



The Sage

NEWS FROM THE FRANKLIN COUNTY
NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

FALL 2020

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Board Meetings– 1:00 pm Oct. through Feb.; held virtually until further notice. Contact the office for login info.
- Visit our website at fcweedboard.com to learn about noxious weeds and our activities.
- Cost Share signups for 2021 will begin after Thanksgiving
- Drop by Sacajawea State Park and view the pollinator garden.

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Operations During Covid-19

The onset of the coronavirus greatly influenced how agencies provided services to the public. Some departments within the county were able to work remotely, but the Franklin County Noxious Weed Control Program was tasked with maintaining its program while protecting public health. Public health was given the highest priority however; noxious weeds do not practice social distancing. We had to acclimate to the new “normal” and still maintain continuity of services.

Some aspects of our job are performed independently, but adjustments still had to be made in order to provide essential services while following social distancing guidelines. The spring application on county roads was completed easily because each spray truck is operated by just one applicator. Some of the ways we adapted to provide essential services included:

- ◆ One staff member per office space
- ◆ Observing the 6 ft. distancing and masking up when interacting with coworkers
- ◆ Performing field work independently
- ◆ Driving separate vehicles
- ◆ Controlling at high-priority sites where there was no public interaction
- ◆ Switching to teleconference Board meetings
- ◆ Postponing face to face meetings with the public
- ◆ Attending online training and educational events

This year has been challenging to say the least but we are doing our best to ensure continuity of services while adhering to the directives that have been put in place to protect public health.



Staff following social distancing guidelines

Tree of Heaven, Host To A Potential New Invader

Tree of Heaven, a Class C Noxious Weed in Washington State is a fast growing invasive species that was brought to the eastern U.S for its value as an ornamental tree. Originally planted in urban areas, it spread rapidly and has since become naturalized across much of the country.

As if this aggressive species wasn't bad enough to deal with, we now need to be on the look out for an invasive agricultural pest, the spotted lanternfly, which prefers tree of heaven for nesting. Since 2014 spotted lanternfly has been detected in several eastern states.

Although they have not shown up in Washington yet, USDA scientists

have identified our region as suitable habitat based on the abundant presence of the tree and favorable environmental factors.



Tree of Heaven



This pesky insect poses a real threat should they become established. It feeds on over 70 types of plants, including crops such as grapes, apples, hops, walnuts and other hardwood trees. It is very important that everyone familiarize themselves with spotted lanternfly.

Because it has such a distinctive appearance the public can be a huge help in monitoring for its presence.



Download our Tree of Heaven brochure and other materials from our website at fcweedboard.com/publications.

Sources include Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board; USDA APHIS; Penn State University Extension

Cover That Load

The Franklin County Noxious Weed Control Board partners with the public works department to make our county roads safer and more visually appealing. We do this by making herbicide applications to a specified area of the road each spring and fall. Lately we have been forced to contend with bermudagrass in the spray zone and feel this could be prevented if landscape professionals and others carried out the simple practice of covering loads.

Since weeds have a variety of "natural" dispersal mechanisms it is important for all of us to remember that we spread weed seeds in foreseeable ways and can take action to reduce or prevent spread by human means. Please cover yard waste and lawn clippings when traveling from one job site to the next or on your way to the dump. You can help us clean up our roads one yard at a time!





Wildfires Spark Weed Invasions



Wildfires are a common occurrence each year in Franklin County and it's no wonder since typically there is quite a bit of dry vegetation by late summer. A lightning strike or spark from a train can potentially start a rapidly spreading fire, particularly if high winds are involved.

The disturbance a wildfire brings is the perfect opportunity for noxious and nuisance weeds to invade or for existing infestations to expand. Severe fires may damage plant roots to 4 inches below the soil surface but many perennial noxious weeds have root systems that can grow very deep. Some of the noxious weeds in our area have root systems that extend to depths of 10 feet or more with rhizome-like lateral roots. When fire destroys these weeds top growth new shoots are produced from the underground vegetative root buds or crowns.

