

Section II

Purpose and Organization of Weed Management Areas (WMA)

PART ONE Purpose of Weed Management Area

Weed Management Areas (WMA) are distinguishable zones based on similar geography, weed problems, climate, or human-use patterns.



The purpose of creating a WMA is to facilitate cooperation among all land managers and owners to manage a common weed problem in a common area.

The goal of a WMA is to prevent the reproduction and spread of weeds into and within the WMA. The formation of a WMA replaces jurisdictional boundaries that are barriers to weed management programs in favor of natural or more logical boundaries that facilitate weed management and control. A WMA is an area in which one agency/landowner's weed control success will be largely determined by the cooperative efforts of other agencies or landowners in the area. WMA's have similar characteristics such as geography, weed problems, climate, common interest, or funding support. Boundaries may be a watershed or other geographic feature and eliminate jurisdictional barriers.

How the WMA Concept Works

The WMA enhances and unites individual ownerships or jurisdictions that form the land unit for mapping, planning, monitoring, and conducting weed programs. Cooperators in a WMA jointly prioritize weed management efforts based on species or geographical area. Cooperators then work together to manage the weeds within the WMA.

It is possible that most or all of the control effort within the WMA will take place on land managed by one agency/landowner. Based on the species or geographic priority, it may be several years into the plan before control actions take place on some jurisdictions.

As an example: If one county has a rapidly expanding leafy spurge infestation which threatens a neighboring county, whose only weed problem is common mullein in an abandoned gravel pit, it may be beneficial to both counties to pool their resources to control the spurge before going after the mullein. If individual landowners desire to continue to do their own control work, a joint planning, analysis, and monitoring program would still be efficient; and individuals might alter their priorities to coordinate the control of an infestation that spans a common boundary.

A WMA may be weed-free and organized to quarantine an area from importation of weeds. The landowners may agree not to allow the

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use of forage from outside areas. They may agree to require that any construction, utility, and logging equipment coming into the area be weed-free.

Always include county weed boards in the WMA even if only federal land is involved. The WMA does not supplant the county weed board, but ensures that cooperation extends across county, state, and federal boundaries.

Advantages of cooperating in a Weed Management Area include:

1. It encourages cooperators to plan through the problem to its successful resolution.
2. The plan results in the greatest good for the entire WMA in the long run. **Planning establishes priorities.**
3. Cooperators can locally prioritize and give emphasis to species that are a particular threat within individual WMAs.
4. The designation of a WMA by diverse individuals and agencies focuses attention and provides a united effort to state and federal legislators. It also communicates to the general public the seriousness of weeds by increasing their awareness of the weeds and the need to contain or prevent infestations.
5. A WMA pools talents and resources. For instance, WMAs enable one agency to contract with another for weed control.
6. Under the WMA plan, a landowner or land manager can address the problem of weeds spreading from neighboring land before the damage occurs.
7. A WMA provides a channel for communication within the WMA.
8. It reduces the risk of damage by control actions to water, crops, threatened & endangered (T&E) species, etc.
9. The formation of a WMA increases the effectiveness of weed management by basing control efforts on biological and geographical factors rather than legal divisions.
10. Designation of a WMA helps secure funding or identifies a method for funding.
11. The creation of different management zones within the WMA fits the most effective and environmentally sound weed management and control practices to each zone.
12. A well-written and implemented plan within the framework of a WMA addresses the following potential concerns:

The WMA plan results in the most effective weed control for the entire WMA over time. Planning establishes priorities.

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- a. A private landowner or agency may relinquish some individual autonomy. Everyone gains efficiency and increases their ultimate success by participating in a WMA.
- b. Individual or agency priorities may differ from the WMA's priorities. Individual priorities are usually best served and success is greatest when managed within the context of the entire WMA's priorities.
- c. The weed prioritization and planning process created by a WMA ensures that one jurisdiction or agency cannot dominate.
- d. By involving representatives from all diverse interests within a WMA, residents of one jurisdiction — a county, for example, — better understand why their weed treatment crews spend time working in a different county or on other agency land.

PART TWO **How to Organize a Weed Management Area (WMA)**

I. Initiate Organization

- A. Any agency, weed district, or individual may take the lead towards initiating a WMA.
- B. Consult with weed management specialists for ideas.
- C. Initiate a planning (or inter-agency) organizational meeting.
 1. Invite representatives from all management agencies within the perspective WMA.
 2. Invite principal landowners or representatives from key landowner groups (sports clubs, wildlife organizations, stockgrowers, conservation district, etc.).
 3. Keep the number of representatives from each agency or local interest to a minimum.
 4. To assure good attendance by the agencies and individuals involved, set the time and place of meeting to compensate for seasonal work schedules, community-school events, and holidays.
- D. Select a steering committee to initiate the next stages of organization.

