

Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program

"Making a Difference in Skamania County"

2022 Annual Programmatic Report



Prepared by
Skamania County Noxious Weed
Control Program
704 SW Rock Creek Drive
PO Box 369
Stevenson, Washington 98648
509-427-3941
weeds@co.skamania.wa.us



Board Mission

Our mission is to serve as responsible stewards to limit the economic loss and adverse environmental effects to Skamania County's agricultural, natural, recreational, and human resources as the result of the presence and spread of noxious weeds on all terrestrial and aquatic areas in the county.

We believe prevention of noxious weeds is the best approach and may be achieved through full implementation of the state noxious weed law. To further this approach, we strive for increased public awareness through improved educational efforts.



Students learning how to prevent the spread of weeds while out enjoying the trails and the impact invasive species can have on the forest



Program Coordinator Emily Stevenson shares native plant and pollinator information with visitors at the Hegewald Native Plant Demonstration Garden

Board Goals and Priorities

- 1) Annually adopt the Skamania County Noxious Weed List
- 2) To improve countywide noxious weed education and public awareness about integrated pest management and biological control
- 3) Seek and secure adequate funding to support continued success of the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
- 4) Nurture cooperative working relationships with county residents, landowners, land managers, tribes, and local, state, and federal agencies
- 5) Monitor and document the presence and work to reduce the spread of noxious weeds throughout Skamania County

Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Board

The noxious weed control board members are appointed from five geographic areas within Skamania County. Each appointed board member has a duty to represent their geographic area. Board members serve a term of four years before seeking reappointment.



District 1

Sally Newell

Underwood, WA
509-493-3624

District 2

Steve Hansen, Vice Chair

Stevenson, WA
509-427-5069

District 3

Kenneth Cole

North Bonneville, WA
509-427-8418

District 4

Kenneth Bajema, Chair

Washougal, WA
360-837-3273

District 5

Larry Willson,

Washougal, WA
360-835-8115

Ex-Officio Member

Hannah Brause

WSU Extension Director

PO Box 369
710 SW Rock Creek Drive
Stevenson, WA 98648
509-427-3931

Letter from the Chair

On behalf of the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Board, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read about our program. We are very proud of our staff and crews for the achievements they made this year. They continue to make momentous progress in the march against noxious weeds in Skamania County and with partners across the region.

The goal of this program is to encourage healthy landscapes and build forest resilience by controlling and preventing noxious weeds in Skamania County. Weeds pose an economic threat to agriculture, degrade wildlife forage, spoil recreational opportunities and can impact public infrastructure such as roads and power lines. Our dedicated staff work hard to carry out the board's vision, mission, and goals. The board is proud of the work done to elevate public awareness of dangers posed by invasive noxious weeds and pests through early detection and rapid response actions, community and student engagement, and public outreach activities region wide.

This report summarizes the broad scope of activities undertaken by the Skamania County Noxious Weed Program staff in 2022. It is an impressive body of work and clearly illustrates our commitment to the citizens and resources of Skamania County.

As we transition into 2023, we look forward to working with you again as we continue our important mission.

Ken Bajema

2022 Program Staff

Program Coordinator

Emily Stevenson 509-427-3941 estevenson@co.skamania.wa.us

Partnership Specialist

Cyndi Soliz 509-427-3942 soliz@co.skamania.wa.us

Lead Natural Resource Worker

Kristi Walker

Natural Resource Worker

Markham Price

Natural Resource Aides

Emily Risely
Jali Allen
Issac Zettler
Jackson Keyser

Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program

“Making a Difference in Skamania County” 2022 Program Overview

Noxious Weed Control Program

509-427-3941 weeds@co.skamania.wa.us

<http://www.skamaniacounty.org/noxious-weeds/>

Benefit to the community by creating jobs, patronizing local businesses and enhancing recreational opportunities county-wide

- 7,453 hours of total staff time
- Provided 1 full-time position
- Provided 1 part-time, permanent position
- Provided 6 full-time, temporary positions
- Increased worker skills and marketability by providing specialized training
- Assisted community members with noxious weed & invasive species issues

