



Washington State

Noxious Weed Control Board

2017-2019

Biennial Report



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Cover Photo Credit- Columbia County Noxious Weed Control Board, Mediterranean Sage 2018 Class A Eradication Project

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Mission Statement

To serve as responsible stewards of Washington by aiding in the protection and preservation of the land, water, and resources from the degrading impacts of noxious weeds.

We believe that the prevention of noxious weeds is the best approach and may be achieved through full implementation of the state noxious weed law. To further this approach, we strive for increased public awareness through improved educational efforts.

As the Board, we do not deal directly with control activities; rather, we work to achieve control through local county weed boards, weed districts. For that reason, we seek to improve communication, gain cooperation, and enhance coordination of the collective efforts of noxious weed control.

Finally, we believe that noxious weed control is best carried out by strong, adequately funded programs at the local level. Thus, we strive to build public support for local programs, and to empower those programs to be more successful.

Board Members and Staff

WSDA Director:

Represented by Dr. Brad White

County noxious weed control boards:

Position 1: Ken Bajema, Skamania County

Position 2: Jerry Hendrickson, Asotin County

Position 3: Dr. William Agosta, San Juan County

Position 4: Dirk Veleke, Chelan County

Weed Districts:

Position 5: Tony Stadelman, Grant County

Eastern Washington public interest:

Carey Caruso

Western Washington public interest:

Janet Spingath

Washington Association of Counties:

Commissioner Wes McCart, Stevens County

Scientific Advisors:

Dr. Tim Miller, WSU NW Research
and Extension Center

Jenifer Parsons, WA Department of Ecology

Rod Gilbert, DoD Fish and Wildlife Program
Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Staff:

Executive Secretary

2017-2018 Alison Halpern

2018-2019 Mary Tallman Fee

Education Specialist

Wendy DesCamp

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCB)

The WSNWCB is comprised of nine voting members and three non-voting members. Four board members are members of and elected by county weed boards, and one member is elected to represent weed districts. An elected member of a County Commission or Council is appointed by the Washington Association of Councils (WSAC). The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Director appoints the WSDA representative, a public interest representative from Eastern Washington and Western Washington, and three non-voting scientific advisers.

The WSNWCB adopts the state noxious weed list, disseminates noxious weed information, and coordinates the educational efforts of the county noxious weed control boards and weed districts. The WSNWCB is a member of the Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC) and updates the noxious weed community about current events and pertinent legislative activity. It testifies before legislative committees and submits comments regarding draft rule-making and policy changes.

It is the strong cooperation and open communication between the WSNWCB, WSDA, and the county NWCBs and weed districts that maximize noxious weed management and control efforts statewide.

Introduction and Noxious Weed Law

Noxious weeds are non-native, invasive plants that out-compete our native vegetation and agricultural crops. Noxious weeds are very difficult to control when established. Infestations threaten wildlife habitats, waterways, forest lands, agricultural productivity, and in some cases health and wellness of Washington state residents. For example, Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) can out-compete native aquatic plants, altering the aquatic ecosystem by providing predatory fish habitat and limiting that of some native species. Some noxious weed species are toxic to livestock or humans. Hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*) a toxic perennial that invades pastures can cause birth defects in livestock. If not controlled properly, Washington State faces terrestrial and aquatic habitat degradation, loss of biodiversity, and economic impacts from noxious weed infestations.

Washington State has seen successful control of specific noxious weed infestations due to the continued efforts and support of local landowners, local and state agencies, county weed boards and districts, and supportive legislation. The time, effort, and support given towards noxious weed control throughout Washington State is greatly appreciated. Integrated weed management practices, utilizing herbicide treatments, biological control, and cultural and mechanical controls, combined with interagency cooperation and local support has proven effective against noxious weed invasions. Landowners can re-establish native vegetation or desirable crops by prioritizing infestations and utilizing the proper control methods through combined resources.

Washington State is the forerunner in noxious weed law and rule-making. Washington's first weed law passed in 1881 to fight the spread of Canada thistle. RCW 17.04 was enacted in 1929 providing for weed districts and RCW 17.06 in 1959 for intercountry weed districts. The first state noxious weed list was created by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Weed districts are assessment based and have 3 directors. Weed districts are given the authority to insure noxious weed regulations under these two laws. There are currently 12 weed districts in Washington. In the late 1960's, the state legislature established the State's Noxious Weed Control Board, and authorized counties to establish County Weed Boards. Currently, RCW Chapter 17.10 is the primary noxious weed law, and it is implemented at the state level by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board (WSNWCBC) and the WSDA, and at the county level by the County Noxious Weed Control Boards. The purpose of the weed law is to limit the economic loss and other negative impacts that noxious weeds cause in agriculture, natural resources, and human health and safety.

