

State Weed Advisory Committee Meeting

May 30, 2012, La Junta, Colorado

Members present: Susan Panjabi (chair), Karen Scopel (vice-chair), George Beck, Ed Norden, Terri Schultz, Shiela Grother, Fran Pannebaker, Jack Flowers, Randy Malcom, Ken Harper

CDA staff: Steve Ryder, Patty York, Dan Bean, Ashley Ross

8:35 Meeting opens with introductions

8:40 Discussion of local weed issues with Otero County Commissioners

Steve welcomes local decision makers and explains committee's role and make-up.

Ed Norden asked for explanation of operations in Otero County; Kevin explained that they do ground sterilization around guardrails; broadleaf program along right-of-ways; total of 35,000 spent on roads, between CDOT and their Road and Bridge Dept. Problems arise with landowners adjacent to ROW taking care of their own properties. No contracting or incentives for private properties.

Sheila's program pays up to 50% of chemical costs in their cost-share program. They then work with the landowners to come up with a specific plan and teach them how to manage their own properties. The program contracts with CDOT as well, to supplement their budget.

Ed explains that they do extensive cost-share type contracting with private landowners in Fremont County. They also do spraying on private properties

One of Kevin's main concerns is all the high-value crops grown in the county.

Karen said that in Weld County, many of the farmers spray their own weeds. The county also has equipment that they will rent out to private landowners. Occasionally the county does an enforcement action. Tina goes to the commissioner to get that approved. Tina gets a lot of grants; gets assistance from the local soil service, and the commissioners put some in the pot as well.

Finding money to do the work is an issue. Steve mentioned the state's grant program. George discussed the efforts to redirect federal funds to weed management: Healthy Habitats Coalition

Kevin would like to coordinate better with Forest Service and State Land Board.

George takes it back to the need for more funds. Ed mentioned to start having dialogue with those folks to communicate the issues. Fremont County used to have many of the same issues, but now they have much better coordination between all entities. Sheila mentioned that across the state there is not necessarily one process or one type of program.

Ed and Kevin discussed the Colorado Canal and Rocky Ford Ditch, both of which have experienced large decreases in the amount of irrigated acres of land due to water rights issues with Kansas.

George mentioned section 28.14 of federal noxious weed act law that requires federal programs to work with local governments to control weeds. Terri mentioned that the state land board does have a cost-share program with their leases to control weeds. Sheila's experience with SLB is that if you ask them for money, they will provide it.

Sheila feels the most important thing is that there needs to be that single, strong contact person to run the program in each county. Sheila's worried that San Miguel County is going to try to save \$20-30,000 in salary costs and instead of replacing the fulltime position; they are going to hodge-podge a way around it.

Kevin's final question was how to deal with railroads. Steve mentioned that some counties have contracts with the railroads where the counties take care of the ROWs and then the railroad pays them. It is a struggle to find out who's even in charge. The relationship with railroads is an ongoing challenge. The crews go all around the country, and whether they hit the right weeds at the right time is an issue. Kevin mentioned that the railroads only spray 15 feet on either side (ground sterilizer). Jim mentioned that it's confusing for CDOT as well. George suggested that this would be a place for the state to step up and take responsibility for these lands/ROWs. Right now no one is pressuring the railroads to do anything. Sheila mentioned that the bare ground approach is counter-productive, especially in terms of vectors for travel and spread. Susan brought the conversation back to the overall goals of the committee and meeting: help set the priorities for what our goals are in certain areas or at specific sites. Not just about the killing of the weeds, but more toward a goal of restoration. Kevin said that those are good points, but there needs to be better correlation between all property owners so that one owner isn't controlling weeds on their property while others aren't. Weeds can just spread right back onto the lands that were controlled, and then you just threw those limited resources down the drain. Karen stressed the importance of partnerships and having a weed management plan. Counties are required by statute to have a plan; they don't have to be a huge document, can even be a list of 5 species.

Fran brought up the ARKWIPP program in hopes that it could become a model for the lower Arkansas River. There's so many great projects and good work going on under the umbrella of ARKWIPP. Often times as a government official, sometimes feel at odds with intervening with private property owners. Key is to come up with a few private property owners that can act as the voice on their side.

Terri brought up that many times she hears the opposite from high-value crop owners.

Levy brought up that the county's goals for weed management are not always in line with the state's goals. In Las Animas County, musk thistle is a huge problem, but it's not on the A List, so they don't get the grant money. There's a break in communication between entities. George brought up that it's difficult to allocate the funds, so you need to speak up so that the commissioners know there are problems. This could lead to more funds being allocated from the top.

