

MONTANA NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
June 22, 2011 - Business Meeting
Department of Agriculture Conference Room, Helena, Montana

Attendance

Council: Ron de Yong, Council Chair; Margie Edsall, Western County Representative; Jim Story, Biological Research & Control Representative; Gary Olsen, Eastern County Representative; Nico Cantalupo, At-Large Member; Jim Gordon, Herbicide Dealer/Applicator Representative; Jennifer Anderson Vermillion, Sportsman/Wildlife Interest Representative; Dan Jackson, Livestock Production Representative; Terry Turner, Montana Weed Control Association Representative

Agency Representatives: Tracy Sterling, Montana State University; Mike Miller, Montana Department of Transportation; Joe Merenz, Gary Adams, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS); Pete Stevenson, US Bureau of Reclamation; Steve Shelly, US Forest Service

Montana Department of Agriculture Staff: Greg Ames, Dave Burch, Kim Johnson, Carol Bearden, Jeremy Seidlitz

Guests: Senator Dave Lewis; Jack Eddie, Beaverhead County Weed District; Jerry Marks, Missoula County Extension; Celestine Duncan, Weed Management Services; Liz Galli-Noble, Center for Invasive Plant Management

Business Meeting

Ron de Yong called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 22, 2011. Council members and agency representatives were thanked for their attendance and participation in the 2011 grant hearings. Gary Olsen and Terry Turner were thanked for the years they have served on the council and presented with plaques commemorating their time served on the council, which will end on June 30, 2011.

The minutes of the February 28-March 3, 2011 meeting were reviewed. **Gary Olsen moved to approve the minutes as written, and was seconded by Terry Turner. The motion was approved unanimously.**

The low level of involvement in the Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant program from eastern Montana tribes was discussed. Jeremy Seidlitz was encouraged to step up efforts to increase their participation in pursuing grant funds.

Budget Report

Greg Ames provided a detailed review of the noxious weed program budget for fiscal year 2011. Greg reported that the program revenue is expected to total \$2,744,404 at the end of the fiscal year. Grant awards in FY 11 totaled 2,423,870 and program expenses are projected to total \$229,049. Administrative expenditures are projected to total \$168,891 at fiscal year-end, which Greg said represents 6.2 percent of program revenue.

Greg advised the council that the projected revenue for the year was less than previously expected. Unrealized investment gains resulting from the transition from short term to long term investments, lower revenue to the program from vehicle licensing, and a general slowdown in the economy was discussed. Greg reported that the current Noxious Weed Trust Fund (NWTF) principal balance was \$10,192,273 as of June 9, 2011. A comparison of interest earned each year was provided, with FY 11 interest to date being reported at \$458,042.

Senator Dave Lewis discussed SB365 from the past legislative session which dealt with the allowable 12 percent noxious weed program administration. Although the Bill did not pass

through the session, Senator Lewis said he did not believe it had permanently gone away. Senator Lewis said the Bill was developed due to landowner concerns on the administrative use of the Noxious Weed Trust Fund dollars. Discussion continued on differing opinions of administrative costs and program costs. Greg advised the council that the Department is following the interpretation of the law given by the Department attorney, which has been confirmed by the legislative auditors. Ron de Yong noted that the Department provides program services in response to community requests, but remains open to suggestions.

Expenses related to the noxious weed seed free forage program were reviewed. Discussion followed with Celestine Duncan encouraging the Department to pursue general fund dollars to operate the forage and other noxious weed programs. Senator Dave Lewis commented that future general fund cuts are expected. Ron de Yong agreed with Senator Lewis stating that the Department had taken general fund hits during the last session.

