

THURSTON COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD



2008-2013 STRATEGIC PLAN

As Approved by the Thurston County
Board of Commissioners, December 17, 2007



Noxious Weed Control Agency

Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

MISSION

Protect the citizens, the natural resources, and the agricultural resources of Thurston County from the degrading impacts of invasive noxious weeds.

VISION

The Thurston County Noxious Weed Control Board (Weed Board) and Agency are innovative and responsible leaders in noxious weed control. We deliver highly effective and efficient weed control programs to Thurston County residents, inspiring and enabling them to reduce and prevent the adverse economic and health effects of noxious weeds to agriculture, recreation, animals, and people in the county.

VALUES

- Stewardship** We are responsible stewards of our county's natural and financial resources.
- Leadership** We seek out leadership opportunities in noxious weed control policy and methods.
- Partnership** We work collaboratively with each other, other governmental entities, and community stakeholders to produce solutions.
- Accountability** We honor our commitments and are accountable to the people of Thurston County.
- Diversity** We respect and value our rich diversity and recognize the common strength derived from a culture of equal access and opportunity.
- Integrity** We demonstrate and promote respect, honesty, professionalism and ethical conduct.

2008-2013 GOALS

- 1. Sustain the Weed Board and Agency's core functions and appropriate funding to deliver essential weed control services to residents.**
- 2. Reduce the presence and prevent the unchecked spread of aquatic weeds in Thurston County.**
- 3. Increase public awareness and effectiveness in controlling noxious weeds by strengthening community education activities.**
- 4. Enhance our collaborative relationships with governmental and community organizations.**

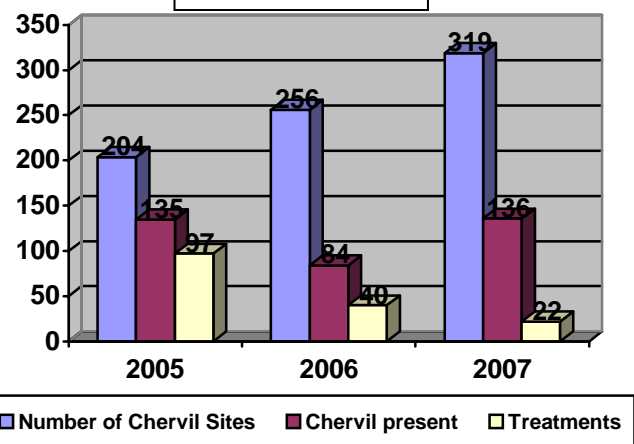
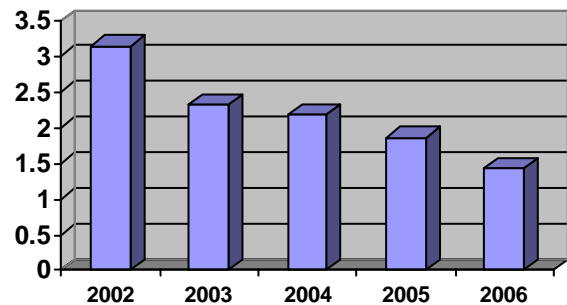
Overview

The residents of Thurston County have challenged government agencies to be effective, fair, and responsive in delivering essential services. They expect and deserve government that is a wise steward of their tax dollars and of the environment.

Noxious weeds threaten our communities and resources. These non-native invasive species threaten our crops and livestock, waterways, tidelands, parks, wildlife, property values, public health and safety, and the ecological health and diversity of our prized native ecosystems. These resources, once destroyed, may be irreplaceable.

The Weed Board and Agency have stepped up to these challenges in conducting a highly respected and successful weed control program. This Strategic Plan is intended to guide future progress in support of the residents of Thurston County. The Weed Board and Agency are building on a strong foundation to move forward:

- ✓ Establishing a comprehensive annual work-plan to guide daily operations, featuring an innovative Risk Assessment Criteria matrix for determining weed control priorities that now serves as a “best practice” model for other County Weed Boards and the State Weed Board.
- ✓ Establishing an effective ongoing program of services to Thurston County residents which includes:
 1. Extensive inventory of existing noxious weed sites (5000+)
 2. Surveillance systems to detect new sites
 3. Strong program of landowner education
- ✓ Achieving a sharp reduction in wild chervil, as measured by infestations on Thurston County rights-of-way. The Weed Agency has achieved progressively more complete site counts each year, and the number of plants on each site has been reduced 45 percent since 2005. Due in part to a recently adopted improved weed control prescription, treatments for control of wild chervil on Thurston County rights-of-way have been reduced by more than 50 percent.