Washington state noxious weed law recognizes the owner's duty to control noxious weeds, regardless of size, ownership, or political jurisdiction. Noxious weeds know no boundaries regardless of public or private land ownership. All landowners are responsible for noxious weed control on their lands. The WSNWCBC adopts an annual noxious weed list per WAC 16-750, designating the noxious weed species for control throughout the state. County noxious weed boards may also select additional noxious weeds for control within their counties.

WA State Noxious Weed List

Every year, the WSNWCB updates the state noxious weed list. One of the strengths of Washington's listing process is its inclusiveness – anybody can request to have a new species added to the list, remove or reclassify an existing noxious weed, or change the designation of a Class B noxious weed. The WSNWCB formally solicits changes to the list from January 1 to April 30. The WSNWCB's advisory committee known as the Noxious Weed Committee (NWC) begins reviewing these proposed changes in May and continues deliberation through the summer, gathering additional information as needed, such as known distribution in Washington. For proposed new additions, the NWC may have WSNWCB staff produce technical reports known as Written Findings, which contain information about the distribution, biology, ecology, economic and ecological impacts (both detrimental and beneficial), and control of a proposed species. The NWC will make its recommendations in September, at which point the WSNWCB will vote on which proposed changes to move forward to a public hearing in November. After the hearing, the Board factors in oral and written testimony before voting on changes to the noxious weed list; those changes go into effect January 1 of the following year.

Once the WSNWCB has adopted the annual noxious weed list, county NWCBs then adopt their own noxious weed list. By law, they are required to add all Class A noxious weeds and Class B noxious weeds that are designated for control in that county. The county NWCB may choose to select Class B non-designates and Class C noxious weeds for mandatory control as they deem necessary. It is this flexibility of the state noxious weed list that allows the WSNWCB to prioritize the eradication and control efforts necessary from a statewide perspective, while allowing each county NWCB to further customize its weed list to best meet local needs.

Class A noxious weeds are nonnative, invasive species whose distribution in Washington is very limited. Eradication of these plants by all landowners is mandatory. The goal is to eliminate these populations before they gain a strong foothold in the state.

2018 Class A Changes

1. Small-flowered jewelweed, *Impatiens parviflora*. Added as a class A noxious weed. Small-flowered jewelweed is a nonnative, invasive annual that can take over a wide range of habitats.

2019 Class A Changes

None

Class B noxious weeds are nonnative, invasive species that are abundant in some areas of the state, but absent or limited in other areas. The statewide goal is to “draw the line” around and contain infested regions, to keep these noxious weeds from spreading into new areas. Class B noxious weeds are designated for control in those areas where they are absent or limited in distribution, or where they pose a specific threat to local agriculture or natural resources. Landowners in these designated areas are required to control and prevent the spread of these

noxious weeds. In those regions where Class B noxious weeds are already widespread, the WSNWCB does not require control, as it might not be economically feasible for landowners. However, county NWCBs have the option of selecting non-designated Class Bs for mandatory control if there is a local concern. Both the WSNWCB and county NWCBs encourage voluntary control and provide information on best management strategies to interested landowners.