Protection and enhancement of land and resources through weed control

- Manual & chemical control on 1,163 acres

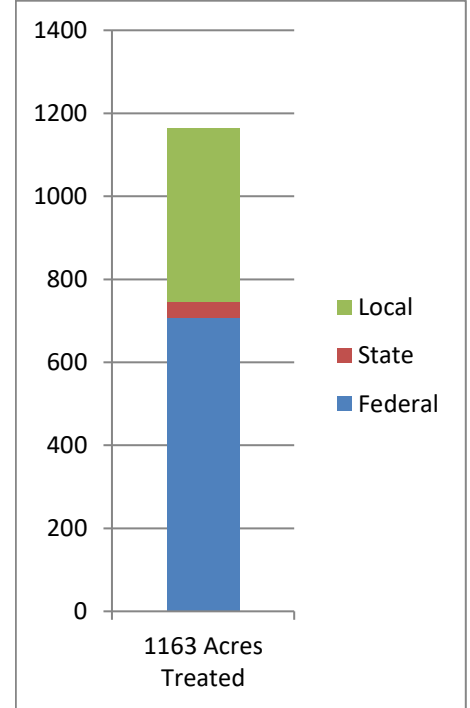
Leveraged funds to maximize county investment & program footprint

- Leveraged over \$227,000 in grants and agreements

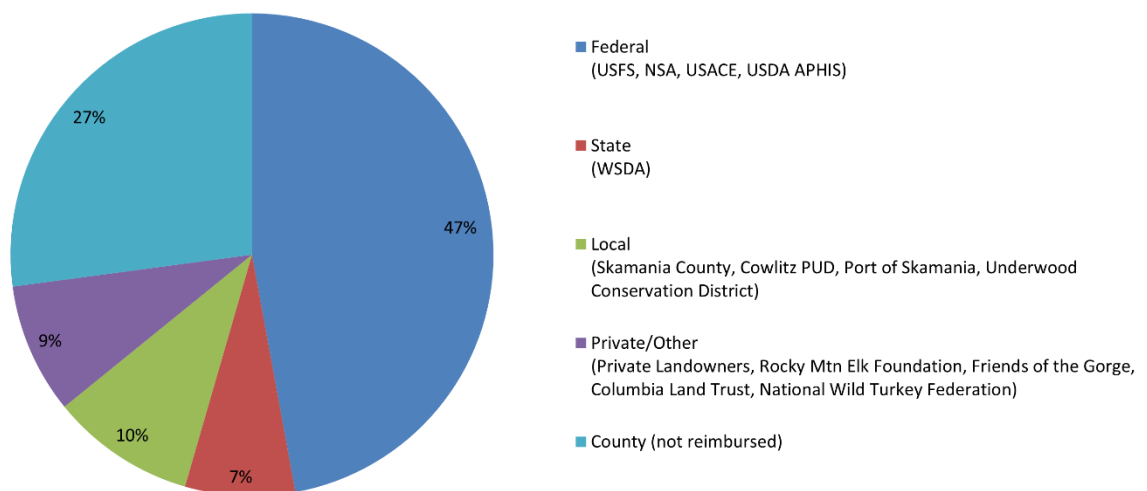
Partnership & coordination with local, state, federal, private and non-governmental organizations, including:

- Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area
- Washington State Coordinators’ Association
- Garlic Mustard Working Group
- Knotweed Working Group
- South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative
- 13 contracts/agreements

Treated Areas (Acres)



2022 Funding for Noxious Weed Control - \$312,284



Overall Direction and Major Results toward Programmatic Goals

- Education with an emphasis on protecting forest, pollinators, recreational, and aquatic resources
- Strengthening regional partnerships and increasing awareness and collaboration between public, non-profit, and private organizations
- Sharing information about vegetation management plan development, early detection rapid response strategies, and restoration activities
- Provide local employment opportunities

Collaboration

Partnerships and educational awareness are key to the prevention and effective control of invasive species. This program establishes working relationships with key stakeholders to ensure weed management is a recognized component in land management and information sharing across all political boundaries.

The Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program (SCNWCP) works together with numerous agencies to protect natural resources and educate the public on a regional scale. Within Skamania County, the SCNWCP collaborates with the following agencies:

- Gifford Pinchot National Forest
- WA Department of Agriculture
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- WA Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Underwood Conservation District
- Friends of the Gorge
- WA Parks & Recreation Commission
- WA Department of Natural Resources
- Skamania County PUD
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area
- WA Noxious Weed Control Board
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- WA Invasive Species Council
- Port of Skamania
- Columbia Land Trust
- WA Department of Transportation
- WSU Forest Youth Success
- Cowlitz County PUD
- Klickitat County Noxious Weed Board

Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area

Skamania County is a participating member of the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). The CWMA provides guidance to local government, land managers, and property owners to manage the impact of noxious weeds regardless of political boundaries.

