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MGA Highlights April as Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month

Washington, D.C. – In order to further its goal of increasing the awareness and understanding of invasive species, the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) announced today that it will observe April as Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month. To help facilitate dialogue, information sharing and collaboration on invasive species issues facing the region, the MGA also launched a LinkedIn group today. The group, [Midwestern Invasive Species Collaboration](#), is open to the public.

Invasive species can feast on and infest our region's thriving agriculture industry, damage our parks and forests, wreck our gardens and throw our ecosystems off balance. Since many of these species lack natural predators, their numbers can become overwhelming if left unchecked. In fact, the economic impact of invasive species has been estimated to exceed \$1 billion annually in the United States due to lost revenue and cleanup costs.

"The Midwest's diverse waterways, forests and farmlands are under significant threat of invasive species," said Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, current Chair of the MGA. "I encourage all Midwesterners to learn how they can stop the spread of invasive species."

There are many ways people can help limit the spread of invasive species, whether they live in a rural, suburban or urban community. Some easy steps include:

- **Buy firewood local, burn local.** Since pests and larvae can hide and ride long distances in firewood, buy firewood where you burn it.
- **Keep it clean.** Wash outdoor gear and tires between fishing, hunting or camping trips. Clean lawn furniture and other outdoor items when moving from one home to another.
- **Plant carefully.** Buy garden plants from a reputable source and avoid using invasive plant species at all costs.
- **Learn to identify.** If you see signs of an invasive pest or disease, write down or take a picture of what you see and then report it at www.HungryPests.com
- **Do not bring or mail** fresh fruits, vegetables or plants into your state or another state unless agricultural inspectors have cleared them beforehand.
- **Cooperate** with any agricultural quarantine restrictions and allow authorized agricultural workers access to your property for pest or disease surveys.
- **Speak up.** Declare all agricultural items to customs officials when returning from international travel. Talk to friends and neighbors about hungry pests.

While this month provides an opportunity for targeted outreach, public service announcements, media efforts and other activities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture helps to lead this effort year round through its "Hungry Pests" outreach initiative. For more information on the above steps a person can take to prevent the spread of invasive species, ways to increase awareness or to learn more about invasive species in your area, visit www.HungryPests.com.

More information on Governor Dayton's agenda can be found by visiting www.midwesterngovernors.org/chairagenda.htm. The page includes links to state agencies, regional partners and upcoming events. Joining and sharing information with the LinkedIn group can be done by visiting the above page.

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The MGA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that brings together the governors of Midwestern states to work cooperatively on issues of importance to the region. Current members of the MGA are Gov. Pat Quinn (Ill.), Gov. Mike Pence (Ind.), Gov. Terry Branstad (Iowa), Gov. Sam Brownback (Kansas), Gov. Rick Snyder (Mich.), Gov. Mark Dayton (Minn.), Gov. Jay Nixon (Mo.), Gov. John Kasich (Ohio) and Gov. Scott Walker (Wis.).