

## Harding County CWMA Final Report Mosquero, NM

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Roy Clover and Mesa Roadrunner 4-H Clubs with their "home-grown" billboards



## Background

Harding County is the least populated county in New Mexico, with just over 700 people. However, the county stretches over 2000 square miles of rangeland with agriculture (ranching) being the main economic driver. The Harding County Invasive Plant Task Force was formed in 2001 to help create awareness of invasive weeds and build a preventative attitude among the residents. Harding County does not have an invasive weed problem, yet neighboring counties to the north do have many noxious weeds. The goal of the CIPM grant was to help further the effort in keeping awareness alive in the county.

## Partners Involved

**Wyoming Weed and Pest Council**—ordered post cards from them to laminate and distribute.

**New Mexico Department of Agriculture**—worked with extension agent on hosting regional weed meeting in Harding County

**New Mexico Department of Transportation**—worked with local road crew foreman on identifying several different species of weeds that he had never seen before. Also worked with him to spray 2 patches of hoary cress and perennial pepper weed 2 years in a row along highway at no cost to cooperative weed management area

**Natural Resource Conservation Service**—collaborated with District Conservationist to judge weed posters that 4-H members submitted

**Roy Clover and Mesa Roadrunner 4-H Clubs**—worked with leaders and members to construct weed billboards for the county

**Local ranchers** volunteered their land and time to help us erect 4 billboards across the county

**New Mexico State University Weed Specialist** was presenter at regional weed meeting and helped us (extension agent and highway department) come up with a plan to spray hoary cress and pepperweed

## Accomplishments

### ***Weed Postcards/brochures***

Over 2000 weed ID postcards (400 of 5 different weeds) were ordered from the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council and an educational video for kids. The post cards were sent to a local printing company where they were laminated and bound together with o-rings to make 400 weed I.D. booklets. These booklets are waterproof and durable. They were then mailed to over 400 producers in the county along with a letter explaining the value of awareness. Producers can put these cards in their pickups, carry them horseback, or just keep them handy for identifying weeds. The five weeds were leafy spurge, hoary cress, perennial pepper weed, musk thistle, and Russian knapweed.

The educational video was shown during a 4-H meeting to get youth excited about noxious weeds.

### ***Weed Billboards***

The original thought when writing the grant was to rent or make billboards. We are very rural, with the two towns in the county representing 500 people combined. Therefore, we are at least an hour from the nearest billboard to rent. So we decided to work with the local 4-H clubs and make our own billboards. As a result, the 4-H members can learn about noxious weeds and earn money by designing, constructing, and erecting the billboards across the county.

The two clubs in the county both agreed to make two billboards each. Grant money provided the lumber and they provided their time, paint, etc.

As a result, four 4 by 8 home-grown billboards were made and put up at four different highways coming into Harding County. These billboards are the first thing folks see as they enter the county. They create an interest and awareness and the county extension office phone number is there to call. This not only created awareness in the county, but it also gave the 4-H members a chance to learn about invasive weeds.

### ***4-H Weed Poster Contest***

To create interest and awareness among our youth, we utilized grant money to have a poster contest for 4-H members. The members were given a sheet that listed noxious weeds and information about them and also went over the rules of the contests. There were two age groups, Senior (14-19) and Novice/Junior (9-13). The member had to create a poster about an invasive weed or invasive weed issue and present it to the club. We also decided to post these posters at the Harding County Fair and they were evaluated by our District Conservationist from NRCS. This contest helped kids learn about noxious weeds.

### ***Regional Noxious Weed Meeting***

In the spring of 2004, Harding County was one of 5 sites across the state that agreed to host a regional meeting concerning noxious weeds. The extension agent worked with NMDA and a weed specialist from NMSU to host the meeting. Over 35 people from the Northeast corner of New Mexico came for a presentation on hoary cress and perennial pepper weed (two area weeds of concern) and general discussion about the threat of invasive weeds. Brochures and information were handed out by NMDA and weed mounts were also available for viewing.

## Progress toward 12-Month Goals

Although some changes occurred within our anticipated 12-month goals, most of the objectives were met. Progress towards these goals included:

- Educational brochures were developed and sent out
- Regional and local meetings were conducted
- Billboards promoting awareness were constructed, a project that turned out to be better than anticipated because we were able to get the 4-H clubs involved, so we not only created awareness for the county, but also started our young people thinking about invasive weeds
- Award money was distributed as prize money in a poster contest via the 4-H clubs, instead of as bounty money
- Spot treatment of weeds was not required as Highway department sprayed all weeds along right of way of highway

## Value of Grant

I believe this grant created a considerable amount of value to our weed management area. Value should be measured in money not spent, instead of money spent. The value of this grant was creating awareness and trying to create a mindset to producers and residents that we won't have to spend a lot of money spraying and controlling weeds if we just don't let them get established in the first place. If locals can learn to recognize what is good and what is bad, and we can destroy small infestations before they get out of control, then that is value. The other value to this grant was that our young kids got a taste of what noxious weeds are, and they can build on that knowledge throughout their lifetime.