Messages shared with the public are consistent and reinforce the success of landscape scale management. The Columbia Gorge CWMA has developed and implemented many projects within the gorge region to treat and prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species



and noxious weeds. The threat of invasive species stretches across all jurisdictions and requires collaboration and partnerships for effective management on a landscape scale. CGCWMA partners include:

- Bureau of Land Management
- Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development
- Clackamas County SWCD
- Clark County Public Works
- Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute
- Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area
- Columbia Land Trust
- East Multnomah SWCD
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Gifford Pinchot National Forest
- Hood River SWCD
- Klickitat County Noxious Weed Control Board
- Mt. Hood National Forest
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon Parks & Recreation Department
- Portland Water Bureau
- Sandy River Watershed Council
- Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program
- The Nature Conservancy
- Underwood Conservation District
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- USDA NRCS – Multnomah & Clackamas counties
- Wasco County SWCD
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board

Education and Outreach

A top priority of the Noxious Weed Control Program is public education. The program endeavors to increase awareness about Best Management Practices and the latest developments in invasive species management in the form of articles, presentations, classes and workshops for landowners, state and federal agencies, students, community members, volunteers, and collaborative groups.

ISEP - The 11th annual Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop

With the help of the Recreation Conservation Office's Washington Invasive Species Council, the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) planned, organized, and delivered the 11th annual Columbia Gorge Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop (ISEP) on March 3, 2022. The online event occurred during the National Invasive Species Awareness Week and drew over 450 registrations from 19 states and 3 countries. At least 290 people participated in the workshop!

Participants listened to the most favored presentations of the day about "Reducing Weeds with Riparian Zone Restoration" and "First Foods and Invasive Species Management." The crowd favorite "Invasive Species Quiz" included 190 participants testing their invasive species identification skills. Additionally, attendees heard about the US Fish and Wildlife Service's "Rapid Response to Zebra Mussel Contamination in Marimo Moss

Balls.” Over 60% of the participants who were surveyed (142) following ISEP stated there were “logistics (they hadn’t thought of when responding to new invasions.”

Workshop attendees also heard about the California-based campaign to address invasive plants in the horticultural industry. PlantRight Project Manager Alex Stubblefield shared the success the group has had teaching homeowners, landscape professionals, and plant retailers about invasive species and their strategy for keeping them out of California’s nurseries, gardens, and wild areas. Importantly, Washington Department of Agriculture Pest Biologist Josh Milnes taught participants how to identify the invasive Spotted Lanternfly, why it’s a problem, and how to report it if found. Over 70% of those surveyed gained knowledge on at least one new aquatic invader and 93% said they were “committed to cleaning (their) gear to prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases and will encourage others to do the same.” In the end, 92% of those surveyed agreed they had an enhanced knowledge and awareness about invasive species after attending the workshop.

The Skamania County Fair

Skamania County Noxious Weed Program hosted an information center for the public at the Skamania County Fair in August. This year featured information about new insect invaders such as the Emerald Ash Borer and Spotted Lanternfly and its host plant Tree of Heaven. Pollinators and pollinator specific garden information and materials were offered. Weed identification booklets and information on Best Management Practices for weeds were distributed. Staff provided information on the importance of prevention, answered questions about weed species and provided technical assistance with control and site restoration.



FYS- blue ribbon display



**SOUTH GIFFORD PINCHOT
COLLABORATIVE**

South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative - SGPC

The Skamania County Noxious Weed Program participates in monthly meetings of the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative to help inform forest management plans and coordinate funding for projects. The South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative (SGPC) participates in the development, facilitation, and implementation of projects that enhance forest ecosystem health, economic vitality, recreation, and public safety on the south end of Gifford Pinchot National Forest and in surrounding communities.

Pollinator Garden Open House

The native plant demonstration garden at the Hegewald Center in Stevenson displays native plantings that represent local Columbia Gorge habitats. On May 18th, the garden showcased how to use native plants to increase pollinator foraging opportunities and create habitat for wildlife in our area. Staff educated visitors about the benefits of using native plants, made recommendations, passed out native seed packets and shared native plants.



