

**Skamania County  
Noxious Weed Control Board**

## **2010 Annual Programmatic Report**

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Class A noxious weed, shiny geranium (*Geranium lucidum*) located in Skamania County natural area during state funded survey.

# Skamania County

## Noxious Weed Control Board

“Making a difference in Skamania County”

## 2010 Annual Programmatic Report

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### Noxious Weed Control Program

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

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

### Mission

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

We believe that 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.

### 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) Continuously monitor and document the presence and spread of noxious weeds throughout Skamania County.
- 4) Nurture cooperative working relationships with county residents, landowners, land managers, tribes and local, state and federal agencies.
- 5) Seek and secure adequate funding to support continued success of the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program.

**Skamania County**  
**Noxious Weed Control Program**

P.O. Box # 790  
704-A SW Rock Creek Drive  
Stevenson, WA 98648

## Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Board

The noxious weed control board is comprised of appointed members of the public from five geographic sections within Skamania County. The appointed board member has a duty to represent their geographic section. Each board member serves a term of four years before running for reelection.

### District 1

#### Sally Newell, Chair

142 Dona Road  
Underwood, WA 98651  
509-493-3624

### District 2

#### Steve Hansen

280 NE Ridgecrest Drive  
Stevenson, WA 98648  
509-427-5069

### District 3

#### Kenneth Cole

117 Shady Oak Lane  
North Bonneville, WA 98639  
509-427-8418

### District 4

#### Kenneth Bajema, Vice-Chair

102 Prindle Road  
Washougal, WA 98671  
360-837-3273

### District 5

#### Larry Willson

242 Belle Center Road  
Washougal, WA 98648  
360-835-8115

### WSU Extension Agent

#### Todd Murray

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Stevenson, WA 98648  
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### Letter from the Chair

On behalf of the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Board, I thank you for your interest in our board and program. Noxious weeds threaten many of our natural areas, negatively impact agricultural production, and reduce recreational value in both aquatic and terrestrial locations. Many noxious weeds can also threaten the health of the public and livestock.

Despite difficult fiscal and weather conditions this year, significant progress was made toward attaining our goals and mission because of dedicated staff and the vision of the weed board,

This report summarizes the wide scope of activities undertaken by the board and staff in 2010. It is an impressive body of work and clearly illustrates the commitment to the citizens and the protection of Skamania County's environmental health as a whole.

Thank you for your interest and participation in 2010. We look forward to working with you again in 2011 as we continue this important work.

*Sally Newell*

### 2010 Program Staff

#### Program Coordinator

Justin Bush 509-427-3941 [bush@co.skamania.wa.us](mailto:bush@co.skamania.wa.us)

#### Partnership Specialist

Cyndi Soliz 509-427-3942 [soliz@co.skamania.wa.us](mailto:soliz@co.skamania.wa.us)

#### Natural Resource Workers

Laurent Nickel

Kristi Walker

Caylen Valentine-George

Curtis Musson

Thomas Mercil

#### Summer College Laborers

Katie Dudley

Aimee Bilodeau

Tim Huntington

Courtney Banks

Daniel Robinson

## Overall Direction and Major Results Toward Programmatic Goals

In reviewing program actions in 2010, one immediately notes that without clear priorities and direction the staff of the Board would make considerably less progress. Given today's fiscal economy and government cutbacks, the creativity and dedication of staff continued to move board goals toward fruition.



Skamania County sits in a rare place statewide, and has excellent relationships with local, state and federal government agencies because they comprise the majority of its ownership. It is a priority of the noxious weed board to collaborate and grow relationships with other land managers. Due to this effort, the Skamania County Weed Program has benefited considerably.

Partnerships and collaboration are not only applied to the federal government where the noxious weed control laws do not apply, but also to every land manager and resident of Skamania County. While staff takes a hard-line on compliance with the laws they've been entrusted to enforce, they also do everything within their power to assist landowners to become compliant.

Staff is available to assist their constituency with any weed problem; no matter its status and work diligently to assist those they are to serve. The Weed Board's directives to