Agricultural Experiment Station Overview

Tracy Sterling, Department Head and Professor with Montana State University (MSU) reported that last year's eight percent funding cut will not be repeated this year, however, she said that funding challenges are on-going. Tracy provided the council with information on MSU research projects that are being funded by the NWTF. Projects discussed included research on cheatgrass ecology and integrated management, implementation of early detection and rapid response using the Invaders Database System, rangeland revegetation, plant community and soil assessment following saltcedar invasion and treatment, and saltcedar effects on mycorrhizal fungal communities. Tracy offered information on the MSU biological control research project activities for tansy ragwort, Russian knapweed, invasive hawkweeds, Dalmatian and yellow toadflax, whitetop, perennial pepperweed, common tansy, and oxeye daisy.

Upcoming Ag Experiment Station field days were discussed. Terry Turner reported that the Havre field day will be held on June 26. Additional field day information can be found by checking the Ag Experiment Station website or contacting Tracy Sterling at tracy.sterling@montana.edu.

Cooperative Extension Service Overview

Nico Cantalupo, Meagher County Extension Agent, provided the Cooperative Extension report as Steve Siegelin was not able to attend the meeting. Nico reported on the success of the Extension supported magazine "Big Sky – Small Acres." Nico said that many Extension Offices actively participate in working with landowners to identify and control noxious weeds, and provide educational opportunities for private and commercial applicators. Nico discussed the Missoula County K-12 education program that has recently been developed.

Program Updates

Dave Burch advised the council that the next council meeting will be held January 9, 2012 in Great Falls at the Heritage Inn. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Montana Weed Control Associations (MWCA) annual meeting. **The 2012 Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant hearings are scheduled for February 27 through March 2, 2012 at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena.**

Dave reported that the 2012 NWTF Grant Guidelines are expected to follow the same general procedures as the past year, but the Department will begin transitioning to the use of an on-line grant program. Dave advised the council that staff training on the newly purchased grant database software system will begin on July 18 with customizations and testing to follow.

Training will be provided to county weed coordinators on use of the new database system and several counties will be asked to assist in the system testing process. Training for grant applicants and council members will also be provided. Dave said the system will be great to have in place as it will streamline the grant process and make grant related data more readily available.

Noxious Weed Trust Fund Project Review

Kim Johnson updated the council on rush skeletonweed control activities in Sanders County noting the value and progress that is being made on this long term project. Kim said that GIS mapping is now being done by the Lincoln County rush skeletonweed coordinator, which will provide a visual report of infestations and control. The much higher infestation level of rush skeletonweed in nearby states was discussed with Kim commenting that the NWTF dollars put toward rush skeletonweed control has prevented a similar explosion in Montana.

Successful tansy ragwort control with NWTF dollars in Lincoln County was discussed. Kim noted the involvement of many groups, individuals, and agency's in the tansy ragwort task force. Steve Shelly commented that these projects were excellent examples of holding the line and containing high threat species. Kim added that the NWTF projects have helped leverage funding from additional sources.

An update on the MSU research grants funded at the 2011 grant hearings was provided by Jeremy Seidlitz. Jeremy discussed the progress being made with several biocontrol agents, and a training program that will be implemented by Jane Mangold.

FY 11 Weed / Fire Grant Funding

Dave Burch advised the council that \$605,000 of State and Private Forestry funding has been awarded for disbursement through the NWTF in FY 12. Dave outlined the allocation of grant funding as follows:

Continental Divide Barrier Zone Project	\$40,000
Missouri River Watershed Coalition	\$40,000
Funds awarded at the 2012 NWTF grant hearings	\$489,000

Dave discussed the council's recommendation, in past years, to set aside \$75,000 of State and Private Forestry Assistance funds and \$75,000 of NWTF dollars as a \$150,000 contingency fund designed to meet the funding needs for quick weed control response following fires. Dave asked the council for approval to establish a FY 2012 contingency fund modified to meet the need for any weed emergency that may arise prior to the next grant hearings. Dave said the council would be notified if an emergency need developed. Greg Ames added that unallocated contingency funding would be utilized to fund grant requests at the 2012 grant hearings.

