**Humboldt Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area**

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Providing land managers, owners and local weed control groups assistance

through funding, agency and weed group coordination, communication and cooperation



Hello from the Humboldt Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area! This month we would like to introduce you to another state listed noxious weed,poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). Poison hemlock originated in Europe and was introduced

to North America in the 1800’s as an ornamental. Since then, it has been extremely successful distributing itself

throughout most of North America. It now occurs in nearly every state in the United States and southern

Canada.

Poison hemlock is commonly found at lower elevations along roadsides, ditch and stream banks, creek beds, fence-lines, waste places, and in or on the edge of cultivated fields where there is sufficient soil moisture. It can also

invade native plant communities in riparian woodlands and flood plains where natural aquatic systems dominate. It can survive in dry sites with poorly drained soils, but is most competitive under wetter soil conditions.

Poison hemlock can invade perennial crops like alfalfa, but it is only a significant problem in the first cutting, because subsequent regrowth of the alfalfa can suppress poison hemlock. In grain fields, poison hemlock can contaminate harvested grain seed. However, it is more common for poison hemlock to invade grazing areas than crops. It tends to grow in moist pastures and meadows where it has the potential to out-compete more desirable native species. Perhaps the largest impact of a poison hemlock invasion is its toxicity to livestock. Serious livestock losses can occur when animals graze on fresh forage, harvested silage, or hay contaminated with poison hemlock. Hemlock is capable of rapid establishment after late-season rains, particularly on disturbed sites or where little vegetation exists. Once it firmly establishes itself under such conditions, the weed can preclude most other vegetation.

Poison hemlock has small but attractive white flowers, arranged in umbrella-like clusters, which open in the early summer. The fruit is tiny, flattened, and ridged, about 1/8thof an inch long, and grayish green in color. Seeds ripen in August and September and can be spread by farm equipment, vehicles, agricultural produce, clothing, water and wind. The weed has a smooth purple stem and triangular, finely divided leaves with bases that sheathe the stem. The stems are hollow between the nodes, while the leaves resemble those of a fern. Poison hemlock is also characterized by a rank, disagreeable odor that is detectable when one is near the plant, or has crushed a leaf or stem. The odor is associated with the alkaloids that the plant contains and toxicity of the plant increases throughout the growing season. In an animal that has been poisoned by hemlock, the odor can be detected in the gut, breath and urine.

Use these recommended control methods to remove poison hemlock from your property. Always wear protective clothing and gloves to prevent accidental exposure to the plant’s toxic juices. Keep children away from poison hemlock.

Mechanical:

Small patches of poison hemlock can be carefully dug up, making sure to remove the taproot. Do not cut or mow the plants, as they will only re-sprout. Dispose of plants in the trash.

Chemical:

Herbicides containing glyphosate are readily available and can be very effective, especially for larger infestations. Always read and follow the label instructions before applying any herbicide product. The best time to spray poison hemlock is when the plant is still young and the leaves are just a basal rosette, and before it forms a stem and flowers. If plants are already in bloom, make sure to cut flower-heads and dispose of them in trash bags.

Follow-up:

Monitor for and treat areas for seedlings and re-sprouts. Plant grasses and other desirable vegetation to help prevent further weed establishment at the site.

As always, please notify the HWCWMA if you see poison hemlock growing within the Humboldt River watershed. 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 advice on how best to remove it. We have an opportunity to stop it from spreading if we act quickly. We [map](http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/maps.aspx) all known locations of regulated noxious weeds in order to help us and others locate new infestations in time to control them.

The Humboldt Watershed CWMA has also developed a website to serve as a clearinghouse for information on 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 and partnerships.

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](mailto:aporreca@humboldtweedfree.org). Or you may speak with Rhonda Heguy, HWCWMA President at (775) 738-3085, email: [hwcwma@gmail.com](mailto:hwcwma@gmail.com).