

Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control

2011 Annual Report



Provided by
Noxious Weed Office Staff

Education and Public Relations

Radio Reports:

51 reports were prepared for KOMW. Topics ranged from Invasive species legislative issues to control methods for specific species of noxious weeds. We have been doing these weekly reports for about 11 years and have built up a very large archive. We are getting more people listening to the reports all of the time, and frequently we receive comments from listeners letting us know how much they appreciate them. The Radio Report is heard from Wenatchee to Osoyoos BC.

Okanogan County Fair:

Budget concerns made it necessary to cancel our fair booth. However, the Conservation District stepped in and allowed us to put some materials in their booth in the Agri-plex. We were able to help staff the booth and talked to many people about their control responsibilities, issues pertaining to weeds, and our policy regarding enforcements and mandatory control. We handed out over 750 brochures about noxious weeds, weed control, our Cross Borders Booklets and Garden Wise booklets, which list alternative plants for people to plant in their landscapes that are not invasive. The Conservation District kept detailed records of how many people were talked to and the final tally was over 1,500. *We really appreciate their assistance in helping us spread the word about invasive plants.*

2011 Horticulture Show at the Okanogan Agriplex:

The Weed Office staffed a booth at the Horticulture Show. We distributed informational packets about noxious weeds, provided control recommendations regarding specific noxious weeds and performed weed identification services. We discussed the assessment and our ability to continue popular programs such as our recertification classes.

2011 Spring Fair

The Weed Office did not participate in the Spring Fair (Home & Garden Show) in 2011 due to restrictions on staff time.

School Camps:

During the course of several weeks in May, we held classes for the 6th graders at Camp Progress, Camp Disautel, and Camp Tokawanee at Lost Lake. We took educational material and provided discussions about noxious weeds, mentioning at each class the particular weeds they may find in their area, how to identify them, and how to help stop their spread.

The updated posters were used and the campers were quite engaged. The posters are informative, each one with a picture or two of the noxious weed, and a little information such as hazards to animals and ways their seeds travel.

The 6th graders had fun looking in our Weed ID booklets and the Range and Pasture guide to see who could be first to identify that particular noxious weed. It helped spark their interest and made the classes more interactive. They were surprised to hear about the overwhelming amount of seeds most noxious weeds can release. They always enjoy trying

to spit Sunflower Seeds as far as a Leafy Spurge can spit seeds (see picture below). Many of the kids in the north area said they remembered previously hearing about noxious weeds in Molson during their 3rd grade school year.



Hunter Information Booth

Staff from the Noxious Weed Office, in coordination with staff from US Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife put on a Hunter's Information Booth at the Omak Walmart parking lot. At the booth, the Weed Office provided hunters with noxious weed identification pamphlets, and discussed what they could do to help prevent the spread of noxious weeds. The event took place on the Thursday and Friday before opening day of modern firearm deer season, so we were able to reach hunters before they reached their hunting locations. The booth was a big success, with over 140 hunters stopping by the booth to pick up information.

Lake Osoyoos Eurasian Watermilfoil Control

Each year the Office receives an increasing amount of comments from Lake Osoyoos landowners regarding infestations of Eurasian Watermilfoil. In 2011 we received a Dept of Ecology grant, in partnership with the Lake Osoyoos Association, to do a survey of the lake for invasive plants, including milfoil. The Weed Office was also asked to apply for the permit needed to perform herbicide applications in the lake. After much concern from Canada regarding potential drift, the permit was awarded and treatment occurred on 4 acres of milfoil.

Re-certification Opportunities:

*****Monthly Weed Board Meetings:** Recertification credits are available for those who attended our monthly Board Meetings. Meetings are open to the public and all are encouraged to attend.

Spring Recertification Class: The event took place in March and over 100 people attended to receive their pesticide recertification credits. We were able to provide 6 credits, on various noxious weed subjects, for a \$5 fee. At this year's Spring Class, we also offered a hands-on backpack sprayer calibration workshop that took place in conjunction with our regularly scheduled classes. The calibration workshop enabled those who were interested to rotate out of the regular scheduled recertification class to calibrate their personal backpack sprayer.

Fall Recertification Class: This year's Fall Recertification Class took place in November, with well over 125 people in attendance. We were able to offer 8 pesticide license recertification credits, which covered a variety of subjects. The pesticide license recertification class was well attended and we received assistance from Okanogan County Coordinated Weed Management Area partners in receipting individuals at the door.