- ✓ Leading a successful intergovernmental partnership to address Brazilian elodea on the Chehalis River. Possibly a discarded aquarium plant, this invasive species has rapidly formed dense mats in the river. Since 2005, more than 128,618 lbs. of Brazilian elodea have been removed from the Chehalis River:

- 2005 - 1.56 acres (44,910 lbs.) removed near River mile 66
- 2006 - 3.35 acres (65,690 lbs.) removed near River mile 60
- 2006 - 2.06 acres (10,748 lbs.) at River mile 66-67 by the Chehalis Tribe
- 2007 - 5.68 acres (84,095 lbs.) at River mile 59
- 2007 - 3.84 acres (22,674 lbs.) at River mile 67 by the Chehalis Tribe

Brazilian elodea grant cooperators include: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Washington Department of Natural Resources; Washington Department of Ecology, Chehalis Tribe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Portland State University.

Strategic Goals

Weed Board members, with the expert input of the Weed Coordinator, have identified several important trends, opportunities, and challenges. From this review the Weed Board has prioritized four strategic initiatives for 2008-2013:

1. Sustain the Weed Board and Agency's core functions and appropriate funding to deliver essential weed control services to residents.

Sharp workload increases in recent years have stretched resources, but the Weed Board has held firm in not raising the levy rate. The Weed Board and Agency must continue to develop and implement innovative strategies to sustain the current essential services and an appropriate level of funding.

2. Reduce the presence and prevent the unchecked spread of aquatic weeds in Thurston County.

Generations ago, invasive species such as scotch broom and tansy became so entrenched that their eradication is now nearly impossible. Today, our state is seeing the emergence of aquatic invasive species that could become just as devastating. Now is the time to take decisive action to reduce the presence and prevent the unchecked spread of aquatic weeds.

3. Increase public awareness and effectiveness in controlling noxious weeds by strengthening community education activities.

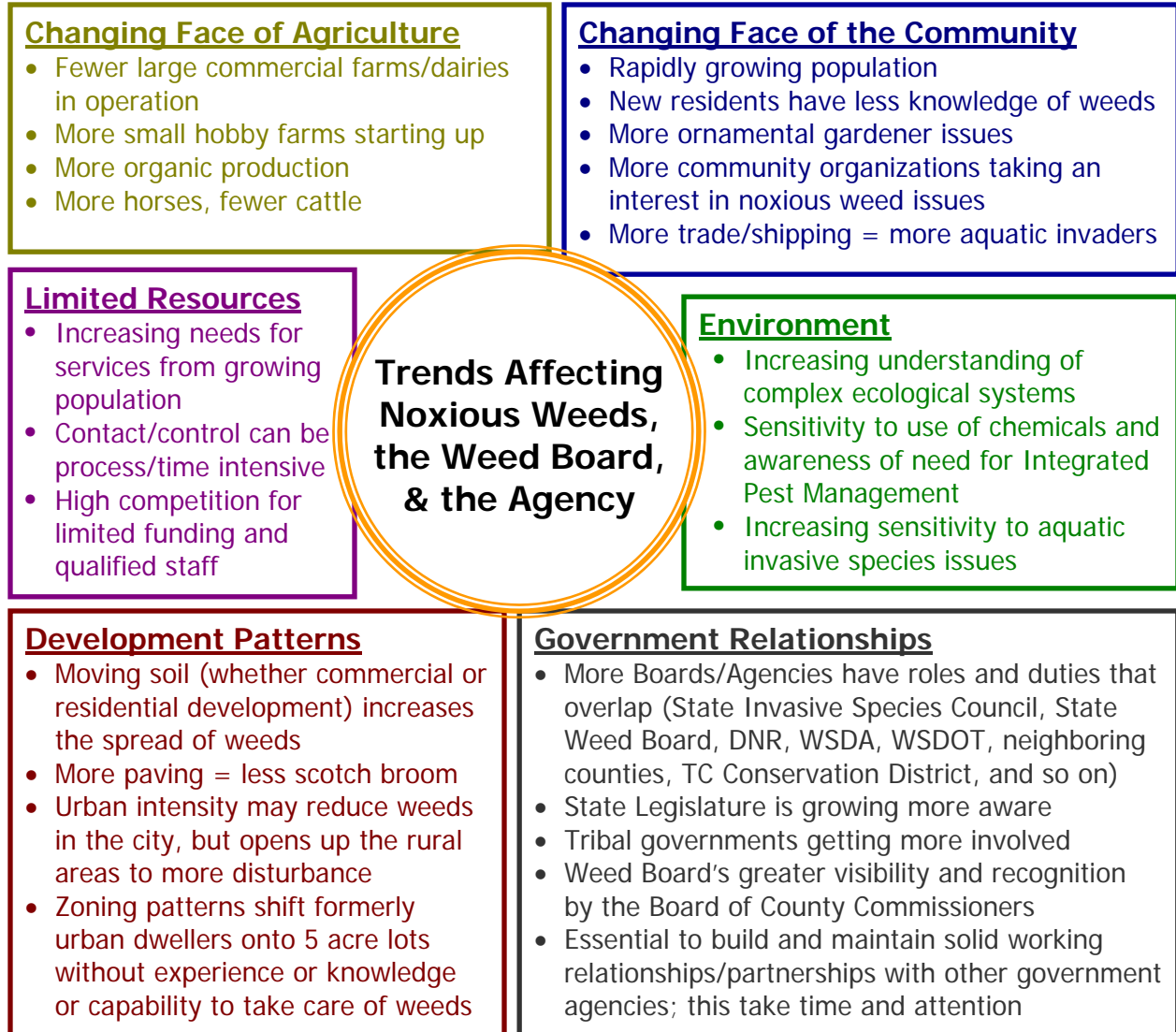
The best method for reducing the harmful effects and preventing the spread of noxious weeds is a well-informed and engaged public. The changing face of the community and of agriculture requires continual adjustment of outreach methods.