Margie Edsall moved to set aside \$75,000 from the NWTF and \$75,000 from the State and Private Forestry Assistance award to fund the \$150,000 Weed Emergency Contingency Fund. Nico Cantalupo seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Legislative Update

Greg Ames commented that it had been an unusual legislative session and thanked the council for their support. Greg reported that of the six noxious weed related Bills, three had passed. House Bill 133, which clarified due process to land owners and county attorneys through the Noxious Weed Act had passed and becomes effective October 31, 2011. House Bill 166 passed as did House Bill 621 involving invasive species. Greg provided a breakdown of the invasive species funding for the 2013 biennium resulting from legislation that will provide funding to MDA, FWP, DNRC, and Sanders County totaling \$2,178,000.

Eurasian Watermilfoil Report

Dave Burch discussed the Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) education, funding, and control plans for the Noxon/Cabinet Gorge Reservoir areas. Curlyleaf pondweed and flowering rush were discussed with Dave noting the currently low results in controlling flowering rush and the on-going treatment trials funded by the NWTF.

Montana EWM locations were reviewed and Dave provided a draft of the quarantine order that is being prepared and is expected to be followed up with development of a management area for the Missouri River basin. Dave said that most infestation areas are small with the largest being found in Fort Peck. Dave reported that Patricia Gilbert has completed an environmental assessment for the Fort Peck area, which will enable control activities to begin when water levels recede.

A map of active inspection stations was provided for the council and Dave reported that 550 boats, including boats from 15 different states, had been inspected this season to date. Information was provided on changes to MDA inspection station operations beginning July 1 with plans for FWP to assume responsibilities for additional border inspection stations. A map of planned DNRC survey locations was provided and Dave discussed the 2011 survey plans for MDA. Discussion followed regarding the importance of inspection stations at Montana's borders and inspected boat marker systems to expedite inspections for frequent users of single water bodies.

Roundtable Reports

Jack Eddie reported that the NWTF dyer's woad project continues to be successful in reducing the noxious weed in Montana. The weed was recently found in a dye display area at the Bozeman Museum of the Rockies and has since been removed. Gary Adams encouraged Jack to consider use of weed locating dogs with this project.

Steve Shelly advised the council that the National USFS draft proposed policy for invasive species is currently available for public comment. **The draft policy can be found in the federal register and Steve encouraged everyone to review the draft and provide feedback.** Carol Bearden will forward council contact information to Steve to assist in the review process.

Mike Miller, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), advised the council that his MDT budget has remained the same and staff vacancies have been filled. **Mike said they are in the final year of their weed plan and asked that any concerns or comments be provided to him as the plan update begins.**

Pete Stevenson with the Bureau of Reclamation reported that the one year contract system currently in place will be transitioning to a five year contract this fall.

Margie Edsall, weed coordinator for Madison County, reported that a tall buttercup task force was formed last winter. Research test plots were being developed but may be put on hold this year due to high water levels.

Other Business

Dave Burch advised the council that the MWCA Education Executive Committee would be meeting later in the day to discuss the future of the Statewide Noxious Weed Awareness and Education Campaign. Dave reported that Carla Hoopes had not been reappointed to her position with the Campaign and that funding was needed to maintain the program. Dave asked

the council to provide input on the program and to consider recommending \$50,000 per year in base line funding from the NWTF. Discussion followed with comments that the Campaign had provided some good resources but the council would like a plan developed for future work before committing funds. **Dave said he will provide the council with a plan of work for the program and talk with partnering agencies regarding funding contributions.**

Dave Burch advised the council that new appointments had been made to replace the two retiring council members. Jack Eddie will be replacing Terry Turner as the MWCA Representative and Dick Zoanni will replace Gary Olsen as the Eastern Montana Counties Representative.

Public comment was asked for. None was heard.

Agenda topics for the next meeting were discussed and included:

- **EDDMapS presentation / update on Invaders Database information merge**
- **Continental Divide Barrier Zone project status report**
- **MDA grant management system update**

The next council meeting is planned for Monday, January 9, 2012 in Great Falls at the Best Western Heritage Inn.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.