Meetings and Workshops Attended

January: Horticultural Show, Grant Co Recert Class, Milfoil Mtg with staff from Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers office, Lake Osoyoos Assoc (LOA) Milfoil mtg, Milfoil Conference call

February: LOA Eurasian Watermilfoil meeting, Okanogan Coordinated Weed Management Area mtg,

March: WSU Forestry Class, Recert Class, Coordinators Conference, State Weed Board mtg, Omak City Council mtg, Cross Borders mtg, Citizens Advisory Group – Sinlahekin mtg, Citizens Advisory Group – Scotch Creek mtg,

April: South Okanogan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society AGM, Boundary Weed Management AGM, International Milfoil Control CWMA mtg, Evaluation Training Seminar

May: State Weed Board meeting, LOA Milfoil mtg, Title II RAC meeting, Okanogan CWMA mtg, DOT noxious weed tour, Camps Desautel, Progress, Tokiwanee,

June: Okanogan Basin Water Board Milfoil mtg, Retired Public Employees mtg, Cascade Columbia River Railroad mtg

July: PNW Invasive Plant Council Workshop, DOE Grant Workshop, County Dept Head mtg, BLM Resource mtg

August: LOA Milfoil mtg

September: Okanogan County Fair, State Weed Board Mtg, Natural Resource Grants Webinar

October: Okanogan CWMA meeting, Hunter Information Booth

November: Weed Association Conference, Fall recertification class, Ferry Co Class,

December: Christina Lake Stewardship mtg,

***Monthly Weed Board Meetings

***Quarterly Commissioner Updates

CWMA's

Okanogan County is in partnership through our Coordinated Weed Management Areas (CWMA's). These partnerships are a valuable asset to our County. Through these partnerships, the agencies have been able to assist each other with noxious weed issues and on the ground control efforts.

The Okanogan County CWMA is a formal partnership with USDA Forest Service, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, USDI Bureau of Land Management, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Okanogan Conservation District, Colville Confederated Tribes/Bureau of Indian Affairs, WSU Okanogan County Extension, and State Parks with the Noxious Weed Office performing the duties of Lead Agency. We have agreed to work together, providing education and performing weed control efforts in geographical boundaries rather than individual property lines.

Together we have been able to seek and implement grant dollars for educational efforts and on the ground weed control. Title II RAC funds have allowed us to select various project areas throughout the county to perform weed control efforts. These project areas have been very successful, making the best use of control dollars, allowing partners the opportunity to focus in a given area instead of individual efforts. We are also in the process of creating and distributing noxious weed awareness posters to be installed at trailheads and campgrounds. We meet quarterly to discuss projects, provide agency updates and learn of issues pertaining to weed control.

Weeds Cross Borders is our formal partnership with Ferry County Noxious Weed & WSU Extension, South Okanogan Similkameen Invasive Plant Society, and Boundary Weed Management Committee weed districts in Canada. We are the lead agency for this MOU. This CWMA addresses the fact that weeds know no boundaries and an international boundary is no different from a property line between neighbors. It is a benefit to both countries in that it allows for mutual projects, education and cooperation. Okanogan sees the results in Mirabilis and Musk thistle control north of the border and Puncturevine control south of the Border to address a Canadian priority species.

We highlight areas of international concern, including bio-control, cross border weed spread, and agency rules that restrict international cooperation. This partnership also produces Weeds Cross Borders calendars. In 2011 we were able to apply for and receive grant funding to print and distribute 6000 "Prevent and Protect" calendars within the project area. The calendars highlighted pristine landscapes where the potential effects of an invasive plant can be devastating. The Chronicle was instrumental this year with its support of this project, without their assistance, the Calendar would not have happened. We meet twice a year to discuss projects, provide updates, and learn about potential issues that we can address to make our international partnership an ideal goal for other areas.

The International Control of Invasive Aquatic Vegetation for the Upper Columbia River System Cooperative Weed Management Area is our newest CWMA. The purpose of this MOU is to develop an integrated approach to invasive aquatic vegetation prevention and control in the Upper Columbia River System Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) through the development of scientific research, education, training and awareness raising at all levels, the development of appropriate coordinated policies and practices, the networking of scientists in the region, and the transfer of information and knowledge by establishing region-wide coordination.

