



# NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Noxious Weed Advisory Commission Endorsement  
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# SECTION I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.01 Overview

Several species of non-native invasive plants, categorized as “noxious weeds”, are known to exist in El Paso County. Without the natural controls that keep them in check, these weeds quickly dominate existing native and economic plant communities. Wildlife habitat deteriorates, water quality diminishes, erosion increases, fire regimes are altered, and recreation values are degraded. Native plant species play an integral role in all healthy ecosystems. They provide genetic material that strengthen our major food crops, provide food and shelter to animals, and enhance the landscape. In order to protect these ecosystems, invasive plant species must be controlled.

In the continuing effort to protect and restore the value of the land in the State of Colorado, the Colorado Noxious Weed Act<sup>1</sup> (Title 35, Article 5.5, of the Colorado Revised Statute, hereinafter “Act”) was developed. The objective of the Act is to curb the threat posed by noxious weeds to the natural resources of the State. In accordance with the Act, on or about February 7, 1991, the El Paso County Board of Commissioners established a local Noxious Weed Advisory Commission whose primary function is the development of an integrated management plan for noxious weeds within the area governed by the County.

### 1.02 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this El Paso County Noxious Weed Management Plan (“Plan”) is to provide guidelines for managing the noxious weeds that represent a threat to the natural and agricultural ecosystems of El Paso County. The Plan implements the mandates of the Act and strives to strengthen, support, and coordinate noxious weed management efforts between private, municipal, county, state, and federal entities. It is ultimately the responsibility of all landowners to employ methods and strategies to manage noxious weeds found on their property.

### 1.03 Enactment Authority

The Colorado Weed Management Act, (now known as the Colorado Noxious Weed Act), § 35-5.5-101, *et seq.*, C.R.S., was signed into state law in 1990. This article declares that there is a need to ensure that all lands of the state of Colorado, whether in private or public ownership, are protected by and subject to the jurisdiction of a local government empowered to manage undesirable plants (noxious weeds), as designated by the State of Colorado and the local governing body (El Paso County).

#### 1.04 Noxious Weed List

The Act designates undesirable plant species as determined by 8 CCR 1206-2, Rules Pertaining to the Administration and Enforcement of the Act, as noxious weeds within the State of Colorado. "Noxious weed" means an alien plant or parts of an alien plant that have been designated by rule as being noxious or has been declared a noxious weed by a local advisory board, and meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Aggressively invades or is detrimental to economic crops or native plant communities.
- Is poisonous to livestock.
- Is a carrier of detrimental insects, diseases, or parasites.
- The direct or indirect effect of the presence of this plant is detrimental to the environmentally sound management of natural or agricultural ecosystems.

The Act further categorizes noxious weeds into three lists:

- "List A", which means rare noxious weed species that are subject to eradication wherever detected statewide in order to protect neighboring lands and the state as a whole.
- "List B", which means noxious weed species with discrete statewide distributions that are subject to eradication, containment, or suppression in portions of the state designated by the commissioner in order to stop the continued spread of these species.
- "List C", which means widespread and well-established noxious weed species for which control is recommended but not required by the state, although local governing bodies may require management.

This noxious weed list is updated annually and is available through El Paso County or the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

## SECTION II

### PLAN OF WORK

#### 3.01 Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to prevent the establishment of noxious weeds in the County in concurrence with the management of existing populations. Countywide noxious weed management efforts will include:

- Prevention
- Inventory, Mapping, and Monitoring
- Control
- Restoration
- Education and Awareness

#### 3.02 Prevention

Prevention is the highest priority weed management technique. Prevention ensures that noxious weed species are not introduced into un-infested areas. Noxious weed proliferation is most likely to occur where soil has been disturbed either by man-made means, (such as road and trail cuts, construction sites, and overgrazing), or naturally in the case of wildfire, avalanche, mudslide, or flood. Strategies to prevent the introduction of noxious weeds include:

- Identifying and eradicating small infestations.
- Monitoring and evaluating to prevent recurrence.
- Promotion of the Colorado Weed-Free Hay and Forage Program.
- Revegetating and reclaiming disturbed sites with appropriate native plant species.
- Restricting the unlawful sale of invasive ornamental plants and seed packets.

Some ornamental plant species, available for purchase in the past, have now been designated as noxious weeds. These plants are capable of escaping yards and gardens. Other known methods of weed introduction include:

- Contaminated seed, feed grain, hay, straw, and mulch.
- Contaminated agricultural, construction, and recreation equipment.
- Animal fur, fleece, human clothing.
- Dried flower arrangements.

