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For immediate release

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PAG coordinates volunteer effort to remove buffelgrass

On Saturday, March 1, 2008, volunteers from across the region will engage in a concerted effort to remove the invasive plant known as buffelgrass. Pima Association of Governments (PAG) has organized this region-wide volunteer effort to raise awareness of the threat and to remove as much buffelgrass as possible on a single day.

People who are interested in volunteering may visit www.buffelgrass.org or www.PAGnet.org to register for one of the various clean up events that are scheduled.

Buffelgrass, which is rapidly spreading over large areas throughout the region, poses a serious fire threat to the desert and urgent action is needed to stem this threat.

While some volunteer efforts have been under way, these have been limited, mostly within our parks. While these efforts are to be praised, the scope of the buffelgrass challenge dwarfs these limited efforts. Once you know what to look for, you can see buffelgrass almost everywhere – and it is spreading exponentially each growing season. It is along roadsides, in washes and it is spreading into the Catalina foothills at an alarming rate. The problem is so serious that Rural Metro Fire has posted signs warning of the fire danger.

The March 1 Buffelgrass Eradication Day was established by PAG's Regional Council to raise awareness of the threat and to remove as much buffelgrass as possible. "This is the year that the Tucson region needs to address this threat head-on and turn the tide," said Dennis Dickerson, the event coordinator and PAG's environmental planning coordinator. "If you love the desert that surrounds us, action is needed now because this weed will destroy the desert environment that makes Tucson so special."

Formal removal events are being sponsored by the Town of Marana, the Town

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of Oro Valley and the City of Tucson. Additionally, Sabino Canyon and Saguaro National Park (West) will conduct major removal events. Groups participating include the Tanque Verde Weedwackers, the Environmental Law Society at the University of Arizona, the Tierra Seca student club in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Arizona, the Sonoran Desert Weedwackers, and the Master Watershed Steward Program.

The following day, March 2, will see a major effort to attack buffelgrass in the Ironwood National Forest by members of the local Sierra Club.

Individuals and groups wishing to participate can still volunteer by logging onto www.Buffelgrass.org and selecting a location where organized buffelgrass removal efforts will occur.