

Noxious Weeds Stakeholder Meeting for Southeastern Arizona and Southwestern New Mexico

Submitted by:

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Abstract: The spread of noxious, invasive weeds on public, state trust and private lands in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico continues to be cause of great economic and environmental concern. While many federal and state agencies are involved, there is currently no fully coordinated, stakeholder-informed plan for addressing these issues. We propose to organize a one-day workshop to identify stakeholder needs and solicit input on the development of a strategic plan to address noxious weeds issues in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. The strategic plan, developed by the Southeastern Arizona Weed Management Area and partners and published on the Arizona Pest Management Center website, will serve as a guide for prioritizing noxious weed control efforts, coordinating communication and sharing of information among agencies, and will be a useful citation of stakeholder priorities to support future grant applications.

Rationale

The spread of noxious weeds on public, state trust and private lands in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico poses risks to native and rangeland animals, threatens biodiversity and native plant species, damages park land and natural resources, and causes economic hardship for farmers, ranchers, and municipalities. The geographic region comprising Cochise, Graham and Greenlee counties in Arizona and Grant and Hidalgo counties in New Mexico has relatively small infestations of noxious weeds compared to other areas in the West. This gives us a unique opportunity to be proactive and control weeds before it becomes economically not feasible to do so. Known infestations of several noxious weed species have been noticeably spreading over the last five years, including Russian knapweed, malta and yellow starthistle and several other species (Table 1). In addition, a substantial acreage of previously unknown infestations were detected in 2007. There are undoubtedly more infestations that we do not currently know about. Areas infested with noxious weeds include rangelands, roadways, state and national forests, tribal lands, crop fields, river bottoms, private yards and urban areas. Because of the number of agencies and organizations engaged in noxious weed management over this area, there is a need to improve communication, share resources, identify stakeholder priorities, and develop a strategic plan for coordinating efforts to address these needs, including plans to seek additional significant funding to coordinate and carry out noxious weed management.

Table 1. Noxious Weed Species Found in Southeastern Arizona and Southwestern New Mexico by County.

	Cochise	Graham	Greenlee	Grant	Hidalgo
Russian knapweed	X		X		X
Malta starthistle	X	X	X	X	X
Yellow starthistle	?		X	X	X
Onionweed	X		X		X
Whitetop			X		X
Sweet resinbush		X			
Karoo bush		X			
Saharan mustard	X	X			
Bufflegrass ¹		X			
African rue				X	X
Bull thistle			X	X	X
Dalmation toadflax				X	

? means that there has been a report, but it has not been confirmed.

¹ ADOT found and treated one plant along HWY 191 in 2007.

Previous Work

The Southeastern Arizona Weed Management Area (WMA) is a group of interested federal and state agency personnel, representatives of local conservation groups, educational institutions and individual ranchers and farmers. The WMA was formed in 1998, initially to develop integrated weed management tactics for sweet resinbush and Karoo bush in Graham County, Arizona. In recent years, the WMA has identified infestations of other noxious weeds in our area, and has expanded its efforts to address some of these to the best of our ability. WMA members have conducted trials for chemical, biological and cultural control methods and meet regularly to share information. We have focused past efforts on educating the public and state and county road crews about the threat of noxious weeds through workshops and news articles. Members of the WMA have also done survey work over the years and are continually adding new infestations to a GIS data base. This mapping helps the WMA to identify high priority areas for future treatment. Mapping protocol and the GIS system was set up with a small grant earlier this year. With the exception of sweet resinbush, however, no on-the-ground control of these weeds has been undertaken because of lack of time and funds. And, although we have had some success in controlling sweet resinbush, the seedlings are now coming back in large quantities, threatening to put us right back where we were 10 years ago.

New Mexico Cooperative Extension has been working with agencies and landowners in Grant and Hidalgo counties. Similar to Southeastern Arizona, they have formed a weed management area that spans the two counties. They are currently focusing on public outreach, and survey and mapping of weed infestations. In August of this year they were able to hire a coordinator on grant funds to map (GIS based) three priority weeds in the two counties.

Objectives and Steps

We propose to organize a one-day workshop to identify stakeholder needs and solicit input on the development of a strategic plan to address noxious weeds issues in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

- We will engage all interested stakeholders to identify and prioritize needs related to noxious weeds, and will inventory available resources among partner organizations.
- We will develop a Strategic Plan for addressing these needs, to include (a) enhancing communication and sharing of resources among all parties; (b) identifying potential sources of funding to address noxious weed priorities; and (c) development of locally-driven strategies to combat weeds.
- We will specifically engage in dialog to identify potential funding sources to address noxious weed management and develop a plan to pursue appropriate funding opportunities.
- Our “Strategic Plan for Noxious Weed Management in SE Arizona and SW New Mexico” will be reviewed by all interested stakeholders and published on the Arizona Pest Management Center website (<http://cals.arizona.edu/apmc/>) for easy reference.

This strategic plan will serve as a guide for prioritizing noxious weed control efforts, coordinating communication and sharing of information among agencies, and will be a useful citation of stakeholder priorities to support future grant applications. It is also expected that this stakeholder meeting would help engage people in various communities and help initiate locally-driven strategies to combat these weed threats.

The SE Arizona WMA has engaged a number of individuals and partner organizations that are actively involved with the WMA and expected to participate in the stakeholder workshop, including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Gila Valley Natural Resource Conservation District, Willcox-San Simon Natural Resource Conservation District, Arizona State Land Department (for sweet resinbush), Coronado Resource & Development, Inc., DuPont, Dow, USDA APHIS-PPQ, Arizona Department of Transportation, Eastern Arizona College, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, and specific farmers and ranchers. Others identified by the WMA for the stakeholder meeting include: county and state road crews, farmers and ranchers, urban and rural public, Fish & Wildlife Service, Arizona Game & Fish Dept, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and youth such as FFA/4-H. New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension agents in Grant and Hidalgo counties will work with their WMA to identify New Mexico stakeholders who need to be invited.

Probable Duration: The project will be completed in less than one year. The stakeholder meeting will take place December 3, 2008 in Safford, Arizona. Meeting notes, stakeholder priorities, identified tasks, communication plans, etc. will be compiled by March 1, 2009 and sent to all stakeholders for final review. The final plan will be posted on the APMC website by April 30, 2009. A final report will be submitted to the Director, WIPMC no later than June 1, 2009.

Budget Narrative

The budget we are requesting will provide for meeting logistics, including a working lunch which will help to ensure the continuity of the meeting, and travel expenses for participants.

Budget

Room rental, working lunch, breaks, gratuity		\$900
Travel reimbursement for participants		
Mileage	.49/mile x 180 avg miles x 25	\$2,205
Hotel	89.50 x 10	\$895
Total direct costs		\$4,000
Indirect costs 20%		\$1,000
Total		\$5,000