

Invasive weed control: A hard pull goes on

Commissioners get update on efforts

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Progress is being made toward managing the invasive weed problem in Wallowa County, but there's still much to be done, said Andy Marcum, manager of the Wallowa County Weed Department, who led an update on weed management before the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners at their Wednesday, Feb. 17 meeting.

Marcum told of numerous areas where noxious weeds had been eradicated followed by reseeding, but said those areas often take several years to really show results.

"A lot of successful places that we have planted really don't look successful in year 1 or 2 or 3," he told the commissioners.

Commissioner Todd Nash, who raises cattle and has a test plot he both grazes and has had reseeded, told of his own experience there.

"It really wasn't until about five years after you seed before you really started to see (replacement plants) start to perpetuate their own seed and take hold and you could see it was well worth it," he said.

He asked Marcum if grazing helped or hurt efforts to replace noxious weeds.

"Once it gets established, your grazing regime does seem to help," Marcum said, adding that a rancher can't let it be overgrazed. "You have to allow these seedings



Andy Marcum, left, manager of the Wallowa County Weed Department, gives an update on weed control efforts in Wallowa County to the county commissioners at their Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021, meeting. Listening are, from left, Commissioners John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

to take hold."

He told the commissioners about some of his treatment work last year that was showing success on areas such as Alder Slope, Elk Mountain Road, Jimtown Road out of Lostine, Sheep Hill and others. He said there also are some historically organic pastures that have been treated with the cooperation of landowners.

Some of the invasive or noxious weeds being battled by the weed department and its partners include meadow hawkweed, common bugloss, leafy spurge, leafy spurge, musk thistle, yellow starthistle, medusahead rye, plumeless thistle, yellow flag iris, spotted knapweed and rush skeletonweed.

Marcum told of projects he's working on along Bear Creek, the Wallowa

River, the Lostine River, Little Sheep Hill, Tick Hill, Ant Flat, the East Moraine of Wallowa Lake and the upper and lower-middle Wallowa Valley.

This year, he said, the weed department will survey an additional 6,000 acres of Tick Hill for medusahead rye and yellow starthistle, 4,000 acres on Ant Flat for plumeless thistle, will continue distributing weed control brochures and continue weed tours and drone demonstrations, as well as webinars with weed-control partners.

Marcum said he also hopes to develop a small way station at Flora Junction along Highway 3 in northern Wallowa County, as hunter and recreationist traffic from the Lewiston area has markedly increased.

Another plan is to hold

spray days in July along the East Moraine. He said that would take about three days with from five to 10 partners each of whom has an ATV and backpack sprayer, including Wallowa Resources and the Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area of Baker, Union and Wallowa counties. He said when those spray days take place, signs will be posted to warn people so they can avoid it.

Kris Crowley, of Wallowa Resources, also gave an update for his agency. He said they received a grant in 2019 to survey 100,000-plus acres in the Grande Ronde/Joseph Canyon area. He said 2,008 acres have been treated and some seeded on the Zumwalt Prairie.

Last year, Crowley said, 3,160 acres in the county

were inventoried for weeds, with 2,832 acres treated and 190 seeded.

Ongoing and upcoming projects include work with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to eliminate medusahead rye from the Zumwalt Prairie and starthistle from the Grande Ronde area. He said Wallowa Resources also received a grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to eliminate starthistle along the Grande Ronde in Washington state.

"We surveyed everything we could from Troy to Heller Bar" (on the Snake River), Crowley said.

He added that they took ATVs with backpack sprayers down on raft to get on otherwise inaccessible bars.

"It was actually kind of fun," he said. "We got a lot of treatment done there."

Teresa Smergut, chairwoman of the Wallowa County Weed Board, attended the meeting virtually and expressed appreciation at the help the county has received from other agencies.

"We've gotten a lot of help from our partners," she said.

Other partners involved in weed control in Wallowa County include the Nature Conservancy, the Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Zumwalt Prairie, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, several Idaho agencies and several private members.

