King County Noxious Weed Control Board

DATE: April 29, 2008

TO: Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board
Noxious Weed Committee

FROM: Scott Moore, Chair
King County Noxious Weed Control Board

RE: Proposals for 2009 Weed List

1. Move hairy willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) to Class B Noxious Weed List, designated in King County
2. Add Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*, syn. *Rubus discolor*) and evergreen blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*) to the Class C Noxious Weed List

Explanation and Background Information

1. Hairy willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) proposed for Class B status, designated in King County

Common and Latin Name: Hairy willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*)
Family: Onagraceae
Native Range: Mediterranean, Europe, Asia and Africa.
Introduced Range: Common weed in Belgium, Egypt, Turkey and the U.S. It is also known from southern Australia as of 1990, and it is reported as a nursery weed in Norway. (Excerpted from the State Weed Board Written Findings)
Washington State Distribution: According to the State Weed Board Written Findings, it is present in the following counties: Whatcom, Island, Klickitat, Grant, Benton, and Franklin. It is also present in King County but very limited in distribution (2 sites totaling less than 1000 square feet).
Current Washington Status: Class C Noxious Weed
Status Elsewhere: Prohibited plant in Massachusetts

Reason for Proposed Listing Change:
Hairy willow-herb poses a significant threat to wetlands of Washington and King County where its dense and aggressive growth can crowd out native and other beneficial plants. The King County Weed Board has selected this noxious weed for required control in the county since it was added as a Class C, but requests an upgrade to Class B designate status in order to increase the effort statewide to contain and control this noxious weed. Hairy willow-herb has a very limited distribution in King County, and is present in only a small number of counties statewide.

Therefore, a change in listing status to Class B has the potential to contain this weed to its current locations and to potentially achieve eradication in King County and other parts of the state. Changing the status of this weed would also bring it more into line with other weed listings. For example, giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*) have a wider distribution than hairy willow-herb, but are designated as Class A noxious weeds.

2. Himalayan and Evergreen Blackberry, proposed for Class C status

Common and Latin Names: Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*); Evergreen or Cutleaf Blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*)
Synonyms: Himalayan blackberry is also known as *Rubus discolor* and *Rubus procerus*.
Family: Rosaceae
Native Range: Europe, Western Asia, Africa
Escaped/Naturalized: Western and Eastern United States and Canada; Australia; New Zealand
Washington State Distribution: Introduced both sides of the Cascades, abundant at low elevations on the west side and in the Snake River Valley in Washington (http://biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php?Genus=Rubus&Species=discolor)
Status elsewhere: Himalayan blackberry – Oregon Class B and Quarantined Noxious Weed

Reason for Proposed Listing:
Adding Himalayan and evergreen blackberry to the Class C noxious weed list would allow for more effective restoration efforts in King County and throughout the state. These blackberry species are the most common invasive plants in the natural areas of our county and the success of restoration projects often hinges on their effective management. In addition, in remote wilderness areas, these species of blackberry are often among the few invasive species present and containment and control in remote areas would have a very real benefit to protecting native plant habitat in our county's remaining wilderness areas.

Having these species on the state noxious weed list would allow the Board to carry out more education with land managers about proper control methods and how to dispose of this plant. Listing as a noxious weed may also open additional funding opportunities for restoration projects that involve blackberry control. In addition, listing as a noxious weed increases the ability of county landowners and agencies to control blackberry on their land without having to go through the permitting process required for removing plants not on the state noxious weed list.

The Board also believes that the inclusion of blackberry on the noxious weed list would help legitimize the state noxious weed list in the eyes of the landowner. These two European blackberry species are widely perceived as being the worst weeds in our area and it undermines the legitimacy of the state noxious weed list for these species to be excluded.

Distribution in King County: Widespread throughout most of the county, although more limited in wilderness and forested lands. Just getting established in some wilderness areas such as the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Natural Area.

In an invasive weed survey of the relatively pristine Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley, Himalayan and evergreen blackberry covered more area than all of the other invasive species combined. In the upper valley, these two species are often one of the few invasive species found. Similarly, in Seattle Urban Nature's plant inventory of Seattle's public forests, Himalayan and evergreen blackberry were found to be the most invasive species in Seattle's forests.

Impacts: Himalayan and evergreen blackberry are European species that are highly invasive and difficult to control. Originally introduced for fruit production, they are now naturalized and widespread throughout the Pacific Northwest.

These invasive blackberry species out-compete native understory vegetation and prevent the establishment of native trees that require sun for germination such as Pacific Madrone, Douglas Fir and Western White Pine. Dense, impenetrable blackberry thickets can block access of larger wildlife to water and other resources and impede recreation in parks and natural areas.

Himalayan and evergreen blackberry are abundant along rivers and wetland edges in King County, often blocking access to these areas. In addition, blackberry lacks the deep, bank stabilizing roots of native wetland shrubs and trees. Riversides covered with blackberry often indicate degraded conditions and may mask eroding banks.