highly aggressive weed that can crowd out native rangeland species. Because it’s poisonous to livestock, tansy ragwort can eventually leave rangeland wildlife species with nothing to eat.

## Solution:

The affected counties and USDA Forest Service collaborated with the Montana Department of Agriculture to acquire grant money from the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF). The Forest Service drafted an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to receive approval to spray herbicide aerially on the infested acreage as well as to establish a biological control program using the cinnabar moth to eat the targeted tansy ragwort.

## Result:

The group received approval for the EIS within six months and treated the land shortly afterward. Over the past 10 years the group received 25 grants from the NWTF, which provided more than \$2.4 million in funding and matching funds to treat the problem. As a result, tansy ragwort is hard to find in places it once dominated throughout the Flathead Forest. Native grass species have grown back and elk and deer populations have returned to forage in the once-infested rangeland. The Montana Department of Agriculture continues to maintain the NWTF through a vehicle license fee and interest from the permanent NWTF that is now worth \$4.7 million. Since 1985, grants have been awarded to more than 2,900 landowners or groups, allowing them to implement noxious weed management programs.



*By 1995, tansy ragwort had infested more than 25,000 acres in Montana’s Flathead Valley.*



### Learn More:

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