Swallowtail feeding on Milkweed in the Hegewald demonstration garden

Other Outreach Events

- Rogue Detection dog training - detection dogs that sniff out noxious weeds!
- Washougal High School AP Biology class field trip at Cape Horn Trail
- Friends of the Gorge Stewardship Volunteer weed ID trainings
- UCD Tree Fest
- Forest Youth Success Field Day on the Cape Horn Trail
- PNW-Invasive Plant Council - EDRR Weed ID / Reporting Class
- UCD Winter Workshop Series

Projects

WSDA Tree of Heaven/Spotted Lanternfly Project and Forest Youth Success



With the recent introduction of the spotted lanternfly on the east coast, authorities in the Pacific Northwest have raised the level of urgency in the control of its favorite host plant, tree-of-heaven. Outreach and education about the spotted lanternfly and the tree of heaven has been ongoing for the last several years. WSDA presented at our annual Columbia Gorge Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop and local newspapers have published multiple articles about the threats and our projects.

In 2022, the Skamania County Forest Youth Success Program was funded by the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area to partner with our program for a more thorough survey and landowner outreach in neighborhoods of Stevenson, Carson, and Underwood. The SCNWP trained 19 teens between the ages of 14-18 and 5 adult staff to identify Tree of Heaven (TOH) and Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF), properly survey local neighborhoods,

FYS crew surveying & mapping TOH in Carson, WA

and communicate with landowners and residents. Participants were divided into three separate crews. Each crew was assigned an area and spent two days walking door to door. They documented every property surveyed, as well as their findings, and crew leaders used an online mapping tool to provide details when TOH was found or suspected. The survey data collected was shared with the SCNWCP to supplement data gathered previously in alignment with the statewide “SLF Action Plan.” A total of 324 properties were surveyed for TOH with information being provided to 289 residents. They also created social media posts about TOH and SLF that reached 2,731 people, with 565 engaging with the posts. Thousands of people attended the Skamania County Fair and had the chance to see the teen’s winning educational display.

To date, over 400 properties were surveyed throughout the southern end of Skamania County in the Columbia River Gorge and infestations were mapped. All affected landowners have been contacted. Sixty-one sites have been confirmed and treatment has occurred on 34 of those sites. Three sites have been eradicated and 1 landowner has taken over monitoring and control efforts.

Countless residents of the Columbia River Gorge have been made aware of the damage the tree of heaven and the spotted lanternfly could cause to Washington’s valuable agricultural industry should it establish here.



Injecting TOH with herbicide

Gifford Pinchot and Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Projects



In partnership with the Gifford Pinchot (GP) National Forest and Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), Skamania County NWCP conducts integrated weed management utilizing chemical and manual control of noxious weeds on forest lands. Habitat protection and enhancement through weed control happen on protected areas for wildlife and listed sensitive and threatened species such as the Oregon spotted frog, Mardon skipper, western pale blue-eyed grass and the western pond turtle.

Other priorities on the forest include establishing weed free gravel resources in quarries to protect forest service infrastructure, timber sale weed abatement, and roadside maintenance in high traffic areas to inhibit the spread of weeds.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area worked with Skamania County on high priority projects in the Gorge at Collins Creek slide area, Ives Island, Sams Walker, St. Cloud, the Cape Horn Trail and site preparation for a fish enhancement group project on Woodard Creek.

Knotweed Control Project-WSDA

As of 2022, there have been more than 390 participants in the knotweed program that have either engaged the services of Skamania County Noxious Weed staff for treatment of knotweed or actively participate through maintenance/monitoring of their sites. This program assists landowners enrolled in the knotweed

control project to effectively control knotweed as mandated by the state and empower site managers to successfully maintain their knotweed sites. The knotweed program has successfully eliminated >95% of the original knotweed infestation in Skamania County. Most sites are in maintenance stage and several have surveyed knotweed-free for many years. Many sites were surveyed clean in 2022.

Landowner rapport and community awareness of noxious weeds and the potential impacts on riparian ecosystems have been established and continue to drive programs based on the improvement of former knotweed sites. The Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program is committed to continued stewardship and will reinforce the importance of knotweed control as it relates to habitat and conservation ideals. The goal of this project is to sustain the work already accomplished, prevent re-infestation and reinforce landowner commitment to maintenance in the future.

