

For: Lancaster County

For the year 2020

Statement of Finding

The failure to control noxious weeds on lands in this state is a serious problem which is detrimental to the production of crops and livestock and to the welfare of residents of this state and which may devalue land and reduce tax revenue (Neb. Rev. Stat. 2-945.02(1)).

Section 2-954 of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act requires each weed control authority to establish a coordinated program for the control of noxious weeds within the county.

Goals

List three goals outlining how your county plans to reduce the number of noxious weed infested acres in your county. Also, explain how your county plans on achieving each goal. Be specific and provide as much detail as possible. If more space is needed, you may attach additional sheets. (You may use a computer generated plan that follows the same format.)

Purpose:

The purpose of the Lancaster County Noxious Weed Management Plan is to protect effectively against designated noxious weeds which constitute a present threat to the continued economic and environmental value of lands in the County. This Plan implements the mandates of the State of Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act by setting forth management objectives and plans, methods or practices which utilize a variety of techniques for the integrated management of noxious weeds. In establishing a coordinated program for the integrated management of noxious weeds, it is the County's intent to encourage and require all appropriate and available management methods, while promoting those methods which are the most environmentally benign and which are practical and economically feasible.

Goal 1: Prevent the development of new noxious and invasive weed infestations.

Prevention is the least expensive and most effective way to halt the spread of noxious and invasive weeds. Integrated weed management includes identifying the pathways of how weeds spread, preventing encroachment onto land that is not infested, detecting and eradicating new weed introductions, containing large-scale infestations using an integrated approach and often re-vegetation.

The elements of weed prevention include:

- Identify the pathways on how weeds spread. *Examples: equipment, wind, water, gravel, retail.*
- Limit the introduction of weed seeds into an area.
- Early detection and eradication of small patches of noxious weeds or plant species with noxious weed potential. *Examples: teasels, knotweeds, sericea lespedeza, and knapweeds.*
- Minimize disturbance of desirable vegetation along roadsides, trails, and waterways.
- Re-vegetate disturbed sites with desirable plants.
- Educate landowners how to manage land to build and maintain healthy communities of native and desirable plants to compete with weeds.
- Train inspectors to identify and monitor presence of these weeds.
- Train other departments and agencies to survey and report invasives while performing their regular duties. *This could include; Engineering, NRD's, City Departments, etc.*

- Alert and encourage others to report any findings of these weeds.
- Careful monitoring of high-risk areas such as human and animal transportation corridors and disturbed or bare ground.
- Aerial surveys of our tributaries for aquatic invaders.
- Clean boots, clothing, equipment and vehicles of weed plant parts to prevent the spread of weed seed and plants from one area to another. Follow Play-Clean-Go practices.
- Use of article inspection and quarantines as needed to control dissemination.
- Provide weed-free forage inspections.
- Provide weed-free gravel inspections to provide clean gravel for our roadsides. Weed infestations along roadsides are high priorities for control because they experience frequent disturbance, which creates favorable habitat for weed establishment, and because vehicles and water are two of the most common agents for spreading weeds. Infestations of new weed species may appear first in disturbed sites such as road edges, ditch banks and stream banks. Vehicles travelling along roads and trails can spread weed seeds to other areas.
- Annual evaluations of the effectiveness of the prevention plan so appropriate actions can be implemented.

Goal 2: Provide education and public outreach about noxious and invasive weed control.

The public is generally not aware of the economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds. There is a need to improve awareness of noxious and invasive weeds, providing educational information to cooperators, land managers, and the public. As people become more aware of noxious and invasive weeds, the probability of detecting them is greatly increased, which allows for more effective and timely control. Education and awareness assist weed identification, reporting new infestations, prevention and control, and fosters cooperation and partnerships.