Mark Porter, of the ODA, told of several trouble weeds.

"I have a list of 36 plants

that I keep an eye on," he said. "Some of them are on the state's watchlist and others are not on anybody's watchlist. They're not native and they're scattered around and doing things that we're trying to keep an eye on them so they don't get away from us."

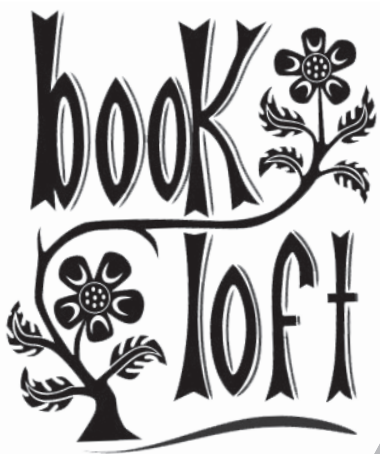
When asked about biological controls by Nash, Porter specifically mentioned Canada thistle, one of the most prolific weeds in the West.

"We spend more money on Canada thistle across the West than on any other weed," he said. "We have a fungus that we know, from trials in Colorado, that if you put this in and have some patience, you can see patches disappear over time. It came with Canada thistle, but what we didn't know back then was it doesn't move well at all. You rarely see it out in nature, but we do have it in the world. Once we learned that we could move it and put it where we want it, it has a root pathogen that goes and kills the whole clump. There's some effort required on our part, but not much."

Commissioner John Hillock suggested another bio-control, telling of a potato farmer who tried a fungicide that worked. He couldn't remember just what fungicide it was, but "We ought to do some research into that."

Nash asked about funding the weed-control efforts and wondered if it would be possible to add an assessment to the county's hotel/lodging tax for weed control.

"We'll work on that with our legislators," he said.



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CLUES ACROSS

- Agreement
- When doubled, a Hawaiian fish
- Hoover ____ (Colorado River structure)
- Haitian religion involving sorcery
- Hugh Laurie's boys' school
- Former quarterback Manning
- Waiting one's turn
- Rustic home
- University official
- Isn't thorough when cleaning an ashtray?
- Shortly, in poetry
- They sometimes clash
- Closed-down arena?
- Chatty bird
- When required
- Word after "public" or "popular"
- TV schedule slot
- Takes revenge
- Trap, as by a winter storm
- Glowing alien of Jabba's species?
- Headliner
- IRS experts
- Where one might get a dog?
- Was aware of
- Conspiring (with)
- Discomfort
- Actress Seydoux or Thompson
- Raise one's voice
- U-Haul truck, for one
- Hosp. areas
- Poetic tributes
- Forgo cooking ... or, read with spaces after the second and fourth letters, a theme hint

CLUES DOWN

- Fanatical
- Certain ice cream holder
- Carbonated drink
- Thor's father

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- "Anchorman: The Legend of ____ Burgundy"
- "Crime ____ pay"
- Philanthropist Gates
- On the summit of
- Big pigs
- Machu Picchu builder
- Eliminate glitches from
- Samuel of the Supreme Court
- After-dinner candies
- Prez known for his top hat
- RVer's stopover
- More pale
- Pollution portmanteau
- Overdone publicity
- Army group
- Prepares, like leather
- "This ____ test"
- Prefix with "verse"
- Defers
- Scratch the surface?
- "Mon ____!"
- Issue forth
- Bumper concern
- Large reproductive cells
- "The Simpsons" character who says "hi-diddly-ho"
- Coins that cost more than seven cents each to make
- Mimic
- Inherent character
- Welcoming expression
- Piano technician
- He has the world at his fingertips
- GPS suggestion
- Hellmann's spread, informally
- Like good Scotch
- Regulation
- Superman, aka Clark ____
- Defense org. since 1949
- Birthday seller in 1959
- Mark from a paintball fight, say
- Teachers' org.

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