- **Assisted 62 landowners on 94 sites**
- **42 acres treated**
- **23 surveyed clean**
- **17.64 river miles surveyed**



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

The Wildlife Forage and Habitat Enhancement Project on the South Zone of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and in the Columbia River Gorge was developed by partners of the US Forest Service, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program. The goal of the project was to increase forage capacity for deer and elk and other wildlife species on eleven meadows or forest openings located on the Mt. Adams Ranger District of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and on the Pierce National Wildlife Refuge. By decreasing infestations of unpalatable or toxic plant species in these feeding areas, the forage quality and quantity for deer and elk improved which also benefited the habitat for other priority species such as the mardon skipper (*Polites mardon*), pale blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium sarmmentosum*), the western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) and the Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*).



*Camas recovery after blackberry removal-Pierce Refuge
Photo by Jared Strawderman*

The Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program, with the help of the weed program from Klickitat County, controlled invasive, noxious weeds in 10 meadow systems totaling 1,421 gross acres on the Mt. Adams Ranger District (South Zone) of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. In 2021, crews treated 356 infested

acres and 208 infested acres were controlled in 2022. Noxious weeds such as Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), tansy ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), and houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) were primary target species while scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), various hawkweed species (*Hieracium* sp.), and other non-palatable weeds were treated where present.

At the Pierce National Wildlife Refuge in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge, the Skamania County Noxious Weed Program partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Gorge Refuge Stewards on a large-scale habitat enhancement project for all wildlife that call the refuge home, including the state-listed western pond turtle. Elk, deer, bear, purple marten, chum salmon and many other birds, mammals, and insects are benefitting from the improvements made with noxious weed control. RMEF and USFWS funded over 100 gross acres (90% infested) of invasive blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*) removal in 2021 and 2022. In these areas, the addition of 400 native plants improved wildlife forage and habitat for all species. Volunteers spent 180 hours since May 1, 2021 and 455 hours in 2022 cutting blackberry and controlling other weeds such as English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*). The Skamania crew followed up with an herbicide treatment in the fall of 2021 and 2022.

Class A Eradication Project

Program staff continued Class A weed eradication efforts on garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) infestations within Skamania County with support from the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Class A weeds are required by law to be eradicated by landowners. Program staff assisted landowners with treatment of infestations and cooperated to develop management plans for future control of their Class A sites. Landowners at Skamania County's primary garlic mustard infestation have coordinated with staff to organize a dedicated volunteer group working throughout the growing season to protect neighboring lands from further spread of garlic mustard and help reduce herbicide use.



US Army Corps of Engineers

In 2016, program staff developed a vegetation management plan for the Bonneville Lock and Dam. Since that time, staff has been controlling noxious weeds prioritized in the management plan. Work conducted has resulted in an overall reduction with notable success in high traffic areas, thereby, reducing spread of weeds as visitors travel through the gorge. Work was conducted to protect habitat on the Columbia River shoreline, improve designated wildlife areas, and reduce spread from high traffic areas in addition to providing USACE worker safety. Species controlled include Scotch broom, poison hemlock, deadly nightshade, tansy ragwort, shiny geranium, spotted and diffuse knapweed, and thistles, and poison oak among others.



Treating knapweeds to prevent spread in high traffic areas



Cowlitz PUD

The Cowlitz PUD employs the Skamania County Noxious Weed staff to conduct tree, brush and weed removal along Swift canal, dikes, and other structures to protect the integrity of infrastructure and provide line of sight for inspection purposes. In addition, crews work to remove invasive plants and enhance forage opportunities in agency designated wildlife areas. The improvement of forage in the Devil's Backbone Wildlife area has been a major driver of a wildlife habitat expansion in that project area.



Other Projects

- Skamania County Parks and boat launches
- Weed free gravel inspection
- Weed free hay certification
- Wild turkey habitat development with National Wild Turkey Federation and USFS

Future Directions

- Develop the capacity and capabilities of the program and regional projects through collaboration and the pursuit of funds to provide avenues for control of noxious weeds in Skamania County and the Columbia Gorge region.
- Continue action on Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR) protocols for Class A weeds and species of concern in Skamania County and increase awareness of the impacts of invasive species.
- Work to further strengthen relationships with adjacent weed boards and programs. Analyze weed issues approaching this area and coordinate activities to actualize effective Early Detection and Rapid Response.
- Ensure the successful transition of remaining knotweed sites back to landowners and develop management strategies to assist landowners battling Class A weeds while seeking grants to assist the public with control.
- Further develop stewardship activities and training to private and public land managers to build regional capacity for ongoing weed control. Cooperate with WSU Extension to provide continuing education and workshops.

