



New Mexico Battles Weeds

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Like every state, New Mexico faces many natural resource challenges. The invasion of noxious weeds is one of those challenges. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture has managed to successfully address this challenge using the state, federal and local partnerships created through cooperative weed management areas.

The past two years, especially, have shown the success of the cooperative weed management areas. Collectively, the fifteen areas have obtained over 1.2 million in county, state, federal, and private funding. The large majority of these funds have been used for on the ground noxious weed control work. As a result, 10,375 acres of noxious weeds have been treated throughout the state.

In 1998 the New Mexico legislature passed the New Mexico Noxious Weed Management Act, tasking the Director of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture with coordinating integrated noxious weed management programs in the state. Along with this important legislation, came the creation of the position of NMDA state noxious weed coordinator.

Then, the coordinator, along with other department of agriculture staff, used their existing partnerships with New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension, as well as the state's 47 soil and water conservation districts, to create cooperative weed management areas in many parts of New Mexico.

Since then, the number of cooperative weed management areas has slowly grown. And over the last three years, the number of management areas has more than doubled. The fifteen management areas in the state cover 20 of New Mexico's 33 counties.

These local organizations integrate noxious weed management resources across state, federal and local governmental jurisdictions. Jim Wanstall, State Noxious Weed Coordinator, lends this success to the staff of the cooperative weed management areas.

Of the fifteen management areas, eleven employ at least part time coordinators or other dedicated staff. Each of the eleven is managed by one staff person. Some are contract employees; others are direct employees of conservation districts. Because of the cooperative nature of the management areas, staff from other agencies dedicates time and resources to address the noxious weed problem. This staff person coordinates existing resources and noxious weed control efforts, filling in the gaps as needed. This makes a management area efficient; they do not require a large staff.

Their ability to build working relationships among governmental agencies, as well as the general public, has proved extremely successful for implementing noxious weed education and management. These relationships allow local management areas to overcome jurisdictional obstacles, combine and share resources, eliminate duplication of effort, and achieve on-the-ground results. The areas are funded through a combination of grants, county funds and conservation district funding.

Since the state legislature passed the Noxious Weed Management Act, the detrimental economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds have become quite apparent, especially damage to natural resources. However, the awareness and education efforts, conducted through weed management areas, the department of agriculture, and the cooperation extension service have increased noxious weed awareness among federal and state agencies, the general public, and the state legislators. This has resulted in many state and federal agencies allocating increased resources to address noxious weeds. In particular the New Mexico Department of Transportation, New Mexico State Forestry, New Mexico Game and Fish, New Mexico State Land Office, the Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service have increased efforts to control noxious weed species.

During the 2006 legislative session the New Mexico legislature recognized the importance of controlling noxious weeds in Senate Memorial 45. In part, it states that “the state be encouraged to take action to reverse the trend of increasing invasions, combat noxious weed infestations throughout the state, and prevent the introduction of new weeds”.

State legislation requesting funding for noxious weed control efforts was introduced during the 2007 legislative session. Although unsuccessful, it provided a great opportunity to discuss noxious weed issues with state legislators and staff. Similar legislation will be introduced during the 2008 session.

For more information on New Mexico’s fight against noxious weeds or CWMA’s please access the following resources.

CWMA Resources & Contacts

NMDA Web Site - <http://nmdaweb.nmsu.edu/natural-resources>. Click on the cooperative weed management areas or noxious weed management headings for CWMA maps, contact information, legislation and more.

Weed Web Site - NMSU extension plant science has developed a web site to serve as a clearinghouse for information on weeds in New Mexico. The website contains fact sheets for the noxious weeds in the state, an interactive weed identification tool (over 400 species), weed distribution maps for state listed species, and many more features. <http://weeds.nmsu.edu>

Center for Invasive Plant Management

The center for invasive plant management is based out of Montana State University. Their website is full of resources for cooperative weed management areas . Check out their web site at www.weedcenter.org .

CWMA Cookbook

This publication is put out by the Idaho Noxious Weed Coordinating Committee. It covers the steps to setting up and running an effective CWMA. If you are involved in or thinking about setting up a CWMA this is required reading. It is available for free on the Center for Invasive Plant Management website www.weedcenter.org . Click on the CWMA tab.

People to Contact

Jim Wanstall
New Mexico Dept of Agriculture
State Noxious Weed Coordinator
Email = jwanstall@thuntek.net
Phone = (505) 269-7761