

2019 Annual Report

Jason Evanko, black henbane mechanical removal near Almont.

Our First Priority

In Gunnison County, noxious weed management is imperative to protecting the health of the lands that citizens and visitors value for their ecological importance and the recreational and economic opportunities they support. While the Weed Management Program generally receives widespread community support for our efforts, valid concerns do occasionally arise regarding *how* noxious weeds are managed. Some may wonder if methods used for controlling weeds are safe for the environment and its inhabitants. What about the safety of people, livestock, pets and ecosystems?

The Gunnison County Weed Management Program is balancing concern for ecological health and the well-being of our all of County's inhabitants with an effective Basin-wide weed management program. Using an integrated weed management approach that includes not only chemical control methods, but also mechanical and cultural approaches whenever possible and practical, allows us to choose the safest and most ecologically appropriate methods for each situation and setting. When herbicides are used, we always strive to choose selective products with low toxicity to non-target organisms, low potential for groundwater contamination, low use rates and low pest resistance potential. We make chemical applications at lowest effective use rates, precisely "spot treat" weed infestations and thoughtfully time applications with plant and pollinator life cycles to maximize effectiveness and minimize impacts in the ecosystem. We offer consultations to landowners who want advice on making the most effective and safest weed management decisions for their properties. We pay careful attention to personnel and operational safety in all aspects of our work in order to protect ourselves, the citizens we serve and the habitats in which we work. In short, the Weed Management Program's fundamental objective is to continue to reduce noxious weed problems throughout the Gunnison Basin while *a/ways* making the health, well-being and safety of people, animals and ecosystems our first priority.

As the 2019 Highlights (see column to right) show, we have enjoyed a busy and productive year. Please consider this Annual Report not only an opportunity to review what the Gunnison County Weed Management Program accomplished in 2019, but also an invitation to share your thoughts about our work. We value the opportunity to serve all of our Program's federal, state, county and municipal partners, the citizens of Gunnison County and the ecosystems of the Gunnison Basin. Please let us know how we can better serve you.

Jon Mugglestone & Bradley Wigginton
Weed Management Program Co-Coordinators



2019 Highlights

The Gunnison County Weed Management Program coordinates integrated noxious weed management in the Gunnison Basin, provides education and consultation on plant ecology, certifies weed free hay and implements and inspects reclamation projects. Below, please find some of the accomplishments we were most proud of in 2019:

- 1561 acres of public lands and rights of way were monitored for noxious weeds, and 102 infested acres treated.
- \$8000 in CO Dept. of Ag grant funding was used to leverage \$18764 worth of contracted weed treatments on 996 acres on private lands.
- Hydroseeding of 3 acres in critical big game and Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat was completed on Sapinero Mesa, funded by Habitat Partnership grant.
- Consultations and on-site visits were carried out with over 150 private landowners, agency representatives and businesses.
- Four Certified Weed Free Hay inspections were completed for local hay producers and the CO Dept. of Ag, for a total of 410 acres certified.

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Community Engagement

Providing education, outreach and assistance are critical aspects of the Weed Management Program's efforts to engage citizens in managing for healthy landscapes. In 2019, Weed Management Program staff worked with numerous partners to develop and lead several initiatives and events aimed at motivating citizens to manage noxious weeds, implement successful revegetation projects and increase the productivity and health of lands they own and manage.

Through engaging citizens at community noxious weed pull days, teaching classes to undergraduate and graduate students, leading hands-on workshops for citizens, certifying weed-free hay and providing consultations to private landowners, the Weed Management Program strives to provide Gunnison Basin residents with information and resources intended to help them meet their sustainable land management goals.

The Private Lands and Assistance Cost Share Program continues to establish strong relationships with private landowners who are addressing noxious weed problems on their lands. This initiative has resulted in 2565 acres surveyed and treated for noxious weeds since 2017. In 2019, the Weed Management program leveraged an \$8000 grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture to fund \$18764 worth of contracted noxious weed treatments on 996 acres of private lands.



Tracking Progress Over Time

Meeting noxious weed management goals usually requires persistence, patience and a long-term outlook. The tenacious nature of the challenges the Weed Management Program strives to manage require that we track ongoing progress toward meeting long-term goals in order to gauge the efficacy of our work and the methods with which we approach it. When large-scale noxious weed populations remain resolute in their will to persist, how do we know we are making progress over time and having the positive results "on the ground" that we intend?

Monitoring the effectiveness of our work, and adjusting practices based on information collected, is a critical component of the Weed Management Program's efforts. We employ a number of different monitoring methods that inform planning and implementation of weed management efforts. Annual inspection of photo points at established monitoring plots provides visual verification that changes in the plant community at that location are progressing in the desired direction. Comparison of annual herbicide application records over time can help us to determine trends in severity of infestations at specific sites and indicate the effectiveness of treatment methods employed. Mapping data collected annually for the Colorado Department of



Agriculture illuminates "big picture" trends in noxious weed species prevalence Basin-wide. Relying on these monitoring methods allows the Weed Management Program to continue to proceed confidently with our work in the short term, even when we know that meeting land management goals can sometimes be an ongoing and long-term endeavor.