Karen mentioned that providing feedback to grantees that were not funded is important. Steve mentioned that we don't provide a lot of feedback due to our limited funds and specific wording in the RFP. We currently just don't have enough money to grant money out to all the List B projects that apply. Sheila asked Steve to explain resources available. We've had upwards of \$400-500,000 to spend, but that amount was drastically reduced this year (SPF cut 70% this year). All the western states have relied heavily on SPF funds in the past. Perhaps every other year, or every third year, perhaps at the state level we could focus more on the List B species.

Susan suggested that we should move forward and that this conversation was incredibly helpful. She mentioned the real goals of each program. Ask yourself: "Which species are most important to control, and what are we trying to protect here?"

9:30 Items 3 and 4; both approved

9:35 Follow-up from yesterday: Sheila mentioned the importance of what we do and how that affects the private landowners. The Russian knapweed that we saw yesterday was overwhelming, and Sheila said that at least we're learning from our mistakes. Terri was excited to see the tamarisk defoliation on the plants. Susan was interested in seeing what is coming in post-defoliation. Not only is it important for us to kill the plants, but to restore the habitat. Fran mentioned the importance of the riparian corridors in general. Ed mentioned that it will be interested to see the effects of the tamarisk control in 10-20 years, especially in terms of water/riparian. Along the Chihuahua and Purgatoire, they have found that if a few landowners get on board, many others end up wanting to as well.

9:45 Fran's orientation to noxious weed efforts in the region

Map of FS/State/DOD lands. Slide depicting populations of each of southeastern CO counties. Fran's favorite project: ARWIPP: Working toward a Restored Arkansas River Watershed Riparian Ecosystem. 69% of tamarisk in CO is within the Arkansas and Purgatoire watersheds. 5 action steps: work with landowners, education/outreach/volunteer, research, long-term funding, and long-term sustainability. There's a committee for each action step. Partners. Watersheds of Arkansas River Basin: most of Purgatoire has been treated, and the only reason not all of it has been is due to accessibility issues (narrow, steep canyon). Prowers County is doing mostly helicopter spraying of tamarisk, and they are GPS recording where they are spraying with the helicopter. Map of EPMTs across the country; currently reorganizing to get more parks covered. Crews that were successful had liaisons that leveraged funds from other entities (maybe CDOT could provide chemical, BLM could provide a truck, etc.). That's the way it should work, and Fran hopes to see a strong liaison hired that can work with Steve, and Jim (CDOT), and the Grasslands. Susan mentioned that where there are multi-agency programs across the state, there has been great success. There's a new program through Otero Junior College (STEM) that teaches students to use GPS units to track weeds. Fran wants to help them come up with actual weeds/areas that need mapping so that they're not just out there mapping things that aren't important.

George wants to encourage the entire drainage to create a long term program that works together with many partnerships. This will open them up for more funding opportunities. Steve mentioned that the state is looking for cooperative weed management areas to coordinate efforts with.

Ashley mentioned that many times her CD's are concerned about weeds, but they either don't have the knowledge of what to do or the manpower to get it done. They are the ones who can connect the weed managers with the private landowners.

Adam's presentation on NPS EPMTs: Background: created in 2000; there's about 400 units spread across all the parks/programs. Designed to come into a park and help treat large infestations. 2.6 million acres of NPS lands dominated by invasives. EPMTs formed to assist parks; operate over wide area and assist many parks. Focus is on control and restoration. 16 total overall teams. Successful crews fund additional crew members from state and local agencies. Most crew members are seasonals. Revegetation project include native seedlings and cottonwood and willow livestock plantings. Reorganization of crews; advisory group was created; alternative plans were presented. Person at the federal level covers plants and aquatics (Rita Beard) for the entire country.

