

Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District First in State to Initiate Weed Control District

The Morrow County Weed Control District originated in 1940 but was inactive for 40 years. The Soil and Water Conservation District reactivated it again in 1982 and it is part of the county budget.

Some people think weeds are just a nuisance but the truth is they have an economic and social impact on each and everyone of us in Morrow County. Just ask Jim Van Winkle, who spends his time dedicated to the elimination of weeds.

Van Winkle, in his fourth year as District Manager and Weed Supervisor, has seen the program grow as fast as the weeds. Beginning with a \$6,000 budget, it is now \$80,000.

"When I took the job, the district made weed control a number one priority and one of my responsibilities was to enforce state and county laws regarding noxious weeds. It has expanded to include weeds of all varieties with me being



Jim Van Winkle the resource person," remarked Jim.

The spread of weeds has a devastating impact on cropland, rangeland and forests, transforming productive land into barren, unproductive wasteland. This results in loss of revenue for county landowners.

Jim has seen the effect of one such

weed - diffuse knapweed - in south Morrow County and considers it a personal obligation to keep this weed from destroying thousands of acres.

To do this, Jim, with the aid of the district and a weed advisory board consisting of local residents and with help from Fish & Wildlife, the Forest Services, and private businesses has set out to identify all potentially threatening weeds in the county. He began with a spray program to clean up weeds on public lands, along railroad and highway right-of-ways and has worked with farmers and ranchers.

Jim has implemented range rehabilitation programs and reseeding and has worked to improve existing rangeland infested with knapweed on the Dick Wilkinson ranch. He has been involved with the aerial knapweed spraying program on Rock Creek and Little Buttercreek. Along with these measures, Jim has provided information and education to all county residents aimed at alerting them to the dangers of weed infestations.

The weed supervisor has sought ways to establish biological controls for weeds and has three controls for knapweed, one for St. John's weed and one for poison hemlock.

From the beginning of the weed program, Van Winkle has sought

Dalmation Toad Flax found near Hinton Creek; on list of noxious weeds.

funding to help support the noxious weed program. He has acquired funding from the Forest Service, Union Pacific Railroad, the State Highway Department, Bonneville Power Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Army Corps of Engineers, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Resources Department, and the U.S. Naval Bombing Range.

Jim has furthered his desire to inform the public about the importance of weed control through district sponsored weed tours, information booths at county fairs and public events and with speaking engagements for organizations such as local garden clubs. Regular news articles on weeds have appeared in local and regional publications.

The cities in Morrow County have

utilized Jim's programs, and one has received his cooperation in spraying poison hemlock on creek banks.

Jim also devotes time to the Conservation Reserve Program. He works closely with the Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, and chemical dealers and makes recommendations to farmers on weed control in their CRP fields.

While most of Jim's time is allotted to the weed program, the remainder is devoted to soil and water conservation programs in the county. He serves as secretary of the Heppner Water Control District, is a planning member of the Resource Conservation and Development board and secretary of Rock Creek Range Conservation Corporation, Vo-ag Advisory Committee, and has served on the ad hoc committee on the chemical 2-4-D.



Jim Van Winkle with scotch thistle, a weed that was moved up to the 'A' list.

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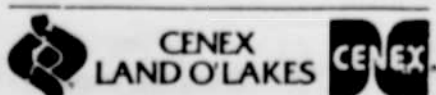
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