2019 Highlights

Continued from front page

- Presented to 30+ citizens, students and professional land managers at the Gunnison Conservation District's Cheatgrass Workshop in September
- Organized and led 2 community noxious weed pull events in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, attended by 20+ citizens
- Presented to 20 members of the Gunnison Rotary Club on noxious weed management
- Hosted an educational booth and led educational activities for 300+ people at the Gunnison River Festival
- Continued expanding integrated weed management efforts by re-seeding a 1/4 acre site in Mt. Crested Butte
- Participated in "Cheatgrass Strikeforce Day", a collaborative interagency effort to address large-scale, cross-jurisdictional cheatgrass infestations
- Assisted with WCU Masters in Environmental Management students in creating a student/agency partnership focused on raising community awareness about cheatgrass
- Led 50+ WCU undergraduate and graduate students in discussions on land management and cheatgrass control
- Assisted Colorado State University range management class in creating an ecosystem management plan for a new CSU facility in Gunnison

State-Listed Noxious Weed Control

Of 1561.5 acres monitored for state-listed noxious weeds during the 2019 field season (May 6-October 23), 102.63 infested acres were identified and treated using chemical, mechanical and cultural control methods. Treatment locations, herbicide acreages, hours worked and cooperators' annual monetary contributions were as follows. Weed Management Program staff are licensed by the CO Dept. of Ag. For additional details about any of these treatments please contact the Weed Management Program.

<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Treatment Site</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Treatment Site</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Treatment Site</u>	<u>Acre</u>	
NPS (\$5,900)	NPS Hwy. Pulloffs	0.13	Town of Pitkin (\$300)	Streets/Alleys	0.13	Gunnison Cty. (continued)	CR 10/North Valley	0.86	
	Elk Creek	1.96		Total Acres	0.13		CR 11	0.70	
	North Willow	0.37		Hours Worked	3.0		CR 12/ Gravel Pits	3.32	
	Dillon Pinnacles	0.10	City of Gunnison (\$1,410)	ROW's, Trails, Water			CR 16 & 19	0.07	
	Dry Gulch	0.25		Treatment Plant, Rec.			CR 17 & Waterline	1.36	
	Red Creek	0.27		Center	2.62		CR 18	0.16	
	Bay of Chickens	0.25		Total Acres	2.62		CR 21	0.35	
	Cooper West	0.10		Hours Worked	19.5		CR 24	0.24	
	East Elk Creek	0.51		Town of CB (\$12,913)	Streets & Alleys, Big Mine			CR 25	1.69
	Old Stevens	0.11			Park, Trails & Open			CR 26	2.27
	Stevens Creek	0.13	Spaces, Gravel Pit		6.82		CR 27	0.43	
	Pine Creek	0.42	Total Acres		6.82		CR 32/Wetlands	0.26	
	CONE Island	1.13	Hours Worked		107.0		CR 38/Subdivisions	1.90	
	Lake Fork	0.16	Town of Mt. CB (\$14,707)		Rec. Path, Street ROW's,			CR 42/Landfill	0.36
	Soap Creek	0.18			Town Hall, Pavillion, Park,			CR 43	0.08
	Cooper Ranch	0.10		Tent Pads	5.06		CR 44	0.11	
	Total Acres	6.17		Total Acres	5.06		CR 46	0.20	
Hours Worked	57.0	Hours Worked		130.5	CR 48/ Castle Mtn.	0.67			
USFS (\$6,000)	Marshall Pass	0.10		Saguache Cty. (\$3,055)	CR 14PP & NN14	0.63	CR 49	0.13	
	Needle Creek	0.10			Dome Lakes Rds.	0.27	CR 51	0.01	
	Slate/ Wash. Gulch	0.11	CR 23YY		0.05	CR 62	0.08		
	Alpine Plateau	0.41	CR 25TT		0.05	CR 75	0.19		
	Kebler Pass	0.26	CR 8EE		0.10	CR 76	2.49		
	Taylor & Spring Ck.	0.46	Gold Basin Rds.		0.64	CR 720	0.10		
	Los Pinos	0.15	Total Acres		1.74	CR 721	1.47		
	Brush Creek	0.18	Hours Worked	31.5	CR 727	0.29			
	Lost Canyon	0.33	BLM (\$13,395)	Alpine Loop	0.39	CR 730	2.06		
	Cement Creek	0.17		BLM 3010	0.05	CR 734	1.48		
	Red Creek	0.16		BLM 3090	0.29	CR 737	0.61		
	Total Acres	2.43		BLM 3072/3073	0.16	CR 738	0.95		
	Hours Worked	61.5		BLM 3063/65/74	1.42	CR 740/Allen HS	0.52		
CPW (\$1,500)	Gunnison SWA	0.65		BLM 3076/3080	0.20	CR 742 & 744	1.08		
	Sapinero SWA	0.82	BLM 3103	0.11	CR 749	0.05			
	Centennial SWA	0.19	BLM 3037	0.76	CR 752	0.05			
	Van Tuyl SWA	0.09	BLM 3012	0.19	CR 763	0.33			
	Dome Lakes SWA	0.03	BLM 3017	1.28	CR 811/Meridian Lake	1.14			
	Total Acres	1.78	BLM 3093/3094	3.00	CR 813	0.12			
	Hours Worked	15.0	BLM 3042/43/54	3.01	CR 818	0.08			
	CDOT (\$27,000)	SH 114	3.82	BLM 3115	0.37	CR 858	0.17		
		SH 133	1.63	BLM 3009	1.43	CR 864	1.43		
		SH 135	5.74	Total Acres	12.66	CR 887	1.03		
SH 92		4.53	Hours Worked	114	CR 888	0.19			
US 50		10.37	Gunnison Cty. (\$131,786)	CR 2 & 77	0.15	Basin Industrial Park	0.36		
SH 149		1.70		Marble Area Roads	0.50	Dos Rios Subdivision	0.20		
Total Acres		27.79		CR 4	0.13	Fairgrounds/Airport/Pub. Safety	0.10		
Hours Worked		232.5		CR 6	0.70	Hartman Rocks Front Side	0.50		
Hinsdale Cty. (\$1,880)	CR 30, 33, 20,50, 35	0.92		CR 7	0.08	Riverbend Subdivision	0.03		
	Total Acres	0.92		CR 8	0.08	Thornton Meadows Subdivision	0.05		
	Hours Worked	22.0				GC Shop Crested Butte	0.03		
						Cemetery	0.10		
					CSFS Sewer Easement/Private	0.32			
				Whitewater Park	0.08				
				Somerset/GC Shop	0.54				
				Alpine Meadows Subdivision	0.08				
				Total Acres	35.11				
				Hours Worked	766.5				

