

NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR LAS ANIMAS COUNTY, COLORADO

Background: In 1991 Las Animas County developed and approved a noxious weed management plan, which complied with the requirements of HB 90-1175; The "Colorado Weed Management Act", which was signed into law on May 7, 1990. This plan however; did not get implemented. The 1990 act was superseded by the "Colorado Noxious Weed Act" (HB96-1008) on May 23, 1996. In 2003 the Colorado General Assembly passed and Governor Owens signed into law a number of revisions to the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. Specifically, these revisions directed the Commissioner of Agriculture to restructure the state's noxious weed list, and implement state noxious weed management plans for specific noxious weed species. This Noxious Weed Management Plan for LA County is now written to conform with the 1996 law and to the 2004 revisions of the "Colorado Noxious Weed Act" ('ACT').

Requirements of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act

Among other things, the Colorado Noxious Weed ACT of 1996 requires each county and municipality to adopt a noxious weed management plan. The plan is to address the management of the state noxious weeds "Designated by rule". Each county or municipality may declare additional noxious weeds for inclusion in the plan, but only after a public hearing. The Colorado Department of Agriculture has developed rules pertaining to the 1996 ACT; and has adopted new permanent rules (119 - CR 5 (2003) of 2004) for the administration and enforcement of the 'ACT'. The most significant changes made to the 'ACT' in 2004 pertain to the classification of noxious weeds into one of several categories (C.R.S. 35 - 5.5 - 108).

1. List A:

rare noxious weed species that are subject to eradication wherever detected statewide in order to protect neighboring lands and the state as a whole. All populations of List A species are designated by the commissioners for eradication.

2. List B:

noxious weed species for which the commissioners, in consultation with the state weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, develops and implements state noxious weed management plans designed to stop the continued spread of these species.

3. List C:

noxious weed species for which the commissioners, in consultation with the state weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, will develop and implement weed management plans designed to support the efforts of local governing bodies to facilitate more effective, integrated weed management on public and private lands. The goal of such plans will not be to stop the continued spread of these species, but to provide additional educational, research, and biological control resources to jurisdictions that choose to require management of List C species.

The current State A, B, C, Listed weed species is an addendum to this management plan.

The 1996 Noxious Weed Act also requires that each municipality shall provide for the administration of their weed management plan. The 'ACT' allows for cooperative planning and plan administration among counties and municipalities. Additionally, the

“ACT” establishes the position of State Weed Coordinator in the Colorado Department of Agriculture, and creates a State Noxious Weed Management Fund. The Department of Agriculture may make special grants from this fund to local entities for the management of State noxious weeds.

Objectives of this Plan

The main objective of this plan is to meet requirements of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act of 1996 and revisions of 2004. This plan provides policy and guidance for the control and reduction of noxious weeds in Las Animas County. This plan is for the use of all landowners and managers, both public and private.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Las Animas County Weed Advisory Board that Integrated Vegetation Management principles be used in the control and reduction of noxious weeds. The Colorado Noxious Weed Act of 1996 defines Integrated Vegetation Management as "the planning and implementation of a coordinated, program utilizing a variety of methods for managing noxious weeds, the purpose of which is to achieve desirable plant communities. Such methods may include, but are not limited to, education, preventive measures, good stewardship and the following techniques:

The techniques listed and described are biological, chemical, cultural and mechanical control measures. Of these techniques, chemical control can be most controversial. Therefore, county sponsored herbicide activity will be conducted only by certified public or commercial applicators, as licensed by the State of Colorado for restrictive pesticides.

It is understood that all applicators will carry such liability insurance and/or bonding as is required for certification and further that any chemicals used will be applied strictly according to the manufacturer's label.

The Las Animas County Weed Advisory Board assumes no liability for the misuse of chemicals, and relies solely upon the integrity and judgment of the applicator to apply herbicides properly.

The Las Animas County Weed Manager will advise landowners of the need and feasibility of weed control. However, only the certified applicator will make recommendations of the suitable chemicals and method of application. Private landowners will be encouraged to do their own herbicide control work where they wish to do so. They will also be advised to strictly follow the manufacturer's label when applying chemicals herbicides.

History and Current Situation

No documented history. In recent years area land management has changed

causing, an increase in soil disturbance due to eg.: gas industry development, 35 acre home sites, absentee landowners, and etc.

In the past few years there has been a large increase in non-native plants species such as mullien, and various thistle species. Some land owners/operators have conducted various plant control methods, many have not.

Targeted Weeds

Weeds covered under this plan are included in the state noxious weed list designated by rule. There are also other weeds listed that are beginning to infest the area. The following weeds will receive priority for control.

