



Humboldt Watershed

Cooperative Weed Management Area

Issue 6

Winter 2016

Biocontrol and Noxious Weeds

HWCWMA will be holding an Annual Meeting on Monday, February 8 at 3:00 at the NV Dept. of Agriculture office in Elko.

Directors and Officers will be elected during this meeting.

Please join us and consider becoming a Board member!

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Biological control, also known as biocontrol, is the use of a living organism to control a pest, in our case, using beneficial insects to control invasive plants. All over the state of Nevada, noxious weeds are invading private and public lands, destroying native habitat, and choking out desirable vegetation. Most of the noxious and invasive plants that are problems in the United States came here from Europe and Asia accidentally as seed or soil contaminants, or in some cases on purpose, as ornamentals. When they arrived in North America, they left the insects that fed on them in Eurasia behind, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Biological weed control is the deliberate release of specialized, natural enemies from the weed's native range to reduce the weeds abundance or spread in its introduced range. Since the state listed noxious weeds in Nevada are exotic species, they have few established natural predators.

Biocontrol methods gen-

erally suppress host weed populations, but will most often not eradicate them. Therefore, integrating other weed management methods with biocontrol is critical.

Typically, biocontrol is most effective on dense weed infestations that cover large areas. These insects are not adaptable to all sites; therefore evaluation must be used to find where they will be



Spotted knapweed biocontrol agents.

most effective.

Nevada has recently began implementing biocontrol as part of its integrated pest management approach to managing noxious weeds. The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) Noxious Weed Program has adopted the International Code of Best Practices for biological

control of weeds. Only safe, effective, and approved natural enemies will be used for biocontrol.

NDA works with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other scientists who visit the original location of the weed to find natural enemies that can be tested as candidates for introduction as biocontrol agents in the US. Before release in Nevada, agents are rigorously tested to ensure they are the following:

- Safe and will not become pests of crops and native plants
- Clean from disease and parasites

Contact your local weed coordinator or extension agent for help with this type of management.

In Nevada, please contact the Nevada Department of Agriculture. They are a host of knowledge for information on all biocontrol currently available for release in Nevada, or any other questions you may have regarding noxious weeds.

Volunteer Work-Day at Anchor-S Ranch

Last October, the Humboldt Watershed CWMA teamed up with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to sponsor a volunteer work day at the Anchor-S Ranch, 5 miles east of Elko. The planned workday will include planting willows in an attempt to establish root mass that

will be essential to securing critical points along the river banks to compete with noxious weeds, improve water quality by reducing erosion, and to protect diversion structures from washing out in high flow events. Controlling perennial pepper-weed and other invasive spe-

cies, the very root of the erosion problem, will be key to continued recovery at the project site. If you are interested in getting involved or participating in future workdays, please contact HWCWMA or NDOW at 775-777-2300.



Call for Projects!

The HWCWMA is very excited to be taking on new partners for treatment and support projects in 2016. By combining forces, we will be more effective in controlling noxious weeds within the Humboldt Watershed. The threat is, if ignored, these invasive weed species have the potential to “move in and take over”. The opportunity is now—if we work together there is a strong chance that we can keep them at acceptable population levels, minimizing the economic and environmental losses. HWCWMA’s goal

is to control and contain the existing populations, even if we can’t completely eradicate them.

Here’s what you can do to help! If you have known noxious weeds on your property that you’d like assistance with, please visit our website, www.humboldtweedfree.org, for information on weeds within the Humboldt River Watershed. The HWCWMA offers a couple of cost-share programs that are available to landowners that can assist with the treatment of noxious

weeds on their property through the purchase of herbicide or by cost-sharing on larger-scale projects. The proposal packets for these programs can be downloaded from our website. BUT, keep in mind that weeds will be growing earlier than usual this year because of the increased precipitation we’ve had, so if you have a project in mind, please get those forms filled out and returned to us as soon as possible so we can stay ahead of the spread of noxious weeds. The HWCWMA always welcomes new partnerships and we look forward to working with you!



Medusahead Treatment Projects



The HWCWMA partners successfully worked together this year to treat approximately 150 acres of the noxious weed, medusahead. This is the largest treatment project of its kind, to date, in Elko County. A strategic plan was developed by the CWMA partners based on funding and an effort to capitalize on natural fire occurrences and defensible adjacent boundaries.

The CWMA partners who participated in 2015, were the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS) and a couple private landowners. A project of this scale would not be possible without the coordinat-

ed focus of each of these individuals. The project, or projects, as they were concentrated in several areas, began at the beginning of October. A contractor was hired to spray, and the Nevada Division of Forestry crews were hired to bag medusahead thatch so the area could be treated this fall. This made the projects more efficient and cost-effective. All of the applicators did a great job. There are great expectations for the results next year.

The areas treated in this multi-million-acre county are near and around: Northern Elko County Lime Fire as well as Harrison Pass, which has been burned by prescribed fire in the past, but with little results. Next year, the plan will continue with more treatments in concentrated areas that will compliment and expound on this year's treatments.

With each treatment project, efforts are being made to make them more effective by adjusting timing, incorporating adjuvants (products added to the spray mixture to provide drift control, adherence to soil, and encapsulation of herbicide molecules) and improving delivery. The hope is to limit the spread of medusahead, while encouraging growth of desirable vegetation.

If you have medusahead and wish to have it treated, please contact the HWCWMA. If treatments are being done in your area in the fall of 2016, we would love to include them with our efforts.



Weeds to Watch: Ventenata

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). *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.



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. Key identification traits for *Ventenata* include: reddish-black nodes in late spring; the long, membranous leaf ligule; the inflorescence has an open panicle

From June-July; the upper floret awns are also twisted and bent.

Ventenata grows 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, *Ventenata* was found growing in areas receiving 13.8 to 44.1 inches (35 to 112 cm) of annual precipitation and elevations of 33 to 5906 feet. It grows in rangeland, dry meadows, pastures, roadsides, rocky swales, open forests, and sagebrush communities, including areas previously dominated by or having cheatgrass present.



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Humboldt Watershed CWMA's Mission

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.

We have an opportunity to stop potentially invasive species from spreading if we act quickly and our staff 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.

The Annual Elko County Weed Extravaganza

This year's Weed Extravaganza will be held at the California Trail Center on April 26-28, 2016. Please contact Kent McAdoo, UNR Cooperative Extension at 775-738-7291, email: mcadook@unce.unr.edu or visit our website, www.humboldtweedfree.org, for more details.

Project Partner Perspective

Managing invasive species is one part of a large movement to conserve native ecosystems. The HWCWMA is unique in that it is made up of diverse partners that offer insight into a number of environmental factors.

CWMA's allow partners to cross boundaries; invasive plant management can be carried out along ecological, rather than political, boundaries. They allow partners to share and leverage limited resources (volunteers, tools, herbicides, mailing and printing costs, media contacts, etc.) to the benefit of all. They are highly visible, building community awareness and participation as well as focusing attention and presenting a united effort to state and federal legislators. They can also reduce the risk of control efforts to water, crops, threatened and endan-

gered (T&E) species, and other resources by assuring that all partners are using best management practices. CWMA's can provide an early detection and rapid response network by ensuring that all the partners are aware of and are able to identify new invaders and have a response mechanism. Finally, CWMA's help partners secure funding.

Thanks to our project partners, the HWCWMA has been able to assist local land-owners control and monitor noxious weeds on their properties. With assistance from our partners, the HWCWMA has been allowed to make significant strides in preventing plant invasions and protecting native plant biodiversity on a scale that no individual organization could achieve alone. Our wonderful sponsors include:

