

# Cooperative Sierra Yellow Starthistle Mapping and Assessment Project

*Steve Schoenig<sup>1</sup>, Aaron Queheillalt<sup>1</sup>, Larry Shields<sup>2</sup>*

*1) IPC, CDFA. Sacramento California, 2) Office of Roadside, Caltrans*

The California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) and CALTRANS are teaming together to fund and lead a project to coordinate a multi-agency mapping of yellow starthistle (YST) at mid-elevations on the central and south-western Sierra. The project will also map YST on State highway right-of-ways in the central-western Sierra. One of the main products of this activity will be a report that will identify areas of high and low priority for stopping the spread of YST.

Yellow starthistle is estimated by the CDFA to cover over 12 million acres in California and is completely beyond total statewide eradication. Such a project would cost billions of dollars and engage tens of thousands of people for many years. Currently, the major activity devoted towards YST is focused on reducing infestation levels in areas where YST is very abundant. However, YST is still moving into non-infested watersheds. There are large areas, including private land and public forests and parks, that can still be protected from the presence of YST in whole watersheds and valleys. In areas like the mid-elevation western Sierra slope, control efforts should focus on prevention of further spread and on local eradication. Agencies and private landowners need better information on where to prioritize this type of control and eradication so that they are making the most effective use of their budgets.

CDFA and CALTRANS, with support from the County Agricultural Commissioners, members of the California Interagency Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee, and local Weed Management Areas, propose mapping of YST by a few hundred resource management professionals, qualified amateurs, and landowners. Mapping will be carried out at a fairly high level of resolution and put into a Geographic Information System. Primary areas of focus will include public lands and roadway easements. A secondary focus will be on the mapping of YST on private land.