The elements of education and outreach include:

- Utilize the **Play-Clean-Go** outreach campaign to help the public understand how to prevent the movement of invasive plants by cleaning their equipment before moving to a new location.
- Utilize our website feature to allow followers to receive the latest information on noxious and invasive weeds.
- Continue to build the **Weed Watcher** program. Identify individuals and groups that could be a part of this effort to identify new infestations of current noxious weeds as well as new invasive weeds that might be in our area.
- Continue to create Noxious Weed educational videos.
- Educate and train Railroad and Department of Transportation contractors to maximize Best Management Practices.
- Weed Awareness special insert to the Lancaster County Cooperative Extension NEBLINE in April. This insert is mailed to around 12,000 homes and available on the web.
- Maintaining and updating the Weed Control Authority Website.
- Pamphlets, bulletins, and brochures are useful at meetings, for follow-up consultations, and educational purposes.
- Presentations / trainings on invasives to; private applicators, highway departments, homeowners associations, master naturalist and other businesses and agencies.
- Set up the display booth at various locations such as; Extension, State Capitol, Farm shows and the County Courthouse.
- Special mailings:
 - Pre-season letters to repeat violators
 - Musk thistle fall control mailers
 - Leafy spurge control mailers
 - Phragmites information letter to help landowners better understand the challenges of controlling this plant.
 - Sericea lespedeza mailings about cost share to landowners
 - Homeowner Associations
 - Public land managers
 - Acreage Owners list serve – UNL Extension

Goal 3: Provide ongoing management of State of Nebraska and Lancaster County designated noxious weeds, as well as the City of Lincoln Weed Abatement program.

Noxious weed management is the systematic approach to minimize noxious weed impacts and optimize intended land use. It is very important for all infested areas to be treated with effective methods. Integrated management is a program of noxious weed control that properly implements a variety of coordinated control methods. Types of control methods include mechanical, cultural, chemical, and biological. Integrated management greatly improves the success rate for your weed control plan. All noxious weed management must be applied and evaluated over an extended period of time to be successful.

The elements of noxious weed management include:

- Prepare advanced work orders on sites that are deemed to require inspection and notification to obtain control.
- Work with landowners one on one to help them manage their noxious weed infestations.
- Follow Best Management Practices to ensure successful management of all noxious and invasive weeds.
- Provide inspections and treatment of noxious weeds in a timely manner at both City landfills.
- Follow up on code violations of the City Weed Abatement program and make an anticipated 7,000 to 8,000 inspections on approximately 3,500 properties.
- Use and develop advanced technology to help with the increasing number of inspections annually, assisting in locating new infestations as well as mapping known infestations.
- Issue 10-day or 15-day legal notices promptly on uncontrolled noxious weed violations.
- Issue mowing contracts on City of Lincoln weed abatement violations in a timely manner.
- Monitor the management efforts to determine overall effectiveness.

General

In this section, list how your county achieved last season's goals and were they successful? Explain.

By following the framework we've adopted, our goals of Prevention, Education and Management have proven successful.

Lancaster County's aggressive eradication program on our invasives such as purple loosestrife, phragmites, saltcedar, sericea lespedeza, knotweed and teasel continues to show signs of success. Our dedication to identifying pathways is helping eliminate new infestations from occurring. An example is our weed-free gravel inspection program, which is preventing new weed infestations along our County right of ways. Our staff continually works to educate our citizens about invasive weeds and always applies Best Management Practices to known infestations.

Noxious Weed Enforcement

1. Which legal notice(s) will be utilized by the county weed control authority?

_____ 10 day _____ 15 day _____ **XXX** _____ Both

2. List the procedure that the control authority has adopted for the weed superintendent to follow when notifying landowners of uncontrolled noxious weed infestations.

- Take action on all uncontrolled infestations
- Notification by other than legal notices to those with good control history or trace infestations.
- Make informal contact with those that have a good control program.
- Send reminder letters to those that have a good control history and those that cannot be reached with an informal contact.
- Send a card to those that have only a trace infestation.
- Send copies of letters and notices to tenants (if known) with return card to report control taken.
- Send copies of letters and notices to real estate agents on property with for-sale signs.
- Make follow-up inspections and send follow-up control letter if control is not complete.
- Issue individual notices to all landowners with a history of poor control efforts.

3. List the guidelines or policy that the control authority has established for the weed superintendent to follow when **issuing and enforcing an individual notice**. (Include information regarding inspections, evidence, officials to be notified, etc.)

