

DOUGLAS COUNTY WEED MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes November 27, 2007

Opening:

The regular meeting of the *Douglas County Weed Management Task Force* was called to order at 1:30 p.m. on November 27, 2007 at the *Douglas County Extension office* by facilitator *Margaret A. Viebrock*.

Committee Members Present

Dan Cavadini, Dan Jordan, Paul Malone, Joe Sprauer, Mike Bromiley, Dean McLean, Darrell Yonko, Rusty Hunt and Dixie Dringman

Members Absent

none

Ex-Officio Members Present

Scott Reiman, Mary Hunt, Dale Whaley and Margaret Viebrock

Ex-Officio Absent

Britt Dudek

Public Present

Kathy Humphrey

A. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as distributed.

B. Approval of Minutes

There were no previous minutes to approve

C. Old Business

There was no discussion of old business

D. New Business

1. Welcome and introductions

Committee members introduced themselves.

Kathy Humphrey expressed interest in joining the committee.

2. Review of Management Task Force Directive

Margaret gave a brief overview of the Weed Management Task Force Directive. (Listed on agenda). She also highlights some of the events of the Task Force.

1. The Task Force met with city, county and state entities that deal with weeds to discuss best practices for weed control. There was an agreement with these entities to work together to help reduce weeds.
2. Surveys were mailed to 900 landowners in Douglas County with a 10% response. Findings showed that about 50% thought they were doing a good to excellent job in controlling weeds and the reason why it wasn't better was due to time and money. Majority didn't want a Noxious Weed Control Board and felt that they could control the weed problem on their own.
3. The intent of the Task Force was to help landowners take charge of their weed problem with education and collaboration among the Foster Creek Conservation District, WSU and Douglas County. The bio-agent weed control project was also included in this plan.
4. Douglas County continued to receive complaints from neighboring counties about our weed problem. Letters were sent to Department of Agriculture by neighboring counties, a few citizen complaints were aired through the media and at the same time other counties were contacting Douglas County to see what we are doing.

3. Review of Task Force History and Accomplishments

Mary gave a brief history of the task force. It began in 2005 after a study done by Douglas County Solid Waste 2001 found that Douglas County did not have a weed program. Their findings showed that what Douglas County was doing was working but could use improvement. Douglas County Commissioners formed the Weed Management Task Force with members from all parts of the county. During the first year they looked at other programs in other counties. They found that they could provide assistance to land owners without forming a Noxious Weed Control Board.

4. Meeting with House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources and Senate Agriculture and Rural Economic Development

Paul reported that other counties aren't able to control their weeds with taxes & other funds. Douglas County is doing just as good as other counties.

Rusty reported the bill was directed at Douglas County since we are the only ones without a Noxious Weed Control Board. He felt there was a lack of support from local representatives.

Joe S. asked the question – Will the bill reappear? – Mary & Rusty responded that it is a possibility.

5. Report of weed survey conducted in Douglas County

A State Noxious Weed Control team came and did a boat and land survey of Douglas County in September 2007.

Report findings – surveyed complaint areas of past years. Report didn't give GPS coordinates to find the locations. Several weeds were found. Water area was bad, but Dale reports it is hard to control. Transportation and Land Services (TLS) has contacted several of the landowners who were on the survey.

Dixie reported that City of Rock Island is trying to clean up noxious weed at the Rock Island Lakes. She is willing to work with the city council on this effort.

There was discussion on what other weed boards do.

Money is collected through fees that go mostly into administration fees and little goes to land efforts. In Chelan County, administration goes to areas and tells land owners what weeds need to be controlled and if they do not control the weeds the county will do it for them and they will get billed. If the bill is not paid, the County can put a lien against the property.

Mary reported that Chelan County is willing to work with us and would like to know our plans. Margaret reminded the committee that WSU is an educational institution only and has no regulatory authority.

6. Douglas county Transportation & Land Services budget for weed control

Scott reported that the 2007 budget was \$365,000 and 2008 was increased to \$410,000. What the money covers is ground spraying, mowing, spot spraying and aerial spraying of pits and quarries and county roads. Douglas County has about 1,600 miles of county roads and they spray about 1,200 and this does not include county right-a-ways. County suggests to farmers that they farm as close to the county roads as possible to help control weeds. It does help the problem. TLS has also hydro seeded (with state hydro seeder) shoulders to help with weed control. Dale will work with TLS weed control operators to educate them in weeds and best practices. Aerial spraying has been very cost effective and is used in cooperation with property owners.

There was some discussion on where most weeds seem to come up.

7. Bio-agent weed control work in Douglas County

Dale reported that most work is done North of Highway 2 – everything South is suppose to be mandatory control. There was discussion on what bio-control agents work. Dale gave over 7000 insects for toadflax to the conservation district for distribution.

State breaks down the level of Noxious Weeds – A, B, C

A - New plant, very small amounts found and goal is to eradicate

B - Abundant & localized – county designates for control

C - Wide spread – bio control long term weed management address these weeds

Dale suggests that borders be spot sprayed and bio-control is used in the middle.

Question was asked, what do you do if you do not have a private applicators license? – Use store bought chemicals. Only short term fix.

Dixie reported that she has a D-7 test plot at her house by WSU (Ann Kennedy) to eliminate cheat grass. Didn't know how well it really works, or if it attacks other plants.

8. Weed control education in Douglas County this past year

Dale has prepared flyers and done presentations for FSA and has bio control project with Bridgeport High School and city.

Question was presented how is the Weed Management Task Force funded? Margaret said it is a joint effort with Douglas County, WSU, TLS and Foster Creek Conservation District. Other counties pay for their Noxious Weed Control programs from current expense with taxes paid by landowners. Okanogan, Chelan and Kittitas County get federal money because of their forest land.

9. Priority weed control education for 2008?

Agriculture landowners

County roads and right-a-ways

Land developers

Bonneville Power

Small landowners

Fish & Wildlife

State?

Bureau of Land Management

Army Core of Engineers

Priority area – where do we start?

There was no consensus of where the Task Force should start.

10. What will be the Task Force plan?

Dan suggested that we come up with a protocol to use every time a complaint comes in.

Create a form letter from the committee to send out to landowners once a complaint is received.

Mary said that she calls the landowner when a complaint is received and would like to continue that and follow it up with a letter. If a complaint comes in without a signature it will go in a separate file and no action will be taken.

Dale is unable to go out to every complaint site. If landowner can't identify weed then it is possible that he could go to the site to identify and give recommendations.

Create a blanket mailer to let people know that there is a weed expert with WSU Extension in Douglas County.

Could contact Douglas PUD and request permission to put a flyer in monthly bills.

Public Service Announcements

Douglas County PUD has grants that address safety, energy & health – possible pursue them.

Next meeting:

Committee members are to brainstorm ideas on ways to get the message out.

Darrell will look into flyer his son received on noxious weeds.

Margaret will provide some suggestions for a form letter, PSA and a flyer.

Next meeting – Margaret will set date & time and mail committee members a notice.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 *p.m.* by *Margaret Viebrock*. The next general meeting will be set at a later date.

Minutes submitted by: Abby O'Brien