10:25 Dan Bean's presentation on the Palisade Insectary. What is biological control, and what are the missions of the insectary? How can you use biocontrol in IPM? We saw that a little yesterday, and the hope is to use biocontrol for more of a long-term effect. Often times a noxious weed project gets funded once, and then it's done. With biocontrol, they can remain in the system for a long time and continue to have an effect on the ecosystem. There's always the question of what will happen to the biocontrol after their host plants are gone? Short answer is that they will not go for other plants; the agents are very well tested, but even then sometimes things don't work out the way we all want them to. One of the best things about biocontrol is that it's generally inexpensive. Operate in an IPM way, but biocontrol will never completely eradicate a weed. It doesn't tend to be the goal for species where biocontrol agents are an option. Control means suppression to a level that makes both the ecosystem and landowners happy. Coming up with a plan is the best approach; insectary helps people with plans, but that is the most difficult part. Often you need to release the agents, see how they work, and then go from there. More coordination between the insectary and chemical program could help with education efforts. Peach orchards use the insectary's moths; don't overwinter in CO; must release each year. Biocontrol saves the peach farmers money because they don't have to spray as much insecticide. Everyone is welcome to take a tour of the insectary; just let Dan know you're coming. 750,000 tamarisk beetles have been released in the Arkansas Watershed. They both release agents and distribute them to landowners. Currently trying to establish yellow toadflax weevil collection sites; once they're established, they'll be able to release to county weed managers and other landowners. There is also mapping, monitoring, and follow-ups of releases. They use Fed-Ex addresses for mapping, and sometimes they get additional information back from releases. They are trying to use Landsat imagery to depict defoliation, instead of individual GPS points, which now takes too much time. Map of tamarisk beetle depicting CO, UT, southern NV, and northern AZ and NM. Dan thinks there's more predation in lowlands by predatory ants. When day-lengths are shorter, beetles don't do as well. They look at both large and small-scale areas for tree health and emergent vegetation that comes back underneath. So far their conclusions are that whatever was there before is coming back. Garfield County has a lot of Russian knapweed, so Steve Anthony is excited to help with the galls biocontrol agent. There is a new biocontrol for tamarisk with good potential: *Coniatus* weevils; theory is that they moved up from Phoenix to Colorado in only a few years.

Ed asked about the certification process to release a biocontrol agent. Dan explained the process, which includes a federal permit. Large numbers of experiments are done prior to release, and these focus on crops, close relatives to the host plants, native plants and particularly endangered species. An advisory committee reviews requests and makes recommendations. APHIS is who actually issues the permit, but FWS also reviews the application.

11:10 Susan shared notes from people who wanted to come but could not attend.

11:15 Ashley's presentation on the Lower Arkansas Basin Conservation Districts. Most of the work has focused on tamarisk along the rivers. They've been doing various trials using different herbicides. They are holding a revegetation workshop in 2012 to discuss goals and processes. Originally planned to treat 25,000 acres, but they were able to bump that up to 47,000 acres due to decreasing the cost per acre. CPW has been very helpful with these efforts. Baca County Noxious Weed Program (CD); County Weed Manager (Brian Wait) is leaving, so they are looking to replace him. Baca County just started an Integrated Pest Management Plan in partnership with NRCS; in 2011 treated 6 noxious weeds, all List B species. They get all their money from the county. BCCD hopes to partner with Kansas and Oklahoma. West Otero-Timpas Creek CD tamarisk aerial application and riparian restoration project. They have used other techniques to get rid of tamarisk as well. Something Ashley's districts do really well is landowner contacting, and they are also good at getting grant money. If anyone needs a contact in the area, please let her know.

11:30 Jim thanked everyone for having him and mentioned that he has to take off. He mentioned that there are some problems with having the Lists, as people spend money on their List A species and then don't do anything with the B's. George brought up his point from earlier that we may need to focus on List B species a little more than we do currently. Steve brought up that this is a huge discussion, definitely worth having, but that we will have to delve into it more in the future. Karen mentioned that the policy committee could possibly discuss this some. Susan mentioned that the List is a good guide. George wants the state to make more of an effort toward B species.

11:45 Subcommittee meeting break-out. What are we trying to do here, and what are our goals?

12:00 Working lunch with updates from Steve. Deputy Commissioner, Rule updates, grants out and being worked on. Suggestions that those funds granted get posted somewhere (blog or website). Weed Act webinar given after a suggestion from CWMA. The webinar is available online (has to check with Maurina to see where). Sheila and Karen both attended the webinar, and thought the conversation was very useful and that the webinar may be very valuable to county commissioners and others looking to run an enforcement program. CWMA did get the taxes check-off option. Meeting with Plant Select at DBG. Happy to come talk to the committee and to have us at their facilities in Fort Collins next meeting. Economic Impact Study: initiated by CWMA; DNR has committed funds; CDA is in the process of figuring out if/how much we can contribute. CSU has hired a graduate student (Craig) that will start pulling together all the information that is currently out there. CPW is still deciding on invasive species coordinator; it is unknown as to whether a fulltime, part-time, or anyone will be in charge of terrestrial weeds through CPW. Committee members whose positions are ending and need to be recruited by next

meeting. Susan suggested that Steve send out an email about the 4 positions that need to be recruited for; there's a nomination form that Steve will send out to a lot of entities. 4 committee member's first terms will be ending in Sept. so they just need to let us know if they do or do not want to continue.