It is a joint endeavor on the parts of Okanogan and Chelan counties to bring together parties interested in Eurasian Watermilfoil control along the Upper Columbia River System. The Okanogan Noxious Weed Office plays a key role and houses the Documents relating to the CWMA. Partners include Federal and State agencies, Conservation Districts, Weed Boards, Tribal Agencies and many others. A Memorandum of Understanding was prepared with assistance from the Army Corps. Each signing party has a stake in the successful control of aquatic noxious weeds, with the current priority on Eurasian Watermilfoil. This project will allow for integrated control efforts and establish a basis for productive dialogue regarding successful control and education efforts as well as develop a potential process for rearing and harvesting of biological controls for non-native milfoils.

Grants

We have received 6 grants, and a control contract, totaling about \$61,000 for 2011.

1. Title II RAC - \$10,000 which was used to treat New Invader species and project areas.
2. WSDA "Forest Health" - \$ 8,000 for Spurge Flax Control and survey.
3. State Weed Board Class A - \$4,600 for Mirabilis Control (Wild Four o'clock).
4. BIA Scotch Thistle Contract - \$12,000 for control of Scotch thistle and New Invader species on the Reservation.
5. Dept of Ecology - \$22,500 for invasive plant survey on Lake Osoyoos. Funding will carry over to 2012.
6. DOT BTEP - \$4,000 for educational Weeds Cross Borders Calendars.

Noxious Weeds

Class A:



Meadow Clary: 2011 documented the first confirmed infestation of Meadow clary in Okanogan County. The initial site was documented in the Methow Valley, between the towns of Twisp and Winthrop, but, upon further surveying, staff detected an additional 4 sites within the Methow Valley area. After a little bit of investigating, it was revealed that Meadow clary had been sold in the Methow Valley at a local nursery, prior to it being added to the state noxious weed list.



Spurge Flax: Spurge flax is present in the Alkali lake area west of Riverside, the Beeman Road area, and south of Spectacle Lake in the Horse Spring Coulee area. This year, we expanded upon the surveying efforts that took place in 2010. Thanks to grant funding, we were able to contract Okanogan Co. Corrections for a surveying crew. In total, we surveyed over 25,600 acres, and treated 40.75 acres of Spurge flax which included retreatments in areas that needed follow-up work.



Buffalobur: We are starting to see more occurrences of Buffalobur. The sites have been small, usually one or two plants, with no major infestations reported. Landowners have been able to provide their own control work. All sites are near bird feeders or houses. Education is ongoing regarding contaminated seed and the need to purchase “Sterile” seed or native seed for feeders.



Wild Four O'clock: Approximately 5,000 acres were surveyed in 2011, with 19 actual acres being treated. This year, a new site was located near the town of Brewster. All landowners with Mirabilis infestations on their property requested treatment, which was provided by grant dollars. Most Mirabilis sites occur along the Okanogan River corridor, or near the town of Loomis. All known Mirabilis sites were treated in 2011.



Velvetleaf: Approximately 100 acres were surveyed around the only known Velvetleaf infestation (near the town of Oroville). A couple of new plants were located and treated within the site this year. We will continue to monitor the site as well as the surrounding areas. Any new growth or newly discovered infestations will be mapped and treat.

New Invaders:



Orange & Yellow Hawkweed: 11,000 acres were surveyed for Hawkweed species (mostly in the NE corner of the County). In total during the 2011 field season, the noxious weed office oversaw the treatment of 6.5 acres of Hawkweed. For the most part, Hawkweed populations and densities in Okanogan County appear to stay fairly stable from year to year, due to the difficult task of locating and treating individual plants over extremely large areas.



Common Bugloss: We continued treatments of three small sites of Common Bugloss this year (one near the Ferry County line, one just off of Toroda Creek Road, and one in the Frosty Creek area). Between the 3 sites, we treated about 1 acre of Common Bugloss in 2011, and surveyed an additional 600 acres. We will continue to keep an eye out for more new sites.



Japanese Knotweed: In 2011, the Noxious Weed Office did not receive any grant funding for controlling Japanese Knotweed. Consequently, no control work was conducted on Japanese Knotweed this year. However, when inspecting the areas that were treated with the injection gun in 2010, we saw very little regrowth.