2018 Class B Changes

1. European coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara* - Added as a Class B noxious weed, designated for control throughout Washington, except for in Grant, Lincoln, Adams, Benton, and Franklin counties. European coltsfoot is a nonnative, invasive plant that is considered a weedy species of agricultural systems in Europe. It has been observed colonizing riparian restoration areas following knotweed control at a few sites in western Washington.
2. Malta starthistle, *Centaurea melitensis* - Added as a Class B noxious weed, designated for control throughout Washington except in Klickitat, Whitman, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties, and a portion of Stevens County. Malta starthistle is a nonnative, invasive plant that is closely related to the highly destructive yellow starthistle, which is already widespread in parts of Washington. Because the two species similar appearance, the designation area of Malta starthistle matches that of yellow starthistle. Only one populations of Malta starthistle is known of in Washington at this time, on Cypress Island in Skagit County, and it is being controlled.
3. Spurge flax, *Thymelaea passerina* - Reclassified from a Class A noxious weed to a Class B noxious weed designated for control in eastern Washington, except in Okanogan County. Spurge flax has become too widespread and difficult to locate, identify, and eradicate in parts of Okanogan County. Reclassifying it to a Class B and designating it throughout eastern Washington except in Okanogan County will keep this invasive plant contained in that county.
4. Butterfly bush, *Buddleja davidii*, and shiny geranium, *Geranium lucidum*- Undesignated in Thurston County to better match their current distribution.
5. Yellow nutsedge, *Cyperus esculentus*- Undesignated in Clark County to better match its current distribution.
6. Policeman's helmet, *Impatiens glandulifera*- Designated for control in Clark County to better match its current distribution.

2019 Class B Changes

1. Eurasian watermilfoil, *Myriophyllum spicatum*, grass-leaved arrowhead, *Sagittaria graminea*, diffuse knapweed, *Centaurea diffusa*, and purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*- Designated in Mason County to better match their current distribution. Populations of these noxious weeds are limited and are currently being controlled.

2. Hoary alyssum, *Berteroa incana*- Undesignated in Ferry County. Populations have become too widespread in the county and do not meet the distribution criterion for a state designation. The Ferry County Noxious Weed Control Board will still control roadside populations and will aim to prevent its spread to counties where it is designated.
3. Brazilian elodea, *Egeria densa*- Designed in Pacific and Snohomish counties to better match its current distribution.
4. Butterfly bush, *Buddleja davidii* - Designated in San Juan and Grays Harbor counties. Populations are limited in each county - with butterfly bush already selected for control in San Juan County, and Grays Harbor County Noxious Weed Control Board is aware of just one patch.
5. Camelthorn, *Alhagi maurorum* - Designated in Walla Walla County. There is one small population known in the county.
6. Dalmatian toadflax, *Linaria dalmatica ssp. dalmatica* - Designated in Cowlitz, Kittitas, and Franklin counties. Populations of Dalmatian toadflax are limited in each of these counties and are such that they currently are or can be controlled each year.
7. European coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara* - Designated in Adams, Lincoln, Benton, and Franklin counties due to the plant's ability to invade riparian habitats and grow in sandy, disturbed soils, which can be found in these Eastern Washington counties. At this time there are no known populations of European coltsfoot in these counties.
8. Fanwort, *Cabomba caroliniana* - Designated in Grays Harbor County as there are no known past or present populations in the county.
9. Hairy willow-herb, *Epilobium hirsutum* - Designated in Walla Walla County to better match its current limited distribution in the county.
10. Houndstongue, *Cynoglossum officinale* - Designated in Douglas and Franklin counties to better match its current limited distribution in each county.
11. Indigobush, *Amorpha fruticosa* - Undesignated in Skamania County to better match its current distribution. Populations of indigobush are especially dense along the Columbia River.
12. Hawkweeds of the meadow subgenus (*Pilosella*) - Designated in Ferry County to better match its current limited distribution.
13. Meadow knapweed, *Centaurea x moncktonii* - Undesignated in Skamania and Clark counties due to its distribution being too widespread to fit the distribution criterion of a Class B designation.
14. Spotted knapweed, *Centaurea stoebe* - Undesignated in Skamania County due to its distribution being too widespread to fit the distribution criterion of a Class B designation.
15. Updated five scientific names of noxious weeds: kochia: *Kochia scoparia* to *Bassia scoparia*; leafy spurge: *Euphorbia esula* to *Euphorbia virgata*; Himalayan knotweed:

Polygonum polystachyum to *Persicaria wallichii*; Russian knapweed: *Acroptilon repens* to *Rhaponticum repens*; tansy ragwort: *Senecio jacobaea* to *Jacobaea vulgaris*.

Class C noxious weeds meet the criteria of a noxious weed but are often so widespread that there is no realistic hope of eradicating them from the state. Other times, noxious weeds are added to the Class C list when the distribution is not fully known at the time of listing. The WSNWCB provides educational information about Class C noxious weeds, but does not mandate control. County NWCBs may require landowners to control Class C noxious weeds if they pose a problem to local agriculture, natural areas, human health, or cause economic harm to tourism, recreation, or infrastructure.

