



Courtesy photo/Wallowa County Weed Control Board

Meadow hawkweed, also known as yellow hawkweed, spreads both by sending out near-surface roots called "stolons," and through its windborne seeds not unlike those of the dandelion.

WEED: Five types isolated

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The Wallowa County Weed Control District was formed in the late 1920s, Schnetzky says, but it wasn't until 2001 that voters from the county approved a ballot measure to help control weeds through taxation. Easily reaffirmed by county voters twice since then, the measure last was endorsed by 78 percent of voters in 2012. The weed levy normally runs for five years.

According to the vegetation manager, an estimated 85 percent of all weeds in the county have been mapped and, at present, five species of weeds have been isolated in containment areas. During a recent presentation to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners, weed officials outlined goals to maintain those individual weeds within specific boundaries.

Entities working with Wallowa County, which contracted out 75 percent of actual spraying in 2014, include the United States Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Wallowa Resources, and the Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area.

The weed species generating maximum concern at this time in Wallowa County, in addition to meadow hawkweed, are common bugloss, leafy spurge, whitetop, and yellow starthistle.

Schnetzky says an oddity in the war against weeds in Wallowa County has to do with the diffuse knapweed. Biological agents were imported years back to kill off the knapweed and nearly succeeded until the bugs lost their food source and moved out of the area. Now, says Schnetzky, the knapweed is returning as are the "bugs" that like to eat the plant.

PATH: Plan moves forward

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Bosket explained the 10-foot-wide path offered a six-foot buffer from the highway and involved widening the roadbed at points and also using a type of pier boardwalk as topography dictates. Much of the property between the highway and lake shore is under private ownership, requiring the project to acquire right-of-way, although Bosket said the amount needed was unclear. He also recommended lowering the highway speed limit.

Bosket said the estimated cost of the bike path falls somewhere within the \$21-36 million range with a rough estimate of \$28 million, depending on the ratio of boardwalk-to-roadbed path. According to Bosket, the total cost probably prohibits building the project all at once. Funding five one-mile chunks of path over consecutive years appears more feasible, however. Bosket called for all the participating state and county agencies to work together, including writing letters of support for project funding.

Darci Rudzinski, a planner for Angelo Planning Group, which works directly with the Wallowa County Planning Department, addressed

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Harold Black
Wallowa County Planning Director

the project's land use issues. Much of the proposed path runs through either exclusive farm use or timber/grazing zones. A conditional use process is required before beginning construction to ensure the design and location of the path is visibly subordinate to the scenic landscape.

Additionally, within the county's land use ordinance, a change will be required to a paragraph (Section 44.030, Paragraph D) that specifies the level of protection for the strip between the lake's eastern shore and the highway. As Wallowa County Planning Director Harold Black explained in an interview later, that level will have to be downgraded from its current 3A "Very High" scenic protection to 3C "High" scenic protection to allow construction of the path.

At the Jan. 20 meeting, Commissioner Susan Roberts asked if the less-restrictive language could affect areas outside of the path, and project officials assured her that

it was limited to the area between the highway edge and the lake shore.

Commissioner Paul Castilleja asked if bicyclists would still be allowed to ride on the highway if there was a path available. The state's people answered that they couldn't ban bicyclists from the road, but with the path in place, Castilleja could expect greatly reduced bike traffic on the highway. Several other attendees also voiced their concern on the matter.

State officials also assured both the commissioners and the planning department that the land use adjustments wouldn't suddenly allow for the construction of other edifices on the east lake shore by private property owners. They also said the current turnouts on the highway would remain in place rather

er than utilizing them for the path.

The meeting ended amicably with the promise of more public forums on the subject as time goes on.

Wallowa County Planning Director Harold Black saw the meeting as positive. "I think they've done a good job. I think they've looked at options, and given all the different constraints I think they made the right recommendation," Black said.

Black foresaw few obstacles or objections on the county's part. He added that the planning department also takes the wishes of the public into consideration when making recommendations to the board of commissioners.

After reviewing the planning department's recommendations, the commissioners make the final decision on whether to greenlight the project. Black cited the cost of the project as possibly the biggest public concern and added the county has no obligation to foot any of it. He estimates the next public meeting on the project will take place in late March.



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