4. Enhance our collaborative relationships with governmental and community organizations.

Invasive noxious weeds don't recognize political boundaries or property lines. Leveraging the skills, expertise, and resources of diverse governmental and community organizations results in far more effective weed control activities.

External Environment

At the Thurston County Noxious Weed Control Board's November 2006 meeting, we mapped the major trends that we see influencing noxious weed control across Washington in general and Thurston County in particular.



This discussion illuminated for the Weed Board several areas of opportunity, which guided the refinement of our goals and strategies. In particular, we see the need to enhance public awareness and education activities, to strengthen our relationships with other governmental and community organizations, and to address the emerging threats from aquatic invasive species.

Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1: Sustain the Thurston County Weed Board and Agency's core functions and appropriate funding to deliver essential weed control services to residents

Background	Sharp workload increases in recent years have stretched resources, but the Weed Board has held firm in not raising the levy rate. The Weed Board and Agency must continue to develop and implement innovative strategies to sustain the current essential services and an appropriate level of funding.
Strategy 1.1	Weed Board Members and the Weed Coordinator shall annually evaluate and update the Weed Program's Rules, Regulations, and Workplan. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: Annually, with Weed Board adoption by March
Strategy 1.2	The Weed Board Chair and Weed Coordinator shall meet annually with County Commissioners. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Board Chair• Timeframe: Annually
Strategy 1.3	Weed Board Members shall draft and seek Board of County Commissioner adoption of a Proclamation in support of noxious weed awareness. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Board Chair• Timeframe: Annually, April-May
Strategy 1.4	Weed Board Members and the Weed Coordinator shall leverage grant funding for limited one-time projects, enabling levy funds to maintain the ongoing core program. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Board Chair and Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2008-2013
Key Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed Program is sustainable through 2013.• Successful adoption of Weed Awareness Proclamation• Successful adoption of Grant Application Pre-approval Protocol
Partners	Board of County Commissioners, Thurston County Development Services Department, State Noxious Weed Board
Stakeholders	Landowners, agricultural producers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, general public

GOAL 2: Reduce the presence and prevent the unchecked spread of aquatic weeds in Thurston County.

