

# OKANOGAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

## 2017 Annual Report



The 2017 noxious weed control season proved to be another challenging, yet productive, year. With the long, cold, and wet spring that we had this year, many of the noxious weed species did not get started growing until much later than usual, which meant that Noxious Weed Office staff were not able to start inspections until much later in the spring than when we normally start. This spring's weather also played havoc on many of the primitive roads in Okanogan County, which made accessing many areas of the county difficult or impossible until well into the growing season. Both of these factors led to many landowners falling behind on their weed control efforts from the very start of the season. Then, almost overnight, the weather turned from cold and wet to hot and dry, which made the weeds grow, flower, and set seed at an accelerated rate, leaving a much shorter window of time for landowners to effectively control them. Even with the many challenges that 2017's crazy weather threw at us, the Noxious Weed Office still had an excellent weed control season this year (primarily thanks to increased staffing levels during the field season).

In 2017, the Noxious Weed Assessment was increased from \$5.74 per parcel plus \$.01 per acre to \$9.74 per parcel plus \$.01 per acre. With this increased funding in the Noxious Weed Office's budget, we were able to hire two part time field inspectors and one part time field assistant. The additional field staff greatly improved our efficiency in inspecting for noxious weeds throughout the county, and improved the speed to which we were able to respond to landowner noxious weed concerns. The increase in our budget also provided enough extra funds for our office to purchase an ATV and equipment trailer, which has greatly increased our ability to access remote and difficult to access areas throughout the county. The ATV will also be used to expand our noxious weed inspection efforts on public lands throughout the County, which we have not had staff or equipment to access for the past several years.

Thanks to increased staffing levels this year, we were also able to greatly expand on our aquatic noxious weed control efforts throughout the county. This year we were able to treat a total of 8 lakes for aquatic noxious weeds (3 more than were treated in 2016). These aquatic treatments have served to improve water quality, improve habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms, restore native aquatic vegetation, and improve safety for everyone recreating on the lakes that were treated.

This year, we were able to again work with the Okanogan Conservation District (with some legislative funding) to provide follow up noxious weed control assistance to landowners who were impacted by the 2014 and 2015 wildfires, which devastated so much of Okanogan County. While we were not able to provide weed control assistance to everyone who was impacted, we were able to focus on treating properties that had sites with mandatory control noxious weed species.

### **Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board**

149 3rd N. Rm. 102

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**Noxious Weed Office Staff:** Thanks to increased staffing levels in 2017, the Noxious Weed Office was able to inspect many areas of the county where we just haven't had time to get to for the past several seasons. We were also able to address landowner noxious weed concerns in a much more efficient manner, and able to follow up in problem areas where there were issues with noxious weeds not being controlled.

**Anna Lyon** (Manager) continued to oversee the aquatic program, which expanded in 2017 (thanks to additional field staff covering inspections for mandatory control noxious weed species). This year, the aquatics program was able to provide follow up treatments to all of the lakes that were treated in 2016 and provide initial treatments to three more previously untreated lakes. Anna also provided oversight to the various grants that we received for control efforts. And, Anna was able to fulfill her obligations to the multiple state boards that she sits on, serving as the president of the Washington State Weed Association, the president of the Washington State Coordinators' Association and serving on the board of the Washington Invasive Species Council.

**Larry Hudson** (Assistant Manager) was once again able to focus his efforts on controlling our Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) and Class A noxious weeds, which are priority species. He actively controlled several small or remote sites with chemical provided by the Noxious Weed Office and provided support to commercial applicators for the larger sites. Thanks to increased seasonal staff, Larry was also able to survey several new areas of the county, leading to the discovery and treatment of several new noxious weed infestations.

**Janet Nelson** (Field Supervisor) kept busy working on follow up treatments within the Carlton Complex Wildfire area. And, with funding from the Colville Range Department and Bureau of Indian Affairs, Janet oversaw noxious weed survey and control efforts on the Colville Reservation in 2017. This funding was used to control Scotch Thistle and other EDRR species, such as Yellow Starthistle and Rush Skeletonweed, and to provide post wildfire noxious weed control on the Colville Reservation.

**Joan Mason** (Field Inspector) concentrated her efforts on inspecting for Scotch Thistle in the Omak/Okanogan area of the county, as well as Puncturevine within public right of ways and parking areas. She also assisted with Washington Wilderness Hay and Mulch inspections in the Omak/Okanogan area, and provided noxious weed education to middle school students at several school camps. And, Joan provided education to landowners and business owners on the importance of controlling Puncturevine in public access areas, leading to control efforts.

**Mike Slattery** (Seasonal Field Inspector) primarily focused on inspecting for Scotch Thistle and other priority noxious weed species in the Omak/Okanogan area of the county, but also lent a hand in inspecting for Musk Thistle and Hoary Alyssum later in the season. Mike also did a lot of paperwork in the office, helping to reduce the backlog that has built up over the past several years due to lack of staff.

**Ryan Balkcom** (Seasonal Field Inspector) served as the rotating inspector filling in wherever he was needed the most. Ryan covered inspections for Hawkweed and Rush Skeletonweed, and assisted with inspections for several other priority noxious weed species.

