

## **Chapter 11. Weed Management Areas**

*Adapted from BLM Guidelines for Coordinated Management of Noxious Weeds*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most effective ways to manage weeds on a large portion of land is to form a Weed Management Area (WMA). WMAs are coalitions of neighboring landowners who pledge to pool their resources in the recognition that “weeds know no boundaries” and that “two (or five or ten . . . heads are better than one.” WMAs have been successful throughout the West in controlling or even eradicating weed infestations that cross boundary lines and/or require expensive or intensive treatment. Weed Management Areas are also great vehicles for involving the community in a project that requires diligence and cooperation. Press releases, flyers, banners, and fundraisers can all help to increase the WMA's profile and let the community know what is being done to halt the spread of invasive plants. The following information is adapted from the BLM's Guidelines for Coordinated Management of Noxious Weeds.

### **PURPOSE OF WEED MANAGEMENT AREA**

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, and thereby 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. WMAs 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.

### **Advantages of Cooperating in a Weed Management Area**

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:
  - A private landowner or agency may relinquish some individual autonomy. Everyone gains efficiency and increases their ultimate success by participating in a WMA.
  - 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.
  - The weed prioritization and planning process created by a WMA ensures that one jurisdiction or agency cannot dominate.
  - 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.

## **HOW TO ORGANIZE A WEED MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA)**

### **Initiate Organization**

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

## Objectives of Initial Meeting

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

1. Establish clearly-defined boundaries coordinated with other WMAs.
  - Boundaries of a WMA may be created according to: watersheds, topography, weed species, land usage, and/or rights-of-way.
  - Identify preliminary special management zones within the WMA such as aquatic areas, threatened & endangered species habitat or species of special concern, recreational/special use areas, transportation corridors — rights-of-way may need to be excluded from the WMA or treated as a separate WMA.
  - 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 larger land area may be identified when a few cooperators have large acreages. Smaller land areas may be identified as WMAs if there are many cooperators with smaller acreages.
2. Select a leader/chairperson, according to his/her abilities, interest, and qualifications, not on agency bias. Allow the chairperson access to office facilities and personnel to ensure completion of communications and reports.
3. Review funding and available resources.
  - Discuss available funding and establish accounting guidelines.
  - Determine manpower and time capabilities of individuals and agencies available within the WMA.
  - Develop a plan to obtain additional funding if necessary.
4. Obtain appropriate state weed laws and agency weed regulations and polices.
5. Set date, time, and place for public meeting to allow input from all individuals within the WMA.
6. Set target dates for completion of different steps of the planning process.

## Initial Assessment by WMA Steering Committee

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. Important reasons for the initial assessment at this stage include:
  - This assessment helps predict the expected level of involvement of the residents, landowners, and other agency personnel in weed management planning and action process.
  - 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.
  - 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?

### **Details of A Public Meeting**

1. Use all forms of publicity to inform everyone who might be affected by or interested in the WMA.
2. Use a model for conducting a public meeting.
3. Ask the attendees to complete a WMA Questionnaire.
4. Review the designated area coordinated weed management concept with the participants.
5. Explain the planning process, mapping, WMA concept, and other information in the planning meeting.
  - Be willing to modify initial objectives based on input from the public meeting.
  - Because of various barriers, the proposed boundaries of the WMA may need to be changed.
6. Identify weed problems. Consider whether weed problems are a localized concern or a threat to the entire WMA.
  - Accurately identify the weeds of concern.
  - Provide a large scale map of WMA and use it to record infestations.
7. Clearly state that integrated weed management practices are required in the WMA.
8. Record all ideas for future consideration.

9. Make adjustments in the membership of the planning/working committee.
10. Obtain mailing addresses and mail results of WMA Questionnaire and Management Plan to attendees.

### **WRITING A WMA MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN**

The Management Plan (MP) is the guiding document for each Weed Management Area. It is developed after the steps outlined above are completed. The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) addresses how the Management Plan is implemented on an annual basis. The planning/organization committee drafts the WMA Management Plan after the public meeting. The draft is reviewed with all interested individuals before the Management Plan is finalized. The Management Plan must allow for changes or modifications as conditions change.

#### **Management Plan**

1. Define/Describe the WMA Name and legal description.
  - Describe boundaries.
  - Describe land use — forest, recreation, grazing, farming, mining, etc.
  - Describe topography, major aquatic features, and other natural resources.
  - Describe wildlife and flora.
  - Describe endangered species and species of special concern.
  - Identify urban areas.
  - Identify archaeological and Native American cultural sites.
2. Define Purpose of WMA Management Plan
  - Describe long-term goals, objectives, and methods for controlling noxious weeds in this Weed Management Area.
  - Identify funding and resources for weed management.
  - Establish cooperation with residents, landowners, agencies, towns, organizations, counties, and states to effectively implement programs of prevention and control within the WMA.
  - Coordinate with other WMAs in the area.
3. Define WMA Policy
  - Commitment to cooperation.
  - Commitment to the use of Integrated Weed Management methods.