Background	Generations ago, invasive species such as scotch broom and tansy became so entrenched that their eradication is now nearly impossible. Today, our state is seeing the emergence of aquatic invasive species that could become just as devastating. Now is the time to take decisive action to reduce the presence and prevent the unchecked spread of aquatic weeds.
Strategy 2.1	Partner with Federal, State, Tribal, and Local Government officials to pursue grant funding to significantly reduce the infestation of Brazilian elodea on the Chehalis River. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2008-2010
Strategy 2.2	Develop and implement a targeted weed management strategy for Eurasian Milfoil in Thurston County. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2008-2013
Strategy 2.3	In collaboration with the Board of County Commissioners, develop and adopt a “Rapid Response” plan for effective initial control efforts that the Weed Coordinator can activate upon the discovery of spartina or other similar highly invasive aquatic species in the County. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Board Chair and Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2008-2009
Strategy 2.4	Maintain continuous surveillance to detect the presence of new invasive species. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2008-2013
Key Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of identified aquatic weed sites• Amount of Brazilian elodea removed from Chehalis River
Partners	Federal, Tribal, State, County, and Municipal Governments, and area Lake Districts
Stakeholders	Landowners, water recreation enthusiasts, fishers, Chehalis Tribe, WA Dept. of Natural Resources, WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, WA Dept. of General Administration, general public

GOAL 3: Increase public awareness and effectiveness in controlling noxious weeds by strengthening community education activities.

Background	The best method for reducing the harmful effects and preventing the spread of noxious weeds is a well-informed and engaged public. The changing face of the community and of agriculture requires continual adjustment of outreach methods.
Strategy 3.1	Strengthen the Weed Agency's current educational materials by: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reviewing current materials for readability, clarity, and consistency2. Developing a brochure that educates the public on the Weed Board, its members, and its activities3. Crafting a compelling public awareness message/slogan, possibly in collaboration with the State Noxious Weed Board <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Board• Timeframe: 2008-2009
Strategy 3.2	Within existing resources, the Weed Board will explore educational partnerships with local School Districts to promote awareness of noxious weeds among youth. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Board Chair• Timeframe: 2009-2013
Strategy 3.3	Weed Board Members shall explore development of a volunteer program to build broader community awareness by giving educational presentations about noxious weeds and the Weed Board to diverse community events and organizations (such as Olympia Master Builders, chambers, home and garden shows, etc...). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Board• Timeframe: 2010-2013, up to six outreach events annually
Strategy 3.4	Coordinate with local nurseries to share information on noxious weed biology and control. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: Annually, February-March-April
Key Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public requests for Agency technical assistance (increasing initially with greater awareness, decreasing eventually with weeds controlled)• Voluntary replacement of invasive non-native species sold at area nurseries in favor of non-invasive alternatives
Partners	State Noxious Weed Board, area nurseries, area Realtors, Master Gardeners, County Development Services Department; School Districts
Stakeholders	Landowners, developers and construction firms, agricultural producers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, general public

GOAL 4: Enhance our collaborative relationships with governmental and community organizations.

Background	Invasive noxious weeds don't recognize political boundaries or property lines. Leveraging the skills, expertise, and resources of diverse governmental and community organizations results in far more effective weed control activities.
Strategy 4.1	Weed Board members shall serve as liaisons to other key governmental or community partners, attending at least one meeting of an external partner's governing body annually. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Board• Timeframe: 2008-2013, five liaison events annually
Strategy 4.2	The Weed Agency will partner with Federal, State, Tribal, and Local Government officials to share information and conduct weed control efforts (such as surveying riparian areas for the existence of noxious weeds at local National Wildlife Refuges) and promote public awareness of the impact of non-native invasive species on habitat. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator and Weed Board• Timeframe: 2008-2011
Strategy 4.3	The Weed Agency will partner with Federal, State, Tribal, and Local Government officials to pursue short-term grant funding to reduce (and long-term funding to eliminate) the infestation of Brazilian Elodea on the Chehalis River. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Coordinator and Weed Board• Timeframe: 2008-2013
Strategy 4.4	The Weed Board will work with Pierce, Lewis, Grays Harbor, and Mason Weed Boards to hold a Regional Weed Board Meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern and identify opportunities to collaborate for more effective noxious weed control. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead: Weed Board and Weed Coordinator• Timeframe: 2010-2013
Key Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amount of Brazilian elodea removed from Chehalis River• Public requests for Agency technical assistance (increasing initially with greater awareness, decreasing eventually with weeds controlled)
Partners	Federal, Tribal, State, County, and Municipal Governments
Stakeholders	Landowners, homeowners, and developers, agricultural producers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, general public