Looking Ahead to 2020: Your Input is Valued!

The Gunnison County Weed Management Program welcomes feedback from all Gunnison Basin residents. As planning for the 2020 field season begins, we would greatly value your input. Please take a few minutes to consider any or all of the following questions and send your replies to the Weed Management Program at: jmugglestone@gunnisoncounty.org or bwiggington@gunnisoncounty.org

1. During the 2019 field season, did the efforts of the Gunnison County Weed Management Program meet your needs and/or expectations? How can we better serve you during the 2020 field season?
2. Are there specific areas in the Gunnison Basin that you think require additional attention as weed control efforts are carried out in 2020?
3. How can the Weed Management Program most effectively reach out to citizens of the Gunnison Basin to raise awareness about noxious weeds and their control?
4. Do you have any suggestions for improving Gunnison County's Reclamation Permit application and/or inspection processes?
5. Other than the goals for 2020 listed in the column to the right, are there any other priorities that you would suggest the Weed Management Program consider?
6. Please share any other thoughts, suggestions or ideas you think the Weed Management Program should consider.

Thank-you very much for your time and for sharing your thoughts. Your ideas and suggestions are valued and will be carefully considered. We look forward to serving you in 2020!



2020 Goals

- Work with partners to set goals, find funding and implement a large-scale cheatgrass management project that further expands the Weed Management Program's reach on cheatgrass management to public lands beyond roadsides and rights of way.
- Secure grant funding that will support continued financial assistance and educational outreach to private landowners.
- Seek funding to continue the integration of re-vegetation into weed management projects, with priority focus on GuSg habitats.
- Continue to seek funding that will more closely balance the Weed Management Program's staffing capacity with the scale of Basin-wide noxious weed challenges
- Identify opportunities to increase "front-end" assistance to Gunnison County Reclamation Permit applicants in order to ensure successful re-vegetation and noxious weed control prior to post-construction reclamation inspections
- Continue ongoing and long-term Basin-wide weed inventory using EDDMaps West in order to contribute data to CO Dept. of Agriculture's state-wide data collection goals
- Expand post-treatment monitoring of weed management and re-vegetation activities to better inform management approaches.
- Assist Western Colorado University Masters in Environmental Management students' efforts to establish an awareness campaign focused on cheatgrass management in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem
- Continue to assist hay producers with certification of weed-free forage in partnership with CO Dept. of Agriculture
- Stay accident-free and safety-focused, as we did in 2019.

**Contact Us: Gunnison County Weed Management Program, 725 South 10th St., Unit B, Gunnison, CO 81230
Phone: (970) 641-4393 , On the web at: http://www.gunnisoncounty.org/public_works_weed_district.html**