Some weed seeds and crowns even survive fires! Because of their early germination and rapid growth rates, noxious weed expansion post-fire is often quicker than native plant recovery. This is also true of nuisance weeds. So what can be done to keep noxious and other weeds from gaining a foothold? You may want to ask yourself the following question:

What was the extent of weed cover before the fire?

This may not be an easy question to answer if regular monitoring of the area had not occurred but, if ground next to the burned area has a moderate degree of weeds then chances are the burned area also had the same weeds. You can then expect some degree of noxious and troublesome weeds will survive.

Fortunately, weed re-establishment can be mitigated with a burned-area weed management plan.

Revegetation can suppress weeds by providing competition. As a general rule, the more severe a burn and greater degree of pre-burn weeds, the more likely the need for seeding back with natives. In some situations you may be able to opt for natural regeneration, just make sure to monitor the site frequently and treat any patches of weeds until native plants have recovered.

And remember, it is **Your Responsibility (RCW 17.10)** to control all noxious weeds. You should be particularly vigilant for potential seed dispersal into or within burned areas that might result from soil disturbances by vehicles, animals or erosion.

High winds swept flames across CRP & farm ground on Labor Day leaving bare ground susceptible to noxious weeds.



Noxious & nuisance weeds with the potential to invade or persist after a fire



Rush skeletonweed has deep perennial root buds and wind blown seeds.



Mustards go dormant by fire season having already dispersed seed that are not damaged by fire. Since they germinate early they will out-compete natives.



Fire stimulates germination of yellow starthistle which is also spread by human activities.



Russian thistle seed will spread with the tumbling action of the detached plants.

Cool Projects:

Since 2018 we have been treating noxious weeds in the Juniper Dunes Wilderness “Off Road Area”. The Juniper Dunes is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and as such is very susceptible to the spread of noxious weeds from off road vehicles, outdoor gear, and animals. Our focus has been on the section adjacent to the new access road off the Pasco Kahlotus Highway. You can do your part in keeping noxious weeds from spreading by cleaning equipment, clothing and pets before leaving the site.

Through funding provided by WSDA we have begun control work on Tree-of-Heaven. Tree-of-Heaven is a Class C noxious weed in Franklin County and is of concern because the invasive lantern fly prefers it as its nesting site. If lantern fly becomes established in Washington it could damage many crops. As a proactive measure funds will be used to determine the best control method. Several agencies are partnering with us on the project including the City of Pasco, WSDOT, and WA State Parks. In the event Tree-of-Heaven is classified as a high priority species we will be that much ahead in being able to provide the public with information. Be sure to look for updates in future newsletters or on our website as this project runs through December 31, 2021.



Another Cool Project at Sacajawea State Park:



Left image: We continue to improve the pollinator garden at Sacajawea State Park. We were having problems with our watering hose springing leaks so a channeled bumper was installed to protect it.

Right image: Mother Nature has a mind of her own! After an unseasonably cool start to spring plants began to flower by late May, continuing into fall.

Our biggest challenge has been finding plants the deer won't eat.



*Hey Kids, Do you find noxious weeds puzzling?
Try this word search to help you learn about bad
weeds.*

Weedy Word Search

There are many unwanted weeds hidden in this puzzle. Can you find all the names hidden inside? Look forward, backward, vertically, and diagonally.

- BLACKBERRY
- BUTTERFLY BUSH
- ENGLISH IVY
- GARLIC MUSTARD
- GIANT HOGWEED
- HAWKWEED
- HEMLOCK
- HERB ROBERT
- INVASIVE
- KNAPWEED
- KNOTWEED
- MILFOIL
- SCOTCH BROOM
- SPARTINA
- TANSY
- THISTLE
- TOADFLAX