12:40 Yellowtuft Alyssum update. Syngenta brought sugar beets to CO, washed multiple times, and seedlings are now in the ground. Apparently limited to serpentine soils, but that has not been found to be the case in situations. 40 different small-garden plots in Larimer, Boulder, and Weld Counties. Harvest happens in the summer; most are Round-up ready. Lands will lay fallow until next year's planting occurs. Terri made a suggestion to put the plant on the Watch List just to keep eyes out for the species in case the trucks carrying the beets let seed off during transport. Terri mentioned that this could become a great "success" story if we find that there aren't any populations to have occurred ten years down the road.

12:50 Management plans for 2013. Canada thistle and Russian olive are the two of main concern for how to develop the plans. Terri suggested that the science subcommittee come up with some sort of questionnaire or form to fill out. Russian olives especially, since they are tree species, are sensitive to nesting species, etc. Dan brought up that there are two paths toward biocontrol currently in the works. One path is a root-feeder/defoliator species, and the other path is to create a sterile tree. Silver buffalo berry is a closely related species (same genus), but that's not necessarily what is holding up the process. There are surveys out right now. Karen mentioned that this is mostly an urban-interface issue. In the municipalities, offering some sort of "bounty" or incentive program may be the right way to go. The management plans could contain some sort of creative language. Could the Forest Service partner in terms of replacing trees?

Other question for committee would be: what do we want to do for 2014? Terri suggests that instead of asking county weed managers to map everything, can we just ask if the line has moved or not. Then we can ask them to show us through the mapping system so that we can change the maps. Were you successful, or do you need more time? And, can we establish containment areas for counties that previously had county-wide suppression? We can start with the first generation that was done and go from there.

1:10 Subcommittee Update

Science Committee: 2 recommendations

1. Incorporate the List B containment areas into the Online Mapping System. Patty should incorporate the Map Figures into the spreadsheet she has regarding List B management plans, and send that out to the committee and weed managers.
2. There is money to do plant assessments, Terri recommends doing the aquatic ones first (with the new form), then the rest of the Watch List species.

Policy and Enforcement Committee:

1. The difference between List A and List B species. In some areas, where the List B species are considered List A's perhaps the counties need a little more support, and perhaps the policy committee could help with this.
2. There is some frustration that some of the counties do not have a management plan for their noxious weeds, as spelled out in the Act. The state has been somewhat soft on this issue, and maybe it is time for the state to figure out what the consequences are, and how we can communicate this with the counties. Steve mentioned that we have been trying to allow compliance through encouragement. Karen thinks there are ways to incentivize those counties (grant money?), and otherwise, perhaps there needs to be some "fine" where we charge them until they create the plan, then we re-release the money back to the counties to implement their plan. Steve mentioned that the commissioner would have to make the decision to penalize counties.

Partnerships and Funding Committee:

1. Healthy Habitats Coalition may be able to provide some support.
2. Discussed taking some time before next meeting to discuss some of the partnerships already exist, and where better ones need to be formed. Susan suggested looking at some partnerships by watershed instead of by political lines. Getting people in the same room to discuss ideas is always a great idea. Sheila mentioned that the bottom line always comes down to money and willingness.
3. Perhaps there could be some attendance at the Fall CCI meeting to discuss these things.

Susan asked if everyone feels the current structure of the subcommittees is working. Terri mentioned that it seems much better to focus your time on one subcommittee instead of having to split time. Susan mentioned that education and outreach is now included on each subcommittee. Everyone seemed to be fine with continuing that way.

1:25 Discussion of water vector rule requirement: This issue has come up multiple times, and continues warranting a discussion. Advice from attorney general has been to just leave the rule in there as is, and then negotiate individually with counties. We have also been trying to get more creative with this rule; perhaps we can focus more on a watershed level (one watershed may be able to be eradicated where another may have a much bigger infestation issue), or some "sub-county" level. Terri mentioned that this seems to go along with revising the List B management plans. There may be some "rules" that we can apply, especially if we can base them on GIS somehow. For example, if we add the 9 or 12-digit HUC shapefiles to the mapping system, can we get people to report in that way for certain species. Sheila asked if any compliance waivers have been submitted recently, Steve said no.

1:40 Patty gave an overview of the results obtained from Phase I and the progress being made through Phase II. Patty brought up the technology discussion, but we will have to continue next meeting as to where technology should play a role in weed mapping/education.

2:00 Closing statements.