Yellow Toadflax: Due to a lack of funding and restrictions on staff time, Yellow Toadflax has been removed from Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board's New Invader weed list. We are still encouraging landowners to control infestations on their property, and informing them of the availability of bio-controls.



Oxeye Daisy: Do to a lack of funding and restrictions on staff time, the Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board decided to remove Oxeye Daisy from its list of New Invader noxious weeds. We are still strongly encouraging landowners to control Oxeye Daisy on their property, and are providing recommendations for controlling Oxeye Daisy.



Yellow Star Thistle: We treated a total of 1.5 acres of Yellow Star Thistle between the 3 known infestations of Yellow Starthistle (Big Goose Lake area, Tunk Valley area, and Davis Lake in the Methow. All areas where Yellow Star Thistle has been found in the past were surveyed in 2011, which added up to a total of 4,500 acres being surveyed. Progress is being made toward eradication, which is evident by the fact that we did not find any plants at the Tunk Valley site in 2011.



Rush Skeletonweed: A total of 2 acres of Rush Skeletonweed were treated in 2011 at various locations around the county. Every year, we are finding more infestations in new locations around the county. This year we surveyed an extensive new infestation in the Horse Spring Coulee area, most of which was not treated due to timing issues. All known Skeletonweed sites were inspected and treated. In total, about 5,000 acres were surveyed for Rush Skeletonweed in 2011.



Tansy Ragwort: In 2011, staff from the Noxious Weed Office inspected the Lemanski Lake site which was discovered, and treated, in 2010. We did not detect any new plants growing. The Lemanski Lake site is the only known Tansy Ragwort infestation growing on private lands within Okanogan County. We will continue to monitor the site over the next several years.

Class B-Designate: ****see note below



Dalmatian Toadflax: Due to prioritization of other species, inspections for Dalmatian Toadflax were very limited in 2011, and infestations were only noted if found present with other mandatory control species. Dalmatian Toadflax biological control agent releases did take place on several large infestations.



Leafy Spurge: Most of the known Leafy Spurge sites are located near Brewster, Riverside, or at Palmer Lake. In 2011, we treated 25 acres of Leafy Spurge, and inspected over 10,000 acres. The Leafy Spurge site in Aeneas Valley was re-checked, no new plants were detected in 2011.



Musk Thistle: We were unable to inspect many of the areas where we have found Musk Thistle in the past and several new sites were also noted. Staff did cover areas around Chesaw, Havillah, and Molson fairly well. In total, we inspected over 26,000 acres for Musk Thistle in 2011, and 2 acres were treated at the New Invader sites. A total of 6 enforcements were performed and 3 liens filed.



Scotch Thistle: Most Scotch thistle sites were inspected this year. The Tribal Range Dept. provided funding for treatments on the Reservation, which allowed us to treat 75 acres and survey over 10,000. Scotch thistle on new land purchases for Tribal Fish & Wildlife outside of reservation boundaries resulted in new contacts being made, control options discussed, and control work performed by Tribal Fish & Wildlife. Between tribal and non-tribal lands, staff inspected approximately 175,000 acres.



Hoary Alyssum: In 2011, we surveyed about 11,000 acres for Hoary Alyssum. All known sites out of the Buffer Area were inspected and treated. Most landowners with Hoary Alyssum on their property were very cooperative, and performed the required control on their property. However, there were a few properties that required enforcement activities on them. Hoary Alyssum continues to be a big concern do to its rapid rate of spread.

*** Inadequate staffing levels did not allow for effective surveys of B-Designate species. Prioritizing Class A and New invader species reduced the amount of time spent on additional designated species.

Weeds of Concern

Aquatic Species: These plants are rapidly moving along the Columbia and Okanogan Rivers. We will continue to monitor and seek funding sources to begin control on these species: Fragrant Waterlily, Yellow Flag Iris, and Eurasian Watermilfoil.

In addition to the International Control of Invasive Aquatic Vegetation for the Upper Columbia River System Cooperative Weed Management Area, we continue to work with the Lake Osoyoos Association, and landowners around Lake Osoyoos and other infested lakes, on education and control efforts for Eurasian Watermilfoil.