- Establish adherence to management of noxious weed in accordance with area priorities as follows: (a) Prevention of potential invaders; (b) Control of new and invading species new to a particular part of the WMA; (c) Containment and management efforts on established stands.
  - Commitment to comply with all policies for at least 5 years.
4. Define Long-Term WMA Objectives. Objectives should address the needs of the individual WMA and may not need to include all aspects of noxious weed management listed here. Also, the need for and prioritization of the following objectives will vary between WMAs. It is important to consider each of these objectives, as success is greatest when an integrated plan is developed and implemented.
- Develop and maintain a survey and mapping system.
  - Develop and maintain funding and administration.
  - Develop awareness, education, and training programs.
  - Develop prevention and early detection programs.
  - Develop long-term management objectives for weeds of concern, according to area prioritization. (Refer to 3 above.)
  - Develop and maintain monitoring and evaluation programs.
  - Develop and maintain a reporting system.
5. Identify Weeds of Concern within the WMA.
- List weed species and acres infested.
  - Describe methods of introduction.
  - Describe most likely areas of future infestations.
6. Develop an Integrated Weed Management (IWM) program for target weed species.
- Describe all appropriate control methods for each weed. Use the Site Assessment Worksheet in Appendix 10 to determine the most effective IWM program.
  - Determine who will make yearly control methods recommendations. Keep recommendations current.
  - Describe safety precautions to be implemented.
  - Include corrective measures to prevent recurrence of weed infestations.
7. Define Cooperators' Roles and Responsibilities
- List agencies and jurisdictions involved.
  - Identify signatures required.
  - Define planning timetable.
  - Define terms and time of termination if applicable.

8. Define Collection and Management of Funds
  - Identify sources of funding.
  - Establish a budget.
  - Determine fund management responsibilities
  - Determine if the WMA needs its own account.
  - Determine administrative costs.

### **Annual Operating Plan**

The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) addresses how, on an annual basis, the objectives of the over-all Management Plan are implemented. Due to manpower, funding, or other limitations, it may not be possible for the AOP to address all the objectives of the Management Plan in a given year. The Management Plan must address long term objectives and priorities. The Annual Operating Plan guides implementation of the Management Plan in yearly increments. Budgets and circumstances may change from year to year and these changes are best addressed in making new Annual Operating Plans, rather than rewriting the Management Plan annually.

An AOP may be developed for different management zones within the WMA. These zone-specific plans should be utilized only if they enhance weed management and control. For instance, a specific AOP may be necessary to manage only roadside weed problems within the WMA.

1. Review the Management Plan and long-term objectives
2. Define Roles and Responsibilities
  - List agencies and jurisdictions involved.
  - Obtain signatures required.
  - Develop planning timetable.
  - Define terms and time of termination, if applicable.
3. Define Agreements and Compliance.
  - Voluntary agreements: compliance of all land managers within their agency guidelines.
  - Written agreements in special management areas requiring intensive management may be needed.
  - Written agreements with landowners for control of noxious weeds along roadways may be implemented.
  - Procedure for non-compliance must be followed where applicable.
  - Cooperative agreements. Include state agencies, municipalities, federal agencies, railroads, power company, others. Should include listed noxious weed species.

- Revegetative standards and guidelines: written plan specifying methods for accomplishing revegetation, timing, methods.
  - Cost-share programs: WMA steering committee should set standards for cost-share. Cost-share programs within the WMA may differ within special management areas.
4. Define Annual Funding and Resource Availability.
- Identify sources and amount of funding.
  - Identify sources and amount of other resources:
    - Equipment availability
    - Staff availability.
    - Cooperative mapping projects.
    - Storage availability.
    - Administration.
5. Define Specific Actions to Meet AOP Objectives
- Implement and maintain a mapping program:
    - Define areas for survey and mapping.
    - Determine who will be responsible.
    - Determine manpower and funding required.
  - Implement prevention and early detection programs:
    - Define specific activities.
    - Determine who will be responsible.
    - Determine manpower and funding required.
  - Implement awareness, education, and training programs:
    - Define specific activities.
    - Determine who will be responsible.
    - Determine manpower and funding required.
  - Implement the IWM system for the weeds of concern.
    - Determine short-term IWM objectives and methods for each target weed.
    - Determine who will implement treatment program.
    - Determine manpower and funding required for control.
    - Implement and maintain monitoring and evaluation for all targeted weeds and according to Management Plan priorities and objectives.
  - Develop and maintain a reporting system for all proposed actions according to Management Plan priorities and objectives.

## WMA RESOURCES

### [Center for Invasive Plant Management WMA Grants](#)

[Guidelines for Coordinated Management of Noxious Weeds: Development of Weed Management Areas](#) – developed in 1998 by the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and state and county land managers. Includes sample contracts and agreements and information about planning, weed awareness and education, mapping, monitoring, reporting procedures, and more.

[Creating an Integrated Weed Management Plan—A Handbook for Owners and Managers of Lands with Natural Values](#). Volume IV in "Caring for the Land Series", from the Colorado Natural Areas Program of the Colorado State Parks. Includes the Weed Management Plan Outlines (88 kb PDF).

[Cooperative Weed Management Areas in the Northwest: Taking Stock and Moving Forward](#), from The Nature Conservancy (Word Document)

[California Department of Agriculture WMA Page](#) Includes Links to WMAs in each CA county, WMA events calendar, and more

[Idaho Dept. of Agriculture Cooperative Weed Management Areas](#)

[Idaho Cooperative Weed Management Area Cookbook](#)

[Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture — 2004 year-end summary of many WMAs](#) throughout the state, outlining the control of rush skeletonweed, Dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed, Scotch thistle, leafy spurge, and others.

[Guidelines for Terrestrial Noxious Weed Mapping and Inventory in Idaho](#) — Recommended by Idaho State Dept. of Agriculture, with information on starting a mapping program, defining goals, and more.