- Perform an initial inspection.
- Determine the correct landowner and tenant, if known.
- Notify the landowner regarding infestation and request compliance.
- Notice may be issued any time after non-compliance.
- GPS photos that include time and date stamp taken with each inspection.
- Individual notice must be in writing as prescribed by the Noxious Weed Act.
- Delivery of the notice shall be in the same manner of service as a summons in a civil action in the district court or by certified mail to the last known address.
- Begin disposition report when a notice is issued. (*keep current during the entire process*)
- Re-inspect the property to determine compliance when notice expires.
- Notify County Attorney on 15-day notices.
- Work with Attorney's office throughout the 15-day notice until controlled or prosecution.
- Implement proper and approved control measures on 10-day notices.
- Document all control work accurately and completely.
- Conduct final inspection to ensure the contracted force control is completed.
- Notify the landowner of cost incurred.
- Immediately file notice of possible unpaid weed assessment with Register of Deeds.
- If unpaid for two months, certify to the County Treasurer.
- Complete final disposition report.

Public Awareness

Explain the type of public relations activities that your county will use in the upcoming year to increase public awareness (newspaper articles, interviews, presentations given, weed tours, landowner contacts, etc.). **Do not include the required general notice in this section.**

- Weed Awareness Special insert to the April Lancaster County Cooperative Extension Service NEBLINE with a circulation of around 12,000.
- Play-Clean-Go education and outreach campaign.
- Weed ID trainings and workshops for landowners, agencies, specialty groups.
- Display booth at various locations including UNL-Extension, County courthouse, State Capitol and the Nebraska Power Farming Show.
- Maintaining and updating the internet homepage at www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds the website continues to be a valuable source of information to the public with 153,779 hits this past year.
- Weed ID videos to help educate the public on how to identify noxious weeds.
- Special mailings to
 - Pre-season letters to owners with multiple violations
 - Owners of problem infestations
 - Homeowner Associations
 - Neighborhood Associations
 - Public land managers
 - Weed Watcher program volunteers
 - Acreage Owners email list serve – UNL Extension
 - Presentation at the Husker Lawn and Leisure Show

Cooperative Efforts

Does your county actively support and participate in a weed management cooperative group?

NO _____ YES X Explain

Lancaster County has been a member of the Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) since its beginning in 2002. The LPWMA brings together all parties in a 10 county area that have a common interest in noxious weed management along the Platte River and its tributaries. Tributaries included in Lancaster County are Oak Creek, Middle Creek and Salt Creek.

With the help of the Lancaster County Attorney's office, the Lower Platte WMA created its own separate entity to better protect each County. Lancaster County Weed Department serves as the Official Administrator of the LPWMA.

How does being part of a weed management cooperative group benefit your county?

As a result of belonging LPWMA we've been able to bring in grants to help fund the cost of controlling noxious weeds within Lancaster County. The LPWMA also plays a vital role in the cooperation between many Federal, State & local agencies as well as private landowners.

- Lancaster County annually receives grant money from the LPWMA to helicopter survey Salt Creek from Lincoln to the Platte River near Mahoney State Park, Oak Creek from Lincoln to Raymond and Middle Creek from Lincoln to Emerald. We will continue to survey all major tributaries.
- LPWMA provides a 50/50 cost share grant for private landowners who spray phragmites by helicopter on our tributaries including Oak Creek and Middle Creek.
- LPWMA funds 100% of the cost for landowners to spray phragmites by helicopter along Salt Creek.

Contact List

Agency	Contact Person	Phone Number
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Dave Kinnamon	402-783-3400
Nebraska Department of Roads	Roger Kalkwarf	402-471-0850
BELF	Larry Gibbens	308-631-1822
LPSNRD	Al Langdale	402-432-6839
UNL-Extension, Lincoln	Karen Wobig	402-441-6750
FSA	Nick Elting	402-423-9683 ext 2
NRCS	Cory Schmidt	402-423-9683 ext 132
Lincoln Public Works	Thomas Casady	402-441-7548
Nebraska Dept of Agriculture	Mitch Coffin	402-471-6844
Railroads Union Pacific	Christina Stoner	402-544-8007
Railroads BNSF	Dennis Mirabal	505-301-8411
UNL East Campus	T. J. McAndrew	402-450-6360
Parks and Recreation	Chris Myers	402-441-7847
Sanitary Landfill	Karla Welding	402-441-7867
Lincoln Public Works ROW	Kyle Williams	402-432-0320
Lincoln Airport Authority	Bob McNalley	402-458-2423

If more space is needed, you may attach additional sheets.