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Objectives of Initial WMA Organizational Meeting(s)

The following objectives can also serve as part of the agenda for your organizational and public meetings.

- A. Establish clearly-defined boundaries coordinated with other WMAs.
 1. Boundaries of a WMA may be created according to: watersheds, topography, weed species, land usage, and/or rights-of-way.
 2. Identify preliminary special management zones within the WMA such as:
 - a. Aquatic areas.
 - b. Threatened & endangered species habitat or species of special concern.
 - c. Recreational/special use areas.
 - d. Transportation corridors — rights-of-way may need to be excluded from the WMA or treated as a separate WMA.
 3. Size of WMAs may be determined by land area or by the number of cooperators. Both should be workable for the organizers and cooperators.
 - a. A larger land area may be identified when a few cooperators have large acreages.
 - b. Smaller land areas may be identified as WMAs if there are many cooperators with smaller acreages.
- B. Select a leader/chairperson.
 1. Select the leader based on the abilities, interest, and qualifications, not on agency bias.
 2. Allow the chairperson access to office facilities and personnel to ensure completion of communications and reports.
- C. Review funding and available resources.
 1. Discuss available funding and establish accounting guidelines.
 2. Determine manpower and time capabilities of individuals and agencies available within the WMA.
 3. Develop a plan to obtain additional funding if necessary.
- D. Obtain appropriate state weed laws and agency weed regulations and polices. (*See Appendix 2 & 3.*)
- E. Set date, time, and place for public meeting to allow input from all individuals within the WMA.
- F. Set target dates for completion of different steps of the planning process.

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II. Initial Assessment by WMA Steering Committee

- A. At this stage, accurately evaluate the level of noxious weed awareness, the existence or status of noxious weed mapping and inventory, and prevention and control programs in the weed management area.
- B. A second meeting of the steering committee may be required. This step in the process is critical to determine what is known and what information is missing.
- C. Important reasons for the initial assessment at this stage include:
 1. This assessment helps predict the expected level of involvement of the residents, landowners, and other agency personnel in weed management planning and action process.
 2. The results of this assessment can determine initial weed management **objectives**. For instance, rather than treat weeds first, it may be most effective to establish awareness and prevention programs first.
 3. The assessment can provide answers to questions that may arise at the first public meeting. Your credibility and the potential value of an established WMA increase when you can correctly and concisely answer such questions as:
 - Why is weed management important?
 - How do weeds impact recreation, wildlife, fish, forestry, etc.?
 - Do we have a weed problem and what does it cost us?
 - Can we keep weeds out or prevent their spreading in the WMA?
 - What weed species predominate in the WMA?
 - Where do weed infestations exist in the WMA?
 - If there currently a weed control program established?
 - Is there a weed prevention program in place?
 4. Once you know the level of awareness in the WMA, the public meeting guidelines discussed in Appendix 5 can be utilized to collect additional needed information.

III. Details of A Public Meeting

- A. Use all forms of publicity to inform everyone who might be affected by or interested in the WMA.
- B. Use a model for conducting a public meeting. (*See Appendix 5.*)
- C. Ask the attendees to complete a WMA Questionnaire. (*See Appendix 6.*)

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- D. Review the designated area coordinated weed management concept with the participants.
- E. Explain the planning process, mapping, WMA concept, and other information in the planning meeting.
 - 1. Be willing to modify initial objectives based on input from the public meeting.
 - 2. Because of various barriers, the proposed boundaries of the WMA may need to be changed.
- F. Identify weed problems.
 - 1. Consider whether weed problems are a localized concern or a threat to the entire WMA.
 - 2. Accurately identify the weeds of concern.
 - 3. Provide a large scale map of WMA and use it to record infestations.
- G. Clearly state that integrated weed management practices are required in the WMA. (*See Section VI.*)
- H. Record all ideas for future consideration.
- I. Make adjustments in the membership of the planning/working committee.
- J. Obtain mailing addresses and mail results of WMA Questionnaire and Management Plan to attendees.

IV. Writing a WMA Plan, including development of a long-term Management Plan and Annual Operating Plan. (*See Section IX.*)

- A. The planning/organization committee drafts the WMA Management Plan after the public meeting.
- B. Review the draft with all interested individuals before finalizing the Management Plan and development of the action plan.
- C. Allow for changes or modifications in the Management Plan as conditions change. (*See Section IX.*)