2018 Class C Changes

1. Spotted jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis* - Added as a Class C noxious weed. Spotted jewelweed is a nonnative, invasive plant of wetland areas, and its populations have been increasing over the past few years. A Class C listing will help encourage control where it coexists with the native spurless jewelweed (*Impatiens ecorruta*) to prevent hybridization.
2. Eurasian watermilfoil hybrid (*Myriophyllum spicatum* x *M. sibiricum*) - Added as a Class C noxious weed. The Class C listing is appropriate because the hybrid may not be possible to differentiate from the parent species without genetic testing. Moreover, not all hybrid strains are aggressive, and it wouldn't be reasonable to require control of non-aggressive strains.

2019 Class C Changes

None



Picture Credit
WSNWCB

Dr. Tim Miller digging
newly listed European
coltsfoot for herbicide
trials.



WSNWCB Strategic Plan & Accomplishments

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board: Strategic plan for FY17-19

Mission Statement: To serve as responsible stewards of Washington by aiding in the protection and preservation of land and resources from the degrading impacts of noxious weeds.

Goals:

To monitor, document, map, and classify noxious weeds in Washington

Provide statewide noxious weed education and increase public awareness about noxious weeds, laws and regulation, and IPM

Promote and support all county noxious weed control boards and weed districts

Maintain successful working relationships with government land management agencies and stakeholder groups.

Maintain a legal and professional Board and staff

Review, revise, and adopt the state noxious weed list for 2018 and 2019.

Update written findings of any additional aquatics that haven't been done recently

Participate in WSDA Task Force in the process of revising RCW 17.10 with involvement of stakeholders

Create primer about the noxious weed listing process and weed control requirements for county legislative authority and WSU Extension

Review Code of Ethics

Report on status of Class A noxious weeds.

Work with state agencies to improve awareness about aquatic noxious weeds.

Provide training about effective communication to Weed Coordinators' Association.

Present at WSAC conference about noxious weed laws

Adopt the "SMART*" method for goal setting.

Support and promote WSDA's noxious weed GPS-collecting and mapping project

Outreach campaign for backcountry users to survey for and prevent spread of noxious weeds.

Share new State Weed Board handbook with county weed board members

Produce new State Weed Board handbook for members and staff (roles, duties, parliamentary procedure, ethical guidelines, etc.)

Educate gravel pit companies about noxious weed management and encourage voluntary inspections

Develop annual performance review of staff

The State Noxious Weed Board provides a strategic plan including goals and tasks for each biennium. The FY17-19 strategic plan includes monitoring and classifying noxious weeds, education and increased public awareness, supporting county programs, maintaining successful relationships with other entities, and maintaining a legal and professional board. The State Noxious Weed Board employed one full time employee (FTE) as the executive secretary, a 0.8 FTE education specialist, and a 0.1 FTE Administrative Assistant to meet the needs of the board. Outreach and education help to achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Along with

educational and technical support, the WSNWCB also offers additional support to counties and other agencies in the form of class A eradication project funding.

Expenditure of Funds

Funding is allocated by the legislation to the Washington State Department of Agriculture budget for the administration of the WSNWCB. The WSNWCB biennial budget for FY 2017-2018 was \$237,432 and for FY 2018-2019 was \$259,746. This included a total biennial reduction of 5% compensated for in the second year. The budget allows for staff, office space, insurance, equipment, storage, and supplies. The budget provides for many benefits throughout the state and counties. Class A eradication projects, printing, outreach, education, and social media are also provided. Due to the temporary 7 month vacancy of the executive secretary position, pass through funds were also available for herbicide for county weed programs, additional printing of brochures, and funds for the WSU Extension's Biological Control program, the Integrated Weed Control Project.

Outreach and Education

An informed public is an empowered public, which is why education and outreach is such a high priority for the WSNWCB. More people will voluntarily control noxious weeds on their property and will be alert for new introductions of invasive plants when they understand how devastating noxious weeds can be. The WSNWCB serves as a central hub of information, education, and outreach for county weed boards and weed districts by helping to provide them with the materials they need to educate residents and landowners. The WSNWCB staff also strives to directly educate Washington residents through its own outreach efforts.

