

**Noxious Weed Advisory Committee**  
**January 12, 2007**

**Members present:** Ray Berges, Roc Rutledge, Harley Ernst, Sarada Krishnan, Margaret Paget, Jonathan Rife, John Taylor, Tom Long, Jeff Connor, Dave Anderson, Terri Schulz, George Beck

**Members present on conference call:** Moe Schifter

**Members absent:** Don Hardin, Bill Wilkinson (both excused due to SE blizzard)

**Nikki Simpson** from the Department of Agriculture recorded the minutes.

**Review/approve minutes from November:** Harley requested that a motion be made approving the minutes. Roc moved, John seconded, all in favor. Motion passed.

**Review/amend agenda:** Harley opened for any additions

**Review progress on past action items (Tom):** Tom Long sent a letter to county weed supervisors responding to their concerns and inviting them to stay in touch with the committee on issues of concern. John questioned about responses and Tom indicated some counties have not responded. Eric noted that several eastern plains counties (Otero, Kit Carson, etc.) often provide unreliable responses to surveys and correspondence.

Tom has not yet sent the letter to county commissioners regarding Canada thistle and the committee's interest their perspective and support for control efforts. Jonathan handed out a spreadsheet that identifies program budgets for many Colorado county weed management programs. Jeff asked if weed control is not of importance for some counties. Tom said money is a lot of it but also often lack of awareness and education. John stated education is critical on environmental issues like the pine beetle problem. Harley said there are lots of misconceptions with weed inspections.

Tom asked for any suggestions for points to make in the letter to county commissioners. The tenor of the letter will be to ask the commissioners for their support of weed management efforts, that counties need to support themselves financially in this effort, and that we need to cooperate with each other to get the ball moving. Eric suggested recommending that county commissioners everywhere speak to their county weed supervisors to see what they need and where the program is going. That way they are informed about what is needed and where the programs are heading. County commissioners are pretty hands off on the county weed programs. Jonathan agrees there are filters (chain of commands) that are block weed staff from communicating more directly with the commissioners. Tom also mentioned education - commissioners do not understand the importance of the program and money/funding problems. Tom will get the letter done and send it out and then will send it out to CCI (newsletter) and Sam Mamet at the Colorado Municipal League. Margaret suggested emailing a copy of the letter back to

the county weed supervisors so they know what is going on. Tom agreed and will send it out. Jonathan said to send it to him and he will email it to his contacts.

**Review status of Department request to reinstate funding to Weed Fund (Eric):** Eric provided an overview of HB 1038, introduced by Representative Gibbs (Summit, Lake, and Eagle counties). Harley mentioned that the subcommittee talked about the bill and identified that there is a problem with funding it through DNR. The Colorado Department of Agriculture should be leading the program, not assisting after the fact. Eric mentioned that the bill would dump a bunch of money on DNR to handle what is already the Department of Ag's responsibility. From Eric's perspective, the DNR has no coordinated effort and has created little to no change on tamarisk in Colorado. If tamarisk control is one of the primary goals, it would be handled locally by many of the networks that CDA already works with very closely like county weed management programs and conservation districts.

Eric believes that it was probably a mistake in rationale that led the DNR to be put in the lead. The severance tax fund is not DNR's per se but many perceive it to be. Severance tax funds can be utilized by other agencies when appropriate. A primary concern with the bill is that it taps severance taxes (like a lot of other bills) and that severance taxes are projected to fall in the coming year.

Harley asked if mapping and inventory has been done for tamarisk. Eric stated that much of it is done.

Harley asked how the committee could effectively rewrite of this bill to be more effective. Eric stated that a big concern is that with all of the emphasis on tamarisk, Colorado will miss opportunities to address species like yellow starthistle that are becoming established but will require far less money to take care of. We need to look at other areas of weed control to see where we can be most cost effective. George suggested that from a monetary perspective, we may not have enough money to get all tamarisk, but perhaps we should suggest how much money would be required to target a suite of species. Focusing our efforts on the control of one or two species will not be effective.

Eric reviewed the efforts by the Department to restore funding to the weed fund: The Owens administration made very few decisions regarding department requests for the new year. And Governor Ritter has not yet staffed up sufficiently to make these decisions either. Even the Department's small request to cover insectary expenses such as Fedex and shipping costs is still waiting for response. So, for the moment, there are no firm directions to move in - there are no "no's" and there are people interested. Eric believes that the most productive opportunity is to work through HB 1038 to address not only tamarisk but other species as well. Eric mentioned that the new commissioner of agriculture (John Stulp) is getting brought up to speed on various topics throughout the Department.

