

The Nature Conservancy Team Wins 2025 Camp Monaco Prize for Invasive Grass Prevention in Greater Yellowstone

2025 Camp Monaco Prize awarded for innovative efforts to defend Greater Yellowstone against invasive cheatgrass threats.

CODY, WY, UNITED STATES, April 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Camp Monaco Prize Jury is pleased to announce that Dr. Corinna Riginos, Dr. Courtney L. Larson, and Ms. Charlotte N. Cadow, representing [The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming](#), have been selected as the 2025 Camp Monaco Prize recipients. The title of their proposal is: "Defending the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Against Potentially Devastating Annual Grass Invasion."



Scientists monitor the spread of cheatgrass at Red Canyon Ranch, a Nature Conservancy preserve near Lander, Wyoming. © Corinna Riginos/TNC

The Prize was established in 2013 through a partnership between the [Buffalo Bill Center of the West's Draper Natural History Museum](#) and the [Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation](#) to foster native biodiversity conservation in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) through innovative scientific research, management action, and public outreach that carries global, as well as regional implications.

Invasive annual grasses, most notably cheatgrass, have become an urgent threat to biodiversity in the Greater Yellowstone and throughout the imperiled sagebrush ecosystem that covers much of the western United States. Cheatgrass outcompetes native plants, dramatically reducing the food and habitat available to big game, birds, and other biodiversity. It dries out early in the season and becomes highly flammable tinder, often leading to hot, fast wildfires. While large areas of the West have been devastated by cheatgrass, the cool climate of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem has slowed its spread so far. However, as Dr. Riginos notes, "preventing and controlling further spread into currently uninvaded areas is now an urgent priority."

The team will take an interdisciplinary approach to supporting managers with maps, evidence, community engagement and policies that enable more proactive, defensive actions to keep cheatgrass at bay.

The Nature Conservancy's blend of science and pragmatic conservation makes this team well-suited to work across social and ecological disciplines, contributing to the fields of restoration ecology and invasion biology, while directly informing land management practices in Greater Yellowstone.

Rachel Clausing, Camp Monaco Prize Jury Committee member, praised the project as taking a "truly integrative approach to address invasive species management. In combining ecological science, practical management, and meaningful community involvement—including local and Indigenous knowledge—it reflects the spirit of the Prize as well as the mission of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation in general and promises a strong ecological and social impact across the region and beyond."

Dr. Charles Preston, Camp Monaco Prize Jury Chairman, stated that competition for the 2025 Camp Monaco Prize was especially strong. "The winning proposal embodies the purpose of the Camp Monaco Prize to support innovative, cross-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional initiatives that address urgent conservation needs and lay the

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Dr. Charles Preston, Camp Monaco Prize Jury Chairman

foundation for broad public engagement and on-the-ground management actions" according to Preston. "While the topic focuses on Greater Yellowstone, the proposed project carries implications for battling invasive species and conserving shrub-steppe ecosystems around the world" he said.

"Thanks to the vision and generosity of the Draper Natural History Museum and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, we hope to make timely strides to hold off this existential threat to the biodiversity, human well-being, and very character of the region," Dr. Riginos adds. "We look forward to working with local land managers and in

doing so, inform invasive grass management in other parts of the world."

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Cheatgrass is a highly invasive grass that is outcompeting native grasses across the West. © Charlotte Cadow/TNC

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