The WSNWCB received hundreds of inquiries from the general public, often requesting assistance identifying plants, controlling noxious weeds, or seeking publications. The interest in and demand for the Bee-U-Tify non-invasive, pollinator-friendly seed packets continued through 2019. Facebook and our online publication request form provide effective means for promoting educational material and information about state and county weed board activities. Public education and outreach tasks are described below.

Website

The WSNWCB website is a vital hub for the public to learn about noxious weeds, the noxious weed law, integrated weed management and pollinator-friendly weed control, available publications and how to request them, and the WSNWCB and upcoming meetings. It also provides links and contact information to the county weed boards and weed districts. Because it plays such a key role in disseminating information to a wide audience, it is critical that it be as accessible and navigable as possible. The website is continually being updated.

Presentations and Outreach

The WSNWCB staff gave many presentations throughout Washington. Staff continued the annual tradition of sharing the WSDA/USDA-APHIS booth at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in 2018 and 2019, where they and county weed board staff provided publications and seed packets and answered questions from attendees. Additionally, a booth is staffed at the yearly Washington State Weed Conference. Staff also continue to present at many pesticide recertification classes as well as other educational venues.

Bee-U-Tify Seed Packets

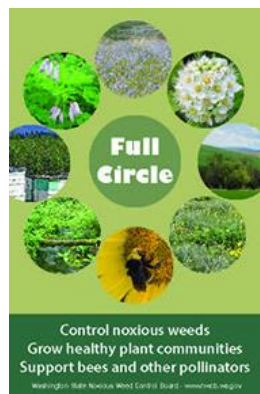


In FY15, the WSNWCB launched an outreach campaign to remind the public that pollinator conservation and noxious weed control did not have to be mutually exclusive and to stress the importance of replacing noxious weeds with non-invasive and/or native pollen- and nectar-rich species. A brochure on bee-friendly weed control was created, and the WSNWCB worked with a Washington-based seed business and a branding company to come up with Bee-U-Tify seed packets, which contained a blend of nonnative but non-invasive and native pollinator-friendly annuals and perennials.

The Bee-U-Tify seed packets have been very successful and are still in high demand. The WSNWCB, along with several county weed noxious weed boards and the Washington Invasive Species Counsel, provided funding for seed packets in 2019. The seed mixes for both Eastern and Western seed packets have been modified to only include native pollinator friendly species. Approximately 60,000 packets were produced.

FY17-19 Printing

In the first year of this biennium, the State Board provided funding for the reprinting of Bees and Noxious Weeds Brochure.



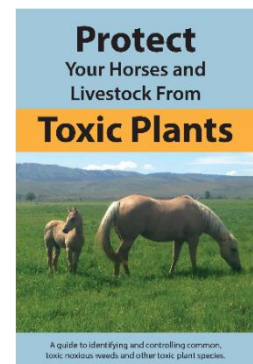
The Full Circle booklet talks about weed management plans, keeping pollinators in mind as you control weeds, and planting native and non-invasive species in your landscape, providing some examples. It is a great resource for public education and outreach. Many counties utilize this brochure at local educational and outreach events. It was reprinted in the first year of this biennium.

Noxious Weeds That Harm Washington State pocket-size field guides describes many of the troublesome noxious weeds of Washington. Two versions are available, one for Western and one for Eastern Washington. Photos, impacts, and methods of control are listed for each weed. This publication also includes a brief introduction that explains how weeds spread, weed laws, and landowner responsibilities. Both were reprinted with additional species and updates in the first year of this biennium.



Garden Wise was created to help educate landowners about alternatives to invasive species for their landscapes. An invasive species is shown and described, and then multiple non-invasive alternatives are provided with pictures and descriptions. Descriptions of the invasive species include habitat and nature of plant. Descriptions of the alternative include shade and drought tolerance, pollinator friendliness, as well as preferred soil type. Both Eastern and Western Washington versions of Garden Wise are available. Both have been reprinted the second year of this biennium and include new pages.