Biological Control Releases

2011 brought an increase in the number of bio control releases through the Ferry-Okanogan-Colville Reservation Region program. 2858 acres were treated through the program, and landscapes are changing. Increases in the amount of native forbs and grasses have been noted.

Chrysolina spp. (St. Johnswort) 700 insects, 3 releases
Aplocera spp. (St. Johnswort) 700 insects, 28 releases
Cyphocleonus achates (Diffuse and Spotted Knapweed) 20 insects
Larinus minutus (Diffuse Knapweed) 17,100 insects, 85 releases
Mecinus janthinus (Dalmatian Toadflax) 35,700 insects, 178 releases

This program has been highly successful and is a very valuable component of our program.

Summary

The 2011 field season got off to a rocky start with the cold weather and late spring. Everything seemed to jump at the same time toward the end of June. Our re-organization allowed us to hit the ground running and accomplish our control goals.

Larry focused on our EDRR (Early Detection, Rapid Response) species such as Class A's and New Invaders, as we removed Musk thistle surveying and control from his list of responsibilities. This proved an excellent idea and enabled Larry to actively control several sites with chemical provided by the Weed Office and provide the commercial applicator with the support needed for the larger sites. A site of Class A species, Meadow Clary, was found by WDFW. Subsequent surveys found several sites on private grounds in the Methow. Since several of these sites are ornamental in nature, we may need to develop a program to fit these unique circumstances.

Because of the shift of responsibilities, Larry was able to provide more time toward control of Spurge flax, and was able to utilize a full jail crew to assist in surveying. This enabled the surveying of additional acres and was covered under the WSDA Forest Health funding. The result from the survey showed additional sites in the Riverside area, mainly due to the increased use of off road vehicles. Larry noted obvious signs of ATV riding through several infestations. The Board may want to consider re-allocating the Riverside funding to the North area sites. Making the Riverside area the total responsibility of the landowners, and control would be enforced.

Funding from the Colville Range Dept. /BIA allowed for a weed control program on the reservation in 2011. This funding was originally allocated for Scotch thistle control, but in recent years has been expanded to include EDRR species such as Yellow starthistle and Rush skeletonweed. Janet

was able to survey and provide support to the commercial applicator to get most of the EDRR sites controlled as well as a substantial portion of the Scotch thistle sites.

Leafy spurge control was once again funded by the Weed Board and several new sites were found, often with small infestations. We have about 95% participation with this program, with a few landowners preferring to control their own sites. All sites were surveyed, and all sites were controlled with enforcement actions needed.

We devised a new electronic field sheet for Musk and Scotch thistle control. The new sheets saved time and were very easy to use once we got used to them. The sheets were adaptive as the season progressed and included field notes, office notes, and aerial photo and GPS data.

Scotch thistle was surveyed and voluntary control was achieved on all sites. A majority of the Musk thistle sites were surveyed and most were voluntarily controlled, but several enforcement actions did occur. Returning field staff made surveying for thistles more effective as they are familiar with most areas and procedures.

We were awarded a Dept. of Ecology (DOE) grant in cooperation with Lake Osoyoos Association (LOA) to develop a plan to control aquatic invasive species, focusing on Eurasian watermilfoil, in the US portion of the lake. We made substantial progress on the grant, completing the survey and mapping portion in 2011. Education and Outreach are ongoing processes and will continue into the foreseeable future. We sought and received a permit from DOE to allow for chemical control of the Eurasian Milfoil, allow for treatment of 4 acres in 2011.

Education efforts are ongoing and we continue to update existing brochures and other handouts with better photography and current control recommendations. We continue to receive requests for on-site consultations and assistance with weed control plans. We have collected contact information, including email, and are able to supply a quarterly electronic newsletter to over 500 people, as well as constant reminders about classes, Weed Board meeting and other pertinent noxious weed info. Joan organized all the collected data for us into distribution lists for individual weed species as well, allowing us to send timely reminders about required weed control.

Our web site has been updated also and a volunteer keeps it current and up to date. The Board is provided with a monthly analysis of site visits, including where viewers are located, length of time on the site, pages viewed, and other pertinent data as requested. We have averaged about 160 visits per month.

2011 proved to be a good year for the office, we continued to make adjustments and adapt our programs to fit revenue expectations?. We continue to provide the support needed for our landowners to effectively control noxious weeds, and will strive to carry a positive outlook into 2012.