Category A*

Yellow Star Thistle *Centurea solstitialis L.*
African rue *Peganum harmala*

Category B

Leafy Spurge *Euphorbia esula*
Musk Thistle *Carduus natans*
Diffuse Knapweed *Centaurea diffusa*
Canada Thistle *Cirsium arvense*
Common Mullein *Verbascum Thapsus L.*
Houndstongue *Cynoglossum officinale L.*
Oxeye Daisy *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*
Scotch Thistle *Onopordum acanthium*
Bull Thistle *Cirsium vulgare (Savi) Tenore*
Russian Knapweed *Centaurea repens*
Spotted Knapweed *Centaurea maculosa*
Saltcedar *Tamarix ramosissima Ledeb*

Category C

Poison Hemlock *Conium maculatum L.*
Common Burdock *Arctium minus*
Cheatgrass *Bromus tectorum L.*
Yellow Toad Flax *Linaria Vulgaris*

Also identified as a targeted weed is Locust Tree or Mexican Locust.

*Mandatory control required by the Colorado Weed Management Act – needs to be eradicated.

If infestations of weeds not included on the list above become a problem, the required public hearings will be held, and weeds will be added to the Las Animas list as needed.

Coordination and Cooperation

The Weed Control Manager will coordinate noxious weed control efforts among various land owners, including private, municipal, county, federal and state land owners and managers. In Las Animas County, this includes, but is not limited to the following:
Las Animas County Trinidad

U S Army Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS)

Farmers, ranchers

and landowners

School Districts

Irrigation companies

Recreation Districts

Colorado State

Land Board

Colorado Division

of Wildlife U.S.

Bureau of Land

Management U.S.

Forest Service

Colorado Department of

Transportation Boy

Scouts of America

Gas /Energy companies

Cooperative agreements and memorandums of understanding will be entered into as needed.

Education

The Weed Control Manager will seek out and disseminate educational materials concerning the identification, propagation, and control of noxious weeds. Various outreach and educational tools will be utilized such as news releases, slide presentations, traveling exhibits, flyers in tax statements, and field trips. Target groups include schools, farm and ranch organizations, PDA's, service organizations, recreational groups, and individual landowners.

Biological Management

Biological management of noxious weeds will continue to grow and as more biological controls are developed. The use of biological agents will be integrated with other methods of weed control to lessen the use of chemicals whenever possible.

Chemical Management

The use of herbicides is expected to remain our most effective tool for the reduction and control of noxious weeds. For example there are no biological control agents available at the present time to attack some of the weeds identified on the undesirable species to be controlled in Las Animas County.

Management of these weeds, as well as those subject to biological controls, calls for the sensible application of chemical herbicides.

Cultural and Mechanical Management

Cultural and mechanical control methods of noxious weeds are closely related. In essence, they both call for intensive and constant management of the vegetative community. The common key is to create conditions favorable for desirable plants at the expense of undesirable noxious weeds. When properly applied, these methods are effective as control measures as well as preventive measures.

Tools include proper irrigation, mowing, and burning, properly timed livestock grazing, plowing and seeding, to mention a few. In the long run, the intelligent application of these tools can be as effective as biological or chemical control methods.

The implementation of cultural and mechanical control methods is complicated. Many landowners do not understand the complex interrelationships involving plant competition, soil characteristics, climate and land use practices. However, the use of these methods will be encouraged when ever the opportunities arise.

Monitoring and Mapping

Tracking the invasion and control of noxious weeds in Las Animas County will require an effective system of monitoring. Previous efforts have consisted of plotting weed infestations and control activities on various maps as time allowed. The results were minimal.

Upon approval of this plan a part time mapper will be required to work with various organizations and individuals using the Geographic Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to create maps. These maps can be easily updated, providing an understandable record of vegetative changes over time. The map information will be stored in a digital format that can be overlaid with other maps that display previous vegetation, roads, streams, land status and other features of interest.

Up to date maps of weed infestations are critical to setting priorities by the Noxious Weed Committee.

Funding

The Las Animas County noxious weed control program can be funded by various entities, including Las Animas County, The Las Animas County Conservation District, Nature/Wild life organizations, Power/Energy companies, Trusts, Grants, and landowners. These monies should be deposited in the county "weed fund". Expenditures from this fund are approved by the Las Animas County Commissioners and monitored by both the County Finance Officer and the Chairman of the Las Animas Noxious Weed Advisory Committee.

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act of 1996 has superseded the 1990 Act. The 1996 Act (revised in 2003 & 2004) provides for appropriations by the state legislature "for the purpose of funding noxious weed management projects". The Colorado Department of Agriculture is authorized to award grants from these funds to local weed control agencies.

The Weed Control Manager, at the direction of the Weed Advisory Board and with the consent of the County Commissioners, will apply for such grants. Such monies collected will be used only for the noxious weed control program.

Review and Amendments

The 1996 Colorado Noxious Weed Act requires that local noxious weed management plans be reviewed at least once every three years. Implicit in this language is that the Weed Advisory Board can conduct reviews and updating at any time. The County commissioners must approve and changes to the Noxious Weed Management Plan. Mandatory review of this plan will be conducted yearly while in its early stage.

Enforcement

Enforcement of the Las Animas Noxious Weed Management Plan will be per Title 35; Article 5.5 - 109 which requires the county, after notification etc, to provide for and compel the management of such noxious weeds on private land. Land owners who do not properly control their noxious weeds will pay the county for the total cost for inspection and other incidental costs in connection therewith as outlined in Article 5.5 109.