Protect your horses and livestock from toxic plants: a guide to identifying and controlling common, toxic noxious weeds and other toxic plant species. The idea for this booklet arose after the typical springtime peak in phone calls and emails to the WSNWCB office from horse and livestock owners seeking information about toxic plants, weed-contaminated hay, and noxious weed control strategies in active pastureland. While there were many resources on how to control toxic, noxious weeds, there was a scarcity of guidelines on how specifically to control them in pastures containing susceptible animals. The WSNWCB contracted a pasture management consultant and toxic plants expert, who teamed up with staff to produce a 58-page booklet that provided information about the identification, symptomology, and control strategies of numerous toxic plants, as well as a section about Integrated Pest Management (IPM) specific to pasture management, and a 2-page spread about inspecting hay for toxic plants. The booklet served as a reference for owners of horses, cattle, llamas and alpacas, goats, sheep, and even chickens and other poultry, since raising backyard chickens had become so popular. County weed boards and conservation districts requested them by the boxload, and numerous horse and cattle owners requests their own individual copies. This publication is currently being reprinted in 2019.



Class A Eradication Projects

Class A eradication project funding is provided as pass-through money to county NWCBs and other agencies towards Class A eradication efforts. Programs that received funding are required to provide a final report as part of the deliverables to track progress of the funded projects. Although funding amounts are modest, the WSNWCB feels that supporting eradication projects is critical in making progress in Washington. Moreover, since the WSNWCB does not fund overhead costs and many applicants are able to provide in-kind matching funds (though not required), each dollar the WSNWCB invests yields greater on-the-ground results. Many programs are able to leverage additional funding from local, state, or federal government or through collaborative partners. The eradication projects that the WSNWCB supported during the FY17-19 biennium, are summarized below.

2018	WSNWCB Funding	Match Funding	Area Controlled
Mediterranean Sage, Columbia County	\$4,000	\$1,212.85	310 Acres Spot Treated



The Mediterranean sage infestations in this project have been treated since 2014. Two sites were treated in 2018; however, due to lack of funding two sites went untreated. The treated sites are nearing eradication and are great examples of successful class A eradication project.



Continued survey and eradication efforts will take place. The Columbia County Noxious Weed Control Board maintains good relationships and support with the landowners.

Island County Garlic Mustard	\$2,626	None	.76 acres of Garlic Mustard treated or manual removal over 4 acre area total
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The initial garlic mustard infestation was identified in 2008. The landowner has manually controlled this infestation with some spot treatments. An additional garlic mustard infestation was identified in 2012 and a nearby infestation in 2014. Control work was



originally limited to manual control. Herbicide treatments were initiated in 2013 and 2014. WSDA grants were utilized in 2013, 2014, and 2016, followed by this project in 2018. Both manual and chemical controls were used in 2018. Populations continue to appear to decline throughout these infestations. Continued outreach and education are crucial in identifying and locating sub-populations and continued control of garlic mustard.



Picture Credits
Garlic Mustard from
Island County Noxious
Weed Control Board

The WSNWCB has allocated \$15,000 towards class A eradication projects for the second year of the biennium. Due to lack of funding, only five out of eight project submitted were funded.

2019	WSNWCB Funding	Match Funding	Estimated area to be controlled
Common Crupina, Asotin County	\$ 2,000	5260	87 Acres
Garlic Mustard, Island County	\$ 2,900	Public Works Reimbursement	4 Acres/ 2 sites
Garlic Mustard, Skamania County	\$ 2,000	10455	45 Acres
Mediterranean Sage, Asotin County	\$ 3,000	6060	
Giant Hogweed, Mason County	\$ 5,000	52000	500 Acres

County Noxious Weed Control Programs

County noxious weed control boards (NWCBs) and weed districts have the task of ensuring that landowners in Washington comply with the noxious weed laws. Each county NWCB is responsible for surveying for noxious weeds, educating landowners on how to control them, and, when necessary, enforcing the laws that require landowners to control or eradicate certain noxious weeds. Currently, 38 of the 39 counties have noxious weed control boards. Douglas County still lacks a NWCB. The WSNWCB believes strongly that every county in Washington should have an activated county noxious weed control board.

County weed boards are financed through one of two sources: a county's general fund or through a moderate special use assessment on properties. The assessments are typically levied on each parcel of land, with an additional few cents per acre for larger landholdings, and exemptions for certain land uses. In the 2017-2019 biennium, Lewis County moved to assessment. Ten counties are currently funded by general fund and one by grants and contracts only.

Some programs are well-funded and have permanent full-time and seasonal staff to carry out these duties. Others are more modestly funded and can only afford to employ a part-time coordinator to implement that county's NWCB top priorities. This disparity in funding, along with local priorities, helps explain why county NWCBs vary widely. Some counties focus exclusively on education and persuasion and rarely or never actually require landowner compliance with the law, while others focus on infestation control and compliance with the law.

