

Environmental Quality Council (EQC) Meeting
September 9 - 10, 2015
Noxious Weed Coordination Report

State Noxious Weed Coordinator

- The new State Noxious Weed Coordinator, Dave Burch, began work July 6, 2015. ~~Dave is unable to be here today to help assist with the report we have prepared for the Council.~~
- Primary duties and responsibilities of the position are to provide statewide noxious weed coordination, management of the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund and Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Programs and supervision of three (3) FTE.

Status Report for FY16 – 1st Quarter

State Noxious Weed Coordinator Activities July – September 2015:

Program Management:

- Completed a new herbicide, revegetation and budget worksheet for our online Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grants program. The intent was to create an easier and more user friendly process for grantees to use when applying for a grant.
- Continued to oversee the operations of the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program.
- Updated job description for the Noxious Weed Grant Coordinator position and began recruitment for that position. **Conducted interviews and hired the position, first day September 8th.**

County and tribal weed district support:

- Technical and regulatory compliance assistance to coordinators, weed boards and county commissioners: July – assisted two counties with specific issues
- Montana Weed Control Act Interpretation and Implementation assistance; form and process assistance August – assisted three counties with specific issues
- The program goal is to meet with one-third (1/3) of county and tribal county weed districts annually:
 - To date we have met with **twelve (12)** of the 56 counties including: Carbon, Yellowstone, Fergus, Powder River, Custer, Hill, Chouteau, **Lincoln, Sanders, Lewis & Clark, Pondera** and Treasure County Weed District Coordinators. Discussed current weed issues and surveyed for Common Reed in several of the counties.
 - We have sent an email to all county coordinators informing them of my availability to meet with them and/or their weed boards and county commissioners to discuss any issues they may have.

Conduct Training and Outreach:

- Will conduct *New County and Tribal Weed District Coordinator training November 4-6, 2015*; conduct Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant and Environmental Assessment training for Tribal and other

interested parties October 7, 2015; participate on planning committee for the Montana Weed Control Association Education Fund Raiser to be held September 19, 2015 and Annual Conference in January 13-14, 2016.

- Serve as Chairman of the Statewide Noxious Weed Awareness and Education Campaign; we are implementing a new program called "Adopt A Trailhead." Interested groups will conduct weed control activities on their favorite Trailhead in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service, County Weed District and the Department of Agriculture.
- Assisting with the planning of the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC) - Invasive Species Summit to be held April 12-13, 2016.
- Assisted in the development for the Invasive Species Survey design to be used to assess "Gaps" in Montana regarding all invasive species.

Respond to Noxious Weed Infestations:

- Coordinated three new noxious weed invader responses, including emergency response, containment and management efforts for Rush skeletonweed, Common Reed and Dyer's Woad. Activities included conducting delimitation surveys and inspections.
- Participated in Noxious Weed Task Force issues for Dyer's woad, two new infestations reported in July; new report of Rush skeletonweed infestation on the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Reservation lands in July, coordinated with Task Force Chair on Tansy ragwort in August – provided additional biological insects for placement in Lewis & Clark County.
- Worked with Sanders and Lincoln Counties and the USDA Forest Service on locating a fire equipment base out of a field known to have Rush skeletonweed. The equipment base was relocated to another field. This could have had the potential to spread Rush skeletonweed into fire areas resulting in new infestations of this noxious weed.

State, regional and national coordination:

- Serve as Department representative on the Aquatic Invasive Species team, along with departments of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Natural Resources and Conservation, and Transportation. We meet on a regular scheduled monthly meeting (every third Thursday Tuesday).
- Serve as a member of the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council (MISAC). Attended meetings in July for the main MISAC meeting and met on sub-committees for the summit meeting and strategic plan.
- Attended a special advisory council meeting for the Center for Invasive Species Management at the University of Georgia in Tifton, Georgia. The council meeting focus was to review and evaluate the current program and to provide recommendations for the future direction of the program.
- As the EDDMapS West coordinator for Montana I have verified 10 reports of noxious weeds.
- Prepare the legislative biennial weed report for FY 14 and FY 15. Sent letters in August to the Department Directors providing information on the report and requesting that this process be conveyed to their Department liaison in charge of weed control activities so they can complete the required electronic form. County Weed District Coordinators have also been contacted and will approve or disapprove the agencies report. The Department will compile all information for a final report in February 2016.

- July 31, 2015 the department adopted an administrative rule adding Common reed to the state noxious weed list and changing the status priority of Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush and hoary alyssum. The administrative rule also added Brazilian waterweed and parrot feather watermilfoil to the regulated plant list.
- Scheduled to attend the Western Invasive Weed Summit in Boise ID on November 17 -19, 2015. The goal of the summit is to build on the recent Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) publication, *Invasive Plant Management and Greater Sage-grouse Conservation: A Review and Status Report with Strategic Recommendations for Improvement*. We will refine the report's challenges and barriers and develop recommendations for securing adequate and consistent program funding at county, state, and federal levels. The final product of the Summit will be the development of an Action Plan to help guide state and federal agencies, local governments and private entities in a coordinated and effective approach to addressing this important conservation issue.
- Process petitions to add new invasive plants, remove existing plants on the list, or change the status of plants currently on the list. The petition process will start in January of 2016 and the Department will work with the Weed Listing Workgroup to evaluate the petitions and requests. Changes to the list will be processed through an administrative rule change.
- The Department will be updating the state terrestrial noxious weed management plan with an estimated completion date of January 2017.