**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,tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima).* Tamarisk is native chiefly to the Mediterranean area and to central Asia. Tamarisk is one of several common names for an invasive non-native tree that is spreading rapidly through the intermountain region of the western United States, through the Great Basin, California and Texas. It is also commonly referred to as saltcedar.

Tamarisk is a general term for several species of Old World shrubs and trees in the genus Tamarix with scalelike leaves on very thin terminal twigs. They have tiny, triangular, scale-like leaves that are winter-deciduous. The flowers are pink to near-white, densely crowded along branched terminal spikes; they appear from January to October. Fruit and seeds are tiny, brown and inconspicuous. Under good conditions, the opportunistic tamarisk can grow 9 to 12 feet in a single season. Under drought conditions, saltcedar survives by dropping its leaves. This ability to survive under harsh desert conditions has given the tree an edge over more desirable native species and causing a sharp decline in cottonwood populations.

Tamarisks are extremely invasive in riparian communities, often nearly completely replacing native vegetation with impenetrable thickets. They are extremely competitive against native vegetation because they are aggressive usurpers of water. They also sequester salt in their foliage, and where flooding does not flush out soil salts the leaf litter increases the salinity of soil surfaces. Dense stands of tamarisks support lower biodiversity than the natural communities they displace. The tamarisk is degrading the rarest of habitats in the desert southwest - the wetlands. Salt cedar invades springs, ditches and streambanks. The tree has taken over more than 1 million acres of precious Western riparian resources.

The tamarisk has an extremely rapid evapotranspiration rate. There is a fear that this rapid loss of moisture could possibly cause serious depletion of ground water. Studies have shown that a mature tamarisk can uptake nearly 200 gallons of water a day. Due to this, the West is losing from 2- 4.5 million acre-feet of water per year because of tamarisk. This is enough water to supply more than 20 million people with water for one year or to irrigate over 1,000,000 acres of land.

**Control Methods:**

There are essentially 4 methods to control tamarisk - mechanical, biological, competition, and chemical. Complete success of any management program depends on the integration of all methods.

Mechanical control, including hand-pulling, digging, use of weed eaters, axes, machetes, bulldozers, and fire, may not be the most efficient method for removal of tamarisk. Hand labor is not always available and is costly unless it is volunteered. When heavy equipment is used, soil is often disturbed with consequences that may be worse than having the plant.

In many situations, control with [herbicides](http://forestry.about.com/od/Silvicultural_Practices/tp/Herbicides-Used-To-Control-Woody-Stem-Plants.htm) is the most efficient and effective method of control for removal of tamarisk. The chemical method allows regeneration and/or re-population of natives or re-vegetation with native species. The use of herbicides can be specific, selective and fast.

Insects are being investigated as potential biological control agents for tamarisk. Two of these, a mealybug (Trabutina mannipara) and a leaf beetle (Diorhabda elongata), have preliminary approval for release. There is some concern over the possibility that, due to the environmental damage caused by tamarisk, native plant species may not be able to replace it if the biological control agents succeed in eliminating it.

As always, please notify the HWCWMA if you see tamarisk 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).