H	Y	X	G	O	S	T	T	D	J	E	T	H	B	S
A	L	R	B	I	U	P	E	A	N	Z	S	P	T	C
W	L	R	R	O	A	E	A	G	N	U	W	O	E	O
K	R	I	R	E	W	N	L	R	B	S	A	G	V	T
W	C	D	O	T	B	I	T	Y	T	D	Y	B	I	C
E	Y	R	O	F	S	K	L	H	F	I	V	Y	S	H
E	V	N	Z	H	L	F	C	L	O	M	N	Q	A	B
D	K	Y	I	U	R	I	A	A	K	G	T	A	V	R
F	U	V	R	E	T	X	M	F	L	W	W	E	N	O
K	Y	A	T	E	G	G	M	E	M	B	D	E	I	O
H	V	T	K	N	A	P	W	E	E	D	R	H	E	M
A	U	G	A	R	L	I	C	M	U	S	T	A	R	D
B	J	B	L	R	Y	X	K	C	O	L	M	E	H	M
E	V	F	W	T	R	E	B	O	R	B	R	E	H	I
S	U	U	Y	T	H	I	S	T	L	E	F	M	F	F



Cinnabar Caterpillar
Eating Tansy Ragwort

Weedy Word Search courtesy of Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/2453/Word-Search-PDF?bidId=>

More activities to help you little weed warriors learn about noxious weeds can be found on our website. Just click on the link fcweedboard.com/education and visit our Kid stuff page. There you will find coloring pages, word scrambles and other activities.

Announcements

- ◆ Due to Covid-19 concerns Board meetings are held remotely until further notice. The public is encouraged to attend by teleconference. For instruction on how to join the teleconference, contact the Weed Board ahead of time and ask for Betsy. Board meetings are held the 3rd Monday of each month at 1:00 p.m. October - February and 7:00 p.m. March - September.
- ◆ Sign ups for the 2021 Cost Share Program will begin 12/1/2020
- ◆ Need a sprayer this fall? Rent one of our 8-25 gallon spray tanks, some mountable — free with a damage deposit. Call the office for details at 545-3847.
- ◆ An innovative new product has been added to the tool box for the management of the invasive annual grass weeds: cheatgrass/downy brome, medusahead and jointed goatgrass. The pre-emergent bioherbicide product is a naturally occurring soil bacterium available through BioWest Ag Solutions. The EPA registered the product in September of this year stating it has the potential to help in wildfire management. To learn more about the product visit [BioWest Ag Solutions](#) or see the news release on the [EPA's](#) website.



ATV/UTV weed sprayer

Sage Words From The Program Coordinator

2020...need I say more? With all the uncertainty of covid-19 and rules changing daily as to what we could and could not do, this year has tested our patience in more ways than one. Keeping calm and keeping my crew calm through the fear and uncertainty of the pandemic was very challenging but we persevered to maintain our program, even holding our monthly Board meetings. We learned the logistics of hosting teleconference meetings when you can't see who you are talking to and dealing with the occasional glitches that come with electronic dependence are not a substitute for the fluid exchange of information you get in face to face meetings. But you have to do what you have to do!

As we move into 2021 the cost share program will go into its 4th year. We have maintained an average of around 3500 acres annually. Those acres range from lightly infested to heavily infested, with one or more of the four weed species that we cost share: diffuse knapweed, rush skeletonweed, yellow starthistle and Scotch thistle. We accept applications to the program beginning the first week of December on a first come, first-served basis for the upcoming year. We provide guidance as to the best timing and products to use to provide a successful project. The cost share program has great value to both the landowner and the Weed Board because we are seeing sizeable acreage getting sprayed. My goal with this program is to be involved with the application to control weeds to the extent that we are able to track progress and in turn provide ongoing guidance for future applications as necessary.

Our Board of Directors has been very supportive of all our endeavors. Their confidence in our ability to get the job done gives us strength in moving forward with our day to day work as well as our long range plans. My staff and I truly appreciate our Board's time and efforts. They each run a successful business and still make time to guide our efforts in controlling noxious weeds.

—Todd Harris, FCNWCB Program Coordinator

Franklin County Noxious Weed Control Board

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