### 3.03 Inventory, Mapping, and Monitoring

Each year, with Board of County Commissioner approved funding, El Paso County conducts a systematic inventory of noxious weeds. Utilizing Global Positioning System technology (GPS), noxious weed infestations are noted and recorded. This inventory provides a database for enforcement and education efforts.

Mapping is employed to determine the location and extent of existing infestations. This information can be used to develop weed management strategies. Mapping is also useful to predict where new noxious weeds infestations are most likely to occur.

Monitoring of weed populations is used to establish baseline data and to record vegetation trends over time. The effectiveness of weed control efforts is determined by recording vegetation quantities prior to and following weed management strategies.

### 3.04 Control

The most effective way to control established noxious weeds is through Integrated Weed Management (IWM). IWM incorporates weed biology, environmental information, and available management techniques, to create a management plan that prevents unacceptable damage from weeds and poses the least risk to people and the environment. IWM is a combination of treatment options that, when used together, provide optimum control for noxious weeds; however, IWM does not necessarily imply that multiple control techniques have to be used or that chemical control options should be avoided. According to the Act, “it is the duty of all persons to use integrated methods to manage noxious weeds if the same are likely to be materially damaging to the land of neighboring landowners.” IWM methods include:

- **Cultural:** Establishing healthy native or other desirable vegetation. Methods include proper grazing management (prevention of overgrazing), re-vegetating or re-seeding, fertilizing, and irrigation.
- **Biological:** The use of an organism such as insects, diseases, and grazing animals to control noxious weeds; useful for large, heavily infested areas. Not an effective method when eradication is the objective, but can be used to reduce the impact and dominance of noxious weeds.
- **Mechanical:** Manual or mechanical means to remove, kill, injure, or alter growing conditions of unwanted plants. Methods include mowing, hand-pulling, tilling, mulching, cutting, and clipping seed heads.
- **Chemical:** The use of herbicides to suppress or kill noxious weeds by disrupting biochemical processes unique to plants.

### 3.05 Restoration

More than 10% of Colorado's native plant species have been displaced by non-native weeds. Following the implementation of noxious weed control methods, native and beneficial plant species should be re-introduced.

Establishing desirable plant communities, after noxious weeds have been removed, requires timely cultivation and reseeding. Seeds from noxious weeds may lay dormant for several years. Revegetation with native and beneficial species deters the germination of weed seeds. Re-introducing native plants or seeds to reclaim disturbed land minimizes degradation of native ecosystems, reduces the need for herbicides, and conserves water resources. When selecting native plant seed, consider the following;

- Water availability and the vegetative requirements.
- Selection of plant species adapted to climate, soil, and topographical conditions of the designated area.
- Establish a vegetative cover that is diverse and capable of self-regeneration.
- Landscape for wildlife by choosing native plants that provide cover and forage.
- Avoid commercial seed packets containing non-native plant species

### 3.06 Education and Awareness

Education plays a vital role in the implementation of this Plan. Continuation and expansion of current educational programs, along with the development of new programs, is a priority of the El Paso County Weed Management Plan. The Noxious Weed Advisory Committee, along with County staff, will work to develop and coordinate public outreach and education to promote the benefits it offers to all citizens of El Paso County and to explain the impacts of noxious weeds on our county's resources. The communications component for this Plan seeks to reach five major groups of stakeholders:

- Rural property owners with regulated noxious weed infestations.
- Urban property owners with regulated noxious weed infestations.
- Land managers and property owners without regulated weeds.
- Local, county and state government agencies.
- Avoid commercial seed packets containing non-native plant species
- Community and non-profit groups focusing on parks, conservation and restoration issues.

The education component is accomplished by organizing and participating in a wide range of outreach activities. The education and outreach tools used include: informational handouts and brochures, formal presentations, technical training classes, media alerts and press releases, staffing booths at community and regional events, helping with community restoration events, and the County website. The County welcomes opportunities to provide outreach and technical assistance with noxious weeds to community groups, homeowners, agencies, volunteers, students and others.

## **SECTION III**

### **PLAN EVALUATION**

The scope of work in the El Paso County Noxious Weed Management Plan will be reviewed, evaluated, and endorsed by the El Paso County Noxious Weed Advisory Commission and approved, by resolution, by the Board of County Commissioners of El Paso County, Colorado, before becoming final. The plan must be reviewed at least every three (3) years per § 35-5.5-107(4)(a), *et seq.*, C.R.S., and the management plan and any recommended amendments to the plan shall be transmitted to the Board of County Commissioners of El Paso County, Colorado, for approval, modification, or rejection.