**Erin Quinlan** (Seasonal Field Assistant) assisted with inspections for Musk Thistle and Hoary Alyssum in the northeast end of the county, leading to more landowners getting their properties taken care of in an efficient manner.

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**2017 Class A & B Designate Noxious Weed Control:** In 2017, Okanogan County had a total of 170,471 acres of privately owned lands that were known to be infested with Class A or B Designate noxious weed species. From those infested acres, there were 2,047 landowners who were impacted by these mandatory control noxious weeds on their property. This year, contracts were again sent out to those impacted landowners, giving them the opportunity to be set up with a commercial applicator in advance. Under the Class A Contracts: OCNWCB paid the first \$100 toward the cost of treatment plus one half of all costs over \$100 (we had 48 landowners return their Class A Contracts in 2017), while under the Class B Designate Contracts: landowners were responsible for paying all costs associated with treatment (132 landowners returned their Class B Designate Contracts in 2017).



**Aquatic Noxious Weeds:** In 2017, OCNWCB continued to expand on our aquatic noxious weed education and control programs. This year, we attended 26 meetings (or telephone conferences) with homeowner associations along 8 different Okanogan County lakes. These landowner education efforts led to 8 different lakes being treated for various aquatic noxious weeds, with a combined total of 188.2 acres of aquatic weeds being treated within those 8 lakes (27.5 acres on Alta Lake, 11 acres on Conconully Reservoir, 15 acres on Salmon Lake, 43 acres on Palmer Lake, 8 acres on Leader Lake, 28.7 acres on Patterson Lake, 17.5 acres on Osoyoos Lake, and 109 acres on Spectacle Lake).



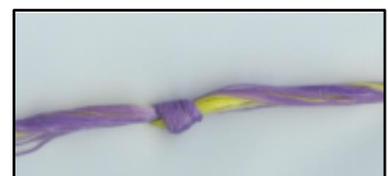
**2017 Wildfire Recovery Efforts:** In 2017, OCNWCB offered follow-up noxious weed control assistance contracts to landowners (with mandatory control noxious weed species) who were impacted by the 2014 and 2015 wildfires. These contracts provided for herbicide treatment of mandatory control noxious weed species at no charge to the landowner. In total, OCNWCB provided follow-up noxious weed control assistance to 315 different landowners who were impacted by the 2014 and 2015 wildfires.



**Grants and Other Outside Funding Sources:** In 2017, OCNWCB was able to facilitate work on 6 different grants or other outside sources of funding, which enabled us to spend \$280,000 on a variety of different noxious weed control projects. These outside sources of revenue were used to pay for several different noxious weed control projects, including: follow up noxious weed control in areas affected by wildfires, noxious weed control assistance to landowners with high-priority noxious weed species, aquatic noxious weed control projects, as well as educational projects that took place throughout Okanogan County in 2017.



**Washington Wilderness Hay and Mulch (WWHAM) Inspections:** In 2017, OCNWCB was once again able to provide WWHAM crop inspection and certification services to local hay producers who wished to sell WWHAM certified products (these products meet US Forest Service requirements for certified weed free hay and mulch). In 2017, OCNWCB staff inspected 4 fields for local growers.



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**Coordinated Weed Management Areas (CWMA's):** In 2017, OCNWCB was once again able to maintain its obligations and commitments to the Okanogan County, Weeds Cross Borders, and the International Control of Invasive Aquatic Vegetation for the Upper Columbia River System CWMA's. These CWMA's allow multiple agencies across many jurisdictions to collaborate & coordinate weed control efforts.



**Biological Control Releases:** 2017 was another great year for getting biological control agents out to landowners in Okanogan County, with a total of 115 acres being treated through the Regional Integrated Weed Control Project.



**Radio Reports:** In 2017, the Noxious Weed Office prepared 51 radio reports, which were broadcast on the KOMW and KNCW radio stations. These radio reports covered a variety of noxious weed related subjects (each week, the most current report is made available on our website under the "Latest News" tab).

### Latest News

[Latest Weekly Radio Weed Report](#)

**Okanogan County Fair:** OCNWCB staff once again helped man a booth at the 2017 Okanogan County Fair. In total, 275 people stopped by the booth to pick up informational brochures or to have their weed related questions answered.



**Thank You "Mid-Valley Rangers" 4 H Group:** We are so fortunate and grateful for all the help we got from the Mid Valley Rangers 4-H Club at the Fairgrounds this year. Altogether they pulled 75 bags of weeds just in time for the beginning of the Okanogan County Fair, and all of their hard work was voluntary.



**School Camps & Other Youth Events:** In 2017, Noxious Weed Office staff again presented noxious weed classes for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders at Camp Progress, Camp Disautel, and Camp Tokawanee, as well as, at Earth Day events, helping to educate our local youth about identification of noxious weeds and the damaging effects that they can have.



**Pesticide License Recertification Opportunities:** Recertification credits were again made available for those who attended our monthly Noxious Weed Board meetings, or our Spring and Fall Recertification Classes (a combined 205 people were in attendance at both classes).



**Other Communication Efforts** (these are approx. numbers): Emails sent/received, 20,148; phone calls in/out, 7,380; website visits, 3,560; outgoing mail, 22,690; office visits, 2,020; events and meetings attended, 97; and landowner onsite consultations provided, 67.



# 2017 Another Great Year For Weed Control

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