The Road Less Taken: A Classical Biological Control Project Operated Through an NGO

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Abstract

Historically, most classical weed biological control projects have been initiated and managed by government departments or agencies. We have successfully developed a project along an alternative route, where the main sponsor is a non-governmental organization. The Alberta Invasive Plants Council (AIPC) was established in 2006 to raise the awareness of invasive plants as a problem in Alberta and to promote cooperative efforts to manage these plants in the province. Later that year, AIPC obtained funding to start a biological control project against common tansy (Tanacetum vulgare L.), a toxic, perennial weed native to Europe and Asia which is spreading rapidly in pastures and riparian areas in western Canada and the northern USA. This is a joint US-Canadian project, with funding from a number of state, provincial, federal, and industry sponsors in both countries. The US funding is coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and most Canadian funding is handled through AIPC. The CABI laboratory in Delémont, Switzerland, conducts exploration and agent testing under contract with AIPC, and a private consultant (the first author) coordinates the project, also under contract with AIPC. The project coordinator prepares proposals for ongoing funding, reports on progress to project sponsors, promotes public awareness of the project, and works with CABI to select agents for study and oversee the project. AIPC provides administrative services to the project including contract management, billing, and accounting. An annual consortium meeting is held to review progress and plan future work. This approach has allowed us to enhance the existing Canadian capacity for managing overseas biological control research.