Happy Holidays from the Humboldt Watershed CWMA! The HWCWMA was developed to address the invasive weed problem and subsequent decline in water quality within the entire 16,843 square mile watershed, which covers most of Northern Nevada. The primary function of HWCWMA has been to provide land managers, owners and weed control groups assistance in the areas of funding, agency and weed group coordination and cooperation.

This month we would like to introduce you to a plant that is **not** currently listed as one of Nevada’s state listed noxious weeds, but has shown itself to be highly invasive in surrounding states. Ventenata (*Ventenata dubia*)commonly referred to as wiregrass, has become a serious problem for perennial forage producers in the Pacific Northwest. Ventenata is an introduced annual grass, native to central and southern Europe, Asia, and Africa. The first recorded sighting of Ventenata in North America is dated 1957; more specifically, in Kootenai County, Idaho. Since then, confirmed sightings have been made in the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Wisconsin, New York, and Maine. Ventenata is a winter annual grass that germinates in the fall, a few weeks after downy brome (cheatgrass). Pastures and hayfields that become infested with Ventenata will have significant yield reductions of 50% or more within a few growing seasons. Ventenata is not palatable to livestock, in part, because it has nearly the same amount of silica as medusahead. With loss of productivity, land condition and land value declines.

Identification of Ventenata in the fall after seedlings emerge and in the early spring can be difficult. Ventenata seedlings can often be found beneath litter created from the previous growing season in the fall and spring. Ventenata is a basally branched, tufted winter annual grass that has rolled or folded leaves and membranous ligules. Openly branched panicles are pyramidal in overall shape and have spikelets comprised of typically 3 florets. The awns of some of the florets are bent and twisted. Theinflorescence is an open panicle, pyramidal in shape, and 2.8 to 8 inches and leaves mostly occur on the lower half of the stem and have open leaf sheaths. Key identification traits for Ventenata include: reddish-black nodes in late spring; the long, membranous leaf ligule; the inflorescence is an open panicle in June-July; upper floret awns that are twisted and bent.

Ventenatagrows in a variety of dry, open and often disturbed habitats, tending to prefer sites that are inundated in early spring but dried out by late spring. It is commonly found on south-facing hillsides with shallow, rocky clay or clay-loam soils, though it can be found on other aspects and substrates. In a survey of land managers throughout eastern Oregon, central and eastern Washington and northern Idaho, Ventenatawas found growing in areas receiving 13.8 to 44.1 inches (35 to 112 cm) of annual precipitation and elevations of 33 to 5906. It grows in rangeland, dry meadows, pastures, roadsides, rocky swales, open forests, and sagebrush communities, including areas previously dominated by or having cheatgrass present.

As always, please notify the HWCWMA if you see Ventenata growing within the Humboldt River Watershed. We have an opportunity to stop invasive species from spreading if we act quickly and our [staff](http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/program-information/who-we-are.aspx) can provide the property owner or appropriate public agency with site-specific treatment options for these plants. The HWCWMA also maps and monitors heavily infested sites in the watershed which allows the HWCWMA the ability to provide educational and financial assistance to land owners and groups in their management efforts, ultimately improving all of the qualities of the land and water in our watershed.

The HWCWMA has also developed a website to serve as a clearinghouse for information on invasive weeds in the Humboldt Watershed. Our website (http://www.humboldtweedfree.org) contains fact sheets for state listed noxious weeds in Nevada, Board of Director’s information, funding partner’s links, and many more features including a detailed project proposal packet that you can print, fill out and mail back to us at your convenience. We are looking to expand our project area outside of the Humboldt River and always welcome new funding opportunities.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Andi Porreca, HWCWMA Coordinator at (775) 762-2636 or email her at aporreca@humboldtweedfree.org.