1. How many total hours does the control authority anticipate will be dedicated to the county noxious weed program? For the coming year? (Hours per quarter)

<u>1560</u>	January - March
<u>4000</u>	April - June
<u>2100</u>	July - September
<u>1560</u>	October - December

2. Has your county's noxious weed infestations increased or decreased in the past year?

Increased

Explain.

I don't feel the noxious weeds are on an alarming increase. I think our inspectors are doing a great job of scouting and reporting the infestations. The awareness of noxious weed control in the County is very good and landowners are doing an excellent job with management. Annual inspections are made on all properties known to have had problems in the past. Lancaster County uses an aggressive inspection and legal notification program to gain compliance of the State of Nebraska's Noxious Weed Act.

Phragmites - We continue to work hard to find infestations and educate the landowners how to identify this plant and the destruction it causes. We continue to notice more landowners controlling their infestations prior to being notified by our office, indicating the education is making a difference. Since phragmites is easier to identify during the winter than during the growing season our staff scouts aggressively in the fall and winter to find new infestations. Control efforts on our roadsides have been very successful with our aggressive herbicide treatments. Phragmites is by far the most serious threat we face.

Musk thistle - Infested acres remained about the same as they have in recent years. There will always be musk thistle and the level of infestations will vary depending on weather conditions and management techniques. Landowners are aware of this noxious weed and do a good job of managing it.

Canada thistle – Infestation levels remained about the same. Since Canada thistle can be moved by root segments brought in with nursery stock. Most of our Canada thistle infestations are located inside City limits.

Teasel - Our aggressive scouting and control of this invasive are showing positive results. While we continue to find new infestations, the management of this noxious weed is similar to musk thistle and easier to control than some of our other invasives.

Leafy spurge - Infestations on our County roadsides are seeing a significant decrease due to the use of Method herbicide. This herbicide has proven to be safe to adjacent crops and has a lasting residual on leafy spurge. This plant is very difficult to control and landowners understand it will be a long term battle.

Sericea lespedeza – While we continue to find new infestations, we are seeing the total number of acres decreasing. Control of this species is not as difficult as some of our other perennials. There are good treatment options available for sericea lespedeza, however, due to the longevity of the seed, landowners that have it, will need to continue to manage the infestation.

Knotweeds – Knotweeds were originally sold as an ornamental, so most of our infestations are found in landscaped areas.

3. Provide any other information or policy that the control authority has determined to be relevant to the noxious weed control program.

Lancaster County, along with managing the Noxious Weed Program also manages the Weed Abatement program for the City of Lincoln. Doing inspections inside city limits helps us track noxious weed infestations better in the City. This interlocal agreement began in 1996 and works really well for the citizens of Lancaster County, giving them one location to call for weed problems.

Early Detection and Rapid Response is one of our main goals in Lancaster County. Because of our concern with new invasives, Lancaster County added cutleaf and common teasel to our noxious weed list in 2014.

4. Does your county have a resolution giving your county weed superintendent the authority to issue individual notices?
NO YES

How often is this resolution presented and approved by the County Weed Control Authority?

No resolution required, therefore it is not presented.

The opinion of the Lancaster County Attorney; the County Board hires the Weed Superintendent to carry out the duties of the Weed Control Authority office on their behalf; therefore a separate resolution is not necessary.

Submitted, reviewed, and approved by the county noxious weed control authority at a regular board meeting

Dated January 16, 2020

January 16, 2020
Date

County Weed Superintendent

January 16, 2020
Date

Control Authority Chairperson

2020 Control Plan.docm