Several county noxious weed control programs have gone through some level of restructuring this biennium. Several programs have employed a new coordinator. Some have had a turn-over in board membership. Some boards are part of a department-division-program structure. Others are a standalone department. RCW 17.10 allows for flexibility in program structure to best meet the needs of the county and noxious weed program. As programs evolve and change, the WSNWCB can offer technical assistance and guidance pertaining to the requirements of RCW 17.10 and the roles and responsibilities of county noxious weed control boards.

Best noxious weed management practices continue to be early detection and rapid response along with biological control, herbicide applications, cultural controls, and mechanical controls. Early detection and rapid response must be a priority when it comes to noxious weed invasions. Once a noxious weed infestation is identified, integrated weed management (IWM) is the best form of noxious weed control. Utilizing several different control methods helps eliminate the possibility of creating herbicide resistant species and helps to control already herbicide tolerant plants. An example of an IWM plan would be utilizing biological control in the middle of a large established knapweed infestation, while controlling roadsides infestations with herbicide, and hand-pulling in sensitive areas. Each tool has its place in the noxious weed control toolbox. If this infestation had been detected early before it was established, the resources needed to control it would be minimal compared to resources needed in this larger infestation.

Just as noxious weed infestations can span across political boundaries, so too do weed control efforts. One popular approach to regional weed problems is the formation of Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA's). These are multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional groupings that may include federal, tribal, state and county government agencies, and non-profit citizen organizations in a particular watershed or region. Some CWMA's are formal organizations with bylaws and memoranda of understandings (MOUs) among members, while others are much more informal groupings of people who simply want to share resources, knowledge, and enthusiasm, to improve their effectiveness. The flexibility of the CWMA model allows for customized efforts to make the most of limited resources and this is what makes them so successful. The WSNWCB supports the creation and coordinated efforts of CWMA's throughout the state.



Photo Credit
WSNWCB
Walla Walla Common
Crupina site visit

Long-Term Weed Control Recommendations

Noxious weed control is a continuous component of a healthy and productive Washington State that saves us all money in the long-term. Our noxious weed laws are considered some of the best in the nation. An adequately funded county weed board can be very effective at helping landowners control their noxious weeds and comply with the law. Unfortunately, the disparity continues between local funding levels of county weed boards, and many lack the resources to perform the duties outlined in Chapter 17.10 RCW. Through a 2019 county noxious weed coordinator survey, only 55% of the respondents indicated that they were properly funded to fulfill the duties under the weed law. Over 60% agreed that if more funding was available that their program would utilize it for on the ground noxious weed control work. The WSNWCB will continue to explore other funding opportunities to help county noxious weed control boards' on the ground efforts when possible. The WSNWCB offers publications, funding for Class A eradications and other special projects, and logistical support to counties, particularly to those programs with smaller operational budgets. Due to lack of WSNWCB funding, some of these resources for counties are limited. One such example is, in 2019 eight class A eradication projects were submitted for funding but only five were funded with available funds.

Many county weed boards and county governments have contacted the WSNWCB seeking clarification about sections of Chapter 17.10 RCW. The WSNWCB legislative committee is currently reviewing the noxious weed law. Finding the best approach to updating Chapter 17.10 RCW has been a challenging process. There are many differing views on how the law should be changed - or whether it should be changed at all. The WSNWCB legislative committee has taken an all-inclusive approach to its review process. The committee continues to gain input from counties, other state agencies, public entities, and stakeholders. While change can be difficult and the unknown disconcerting, there appears to be confusion in how county weed boards should operate within counties, along with issues about whether noxious weed assessments can be collected on state-owned land, with the way Chapter 17.10 RCW is currently written. As the WSNWCB's legislative committee reviews the noxious weed law, it will keep the noxious weed community updated on its findings.

The noxious weed community has continued its mission to help protect Washington's precious resources from the devastating and costly impacts of noxious weeds. Every noxious weed population controlled now will save money in the future, and Washington's citizens, agriculture, and natural resources all benefit from this long-term perspective.

It can be difficult to measure success in the noxious weed world. We often forget about old infestations, and work steadfastly to eliminate current noxious weed problems. Many quiet victories go by unannounced. However, when we see vast and productive agricultural fields or expanses of natural areas untarnished by noxious weeds, we know we are succeeding.