Harley indicated that we should be looking not only at the dollars lost but maybe a little more. Eric stated that asking for what we had plus a small increase to adjust for inflation is a very reasonable request.

**NRCS EQIP** (Eric): The NRCS homepage identifies the \$1,000,000 of dedicated EQIP funding for weed management projects in Colorado for 2007. Once projects are selected, dollars will be available for direct-to-producer assistance contracts over the next few years. The species list is largely the same, except it also has perennial pepperweed and houndstongue. Applicants are eligible to apply for other funds to work on additional species but must first discuss it with Eric to make sure they will be competitive. This year there is more flexibility but we are trying to channel the bulk of the money into higher priority areas (e.g., areas with deadlines for eradication). February 2<sup>nd</sup> is the deadline to receive applications (longer than last year) and we expect that George Beck and Cindy Lair will again participate in reviewing and recommending proposals for funding.

**USFS funding** (Eric): CDA recently issued an email RFP to county weed supervisors, conservation districts, RC&D offices, and others with forms the same as years past. We are still awaiting Congressional action to determine funding levels but we have been told to expect a 10-15% decrease over last year's allocation (\$280,000). However, we will proceed with the assumption that funding will arrive and will be working to get applications in and then let people know that their project is a go pending funding from Congress.

**Finalize process for designating new noxious weeds** (Terri): Harley complimented Terri's work on this project. Jeff, Harley, John, Dave, George, Margaret, and Eric met recently to advance the project. Terri handed out a packet of information. Using the California/AZ/NM protocol as the basis for Colorado's efforts, the committee has added the 4<sup>th</sup> section with reference to impacts on human concerns. There is still some debate about the validity and wording of the last question that refers to the value of the species (a positive instead of a negative) to a particular industry. Some minor adjustments are still required to finalize the land use categories (add dryland crop).

The group identified a few problems that need to be addressed, particularly the ramifications of adding a 4<sup>th</sup> section on the scoring matrix.

Proposed timeline for evaluation in any given year:

1. Anyone can obtain the proper forms and guidelines from the web and complete a plant assessment form and then submit it to Colorado Department of Agriculture annually before Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>.
2. A technical committee would then be formed (by the state weed coordinator) to review the proposal, complete or correct it as necessary, and develop a recommendation for listing as a state noxious weed by October 1.
3. The conclusion/recommendation of the technical committee will be sent to the advisory committee in advance of the Fall meeting for review and some external debate.

4. The state advisory committee will review and discuss vetted proposals and the technical committee's recommendations. It will make a recommendation to list or not to state weed coordinator.
5. State weed coordinator will then make a decision and may choose to propose listing during annual winter rule-making process.

Other considerations: The same process will be used if there is a proposal to remove a species from the state noxious weed list. When nomination forms are submitted, CDA will post a list of these species online indicating that these species are in review. The overall goal of this process is to have a transparent process for evaluating and listing state noxious weeds that is onerous enough to prevent easily adding species to the state list but straightforward enough to encourage consideration and exploration of potential weed species.

Harley confirmed that because the process and protocol are set by department policy, there will always be opportunity to amend and improve the process upon reflection on past performance and changing needs. Even if the technical committee, advisory committee, and state weed coordinator agree that a species should be listed as a state noxious weed, the public rule-making process must still be engaged in order to actually list the species as a state noxious weed.

Eventually, all currently listed state noxious weeds will be reviewed by the process and their assessment forms will be posted online. In the interim, CDA can provide links to the Cal-IPC website reviews that have already been completed and posted.

With respect to classifying as List A/B/C, the state law states that there are three primary considerations that must be considered when classifying a designated state noxious weed in the appropriate list- current distribution, current control technologies, and cost of implementing a plan befitting its classification.

Terri suggested that there will undoubtedly be a handful of species that get proposed for listing but about which we know very little. Consequently, no one may feel comfortable recommending designation as a state noxious weed due to the large amount of uncertainty about impacts, potential distribution, etc. There will be a need to revisit such species every a few years to consider new information that has been developed.

Jeff recommended considering the wisdom of aggressively controlling a newly arrived species that shows up in one small portion of Colorado so that we can avoid having to spend much greater resources in the future once the species has spread. Eric supports this theory in general but is concerned that even small eradication efforts can be very resource intensive and that local, state, and federal weed management efforts may not have sufficient resources to apply this wisdom each and every time something new appears. Clearly, not every non-native plant species that appears in a new area will emerge as an invasive plant species. Hence, the utility of a process that helps us examine a potentially new invasive plant before investing significant on-the-ground resources (and asking others to do so as well).

Terri motioned that the work of the committee be accepted and recommended that the Department adopt as policy with modifications as discussed. Tom seconded. Motion passed. Tom commended the subcommittee for its work.

Note: End of page 4, last impacts question will be a separate section and will require a reverse scoring method to utilize properly (D,C,B,A).

**Realignment of subcommittees and assignment of members** (Eric): Listed on handout of agenda:

Nominations subcommittee – there's no need to form it until the June meeting and it will consist of outgoing members.

Funding subcommittee – Tom and Harley will be busy watching the legislature's activities this spring and then identifying means to improve weed management funding after the session ends.

Education – always trying to move forward with ideas to assist the implementation of the state's strategic plan. A new ornamental weeds poster could be started.

Listing process – wrapping up activities and could be disbanded or find another "special" project.

Eric suggested that the 12:30 discussion may identify the need for another subcommittee. He recommended that everyone think about committees and at end of meeting then add one's name to the list or contact Eric via email.

**Review & discuss efforts to develop management plans for Houndstongue and Perennial Pepperweed** (Eric): See the email recently forwarded by Crystal for more detailed area locations and finer detail – it provides legal description and maps depicting areas for eradication, containment, and suppression. Eric still has to crosscheck the maps against the legal description for any errors. Then these two plans are ready to go as proposed rules. Due to limited resources to address these species, particularly houndstongue, some areas were defined by resource availability (or lack of resources) rather than actual feasibility to eradicate. Houndstongue has a large containment zone, in part because it is a large area with a lot of wildlife and livestock movement. It probably also has a large degree of variability in distribution within the landscape and a large margin of error due to detection difficulties. However, there is also a large opportunity to get it under control.

Perennial pepperweed: the San Luis Valley is a heavily infested area designated largely for containment and suppression. The reported acreage is pretty complete with only minor data gaps.

Side note: one page fact sheet is still needed for each species.

Canada thistle discussion – Eric could use some help from Ray to discuss the issue with the Sedgwick County commissioners and weed board. He has discussed the issue with Phillips and Yuma county to get their perspective on how to address the problem and

would like Sedgwick's opinion on how to approach the issue. So far, the plan has been to target specific agricultural areas and adopt a strategy that people are comfortable with and go from there. Then we would evaluate its effectiveness and modify from there. Eric senses more optimism about controlling Canada thistle with Milestone, a new herbicide available and legal to use in riparian habitat. Harley asked about biocontrol. Eric said it is inconsistent and has no significant impact on the population level.

Tamarisk for the Republican River Watershed discussion – Eric said that after speaking with the Yuma County weed supervisor, he thinks it is possible to draw a box around Bonny Reservoir and eradicate everywhere else in the watershed. However, he must still contact each jurisdiction in the watershed to make sure they are comfortable with this assessment and ready to commit to going after tamarisk wherever it is (with the exception of Bonny).

Spurred anoda, Venice mallow, and yellow nutsedge – Eric said that his progress on these species has been about 10% of what it needs. Because the focus is on strictly agronomic areas, many county weed supervisors are not knowledgeable about these species to any large degree. Success will require talking to crop advisors, extension agents, NRCS agents, etc. Another issue is working more directly with farmers on these species may require a slightly different approach with different education and information. The proposed plans will probably look very similar to those of existing ones but the implementation may be different. Recommendations for control will be different because weed management in cropland must consider some factors more carefully such as residual and non-target toxicity.

Eric proposes instituting rulemaking for houndstongue, perennial pepperweed, and tamarisk but postpone plans for the others until more work is completed. The projected timeline will be to deliver proposed rule to the Secretary of State on March 16<sup>th</sup>, hold the public hearing on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and have the final rule become effective on July 1. The first year requiring elimination for any of these species will be 2009.

**Developing efforts to implement Goal 4 of the state strategic plan (Eric):** Eric reviewed the four goals of the state strategic plan:

1. Keep new species out,
2. Find quickly and get rid of new invaders,
3. Do what we can with the species that we're stuck with, and
4. Restore lands of high agricultural and environmental value

In New Zealand, there are two basic approach to weed management:

- Weed-led approach: Aggressive efforts to eradicate or control a species regardless of where it is because of its risk to spread to many areas. There is little thought to the value of the land infested or the realized impacts.
- Site-led approach: Efforts to control weeds (perhaps multiple species) at a given site are based on the value of the land (agricultural, environmental, recreational values) – those lands with high intrinsic value are priorities for

weed management, regardless of the weed species, in order to protect the values.

The site-led approach is what the 4<sup>th</sup> goal is all about: restoring lands of exceptional agricultural and environmental value. Eric asked what do we need to do to accomplish this goal. First, we need to figure out what those lands of exceptional value are, where they are, and work with those landowners (public or private) to make sure that weeds do not have a negative impact on the value. Many organizations have developed some means of identifying and mapping lands that they believe are of high value for a variety of purposes. We need to figure out what criteria we are using. Jeff suggested that in some cases, “restore” is the wrong word; we may be using words like preserve and protect. George asked about funding to initiate and sustain the project. Eric noted that this is always a constraint but that there are some resources out there where we can tap into or leverage such as NRCS EQIP dollars.

As a frame of reference, Eric suggested that the last thing we want is for someone fifty years from now to evaluate what we’ve done and criticize a lack of effort to protect Colorado’s most important lands from noxious weeds.

Jeff stated that we know where some of these areas are; for example wilderness areas. But this list of environmentally valuable lands will still need to be reduced to a manageable number. Ray noted that society needs to realize that we must protect agricultural land or there will be an increase in importing of food and dependency on foreign production. Jeff suggested that we might look at creating an incentive like a tax break to landowners with good stewardship. Harley agreed that incentives need to be part of a long-term fix to the problem.

Terri suggested that it is too early to have a subcommittee but that we could divide some of the work and bring some existing information to the next meeting. Eric suggested using the weed listing process committee as an example of how the advisory committee has obtained information and brought it to the group to make decisions and recommendations. Sarada asked if we should be looking at two different types of land: agricultural and environmental. Eric said not necessarily – there could be overlap.

Jeff noted that there is plenty of good data around. Harley suggested that we need to decide what criteria makes an area exceptional – that a subcommittee should start working on the criteria. Dave suggested that private lands should have a conservation easement or another means of protecting the land so that our weed management efforts are not wasted if the land is sold for development later. George suggested taking advantage of projects that already funded and underway.

Terri volunteered to work with Margaret to start gathering information. The subcommittee will be named Site-Led Approach. Send information or suggestions to Terri. Terri asked if it would be alright if everyone who was on the weed process committee to be on the site approach. Everyone ok’d. Eric suggested Don or Bill may want to be on it as well. Tom recommended proceeding with a soft touch – his county planning

department was going to prioritize views and land values but ended up walking away from it due to the controversy. This activity will raise some serious issues and possible complaints. Terri is hopeful that we don't reinvent the wheel and can use what other groups have come up with; this might lessen the conflict. Jeff suggested eventually developing a nomination procedure for landowners to use themselves. Committee will report back at the next meeting.

**Educational material** (Jonathan Rife): Passed out fact sheets he has created and will email the publisher file. Forestryimages.com will allow us to use photographs if they are given credit. Handouts are of the final List A species that we did not have fact sheets for. The intention is for everyone to review and then Department of Ag would clean up and post on web site. Need to verify chemicals registered for use in Colorado.

**Odds and ends:**

Agenda was passed around for people to sign up for subcommittees. Email will be sent out for those that are not here.

Side note: Ray mentioned that the CDOW approved a rate hike in hunting license but is now paying for TV advertising. Perhaps that money should be used for something more important like noxious weed management. Jeff suggested that the committee send a letter to CDOW asking them to fill Dave Weber's old weed position. Eric suggested sending it out to all the wildlife commissioners as well. Ray – motion to write the letter, George will 2<sup>nd</sup>, no discussion. All in favor, motion carries.

George asked what was happening at CDOT; the person that is in charge of weeds is also in charge of avalanches doesn't have time to do both jobs well. The committee needs to take advantage of the change in administration and send a letter to CDOT. George made a motion to send a letter to CDOT. Motion of letter was seconded. Terri suggested making some recommendations in the letter. All in favor, motion passes. George is writing the letters to DOW and CDOT. Eric will assist if needed.

**Agenda/Arrangements for next meeting:**

Next meeting April 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> on the West Slope. San Miguel has offered to host a meeting. It has been suggested that the June meeting be held in Northeast Colorado. Terri recommended coordinating a carpool.

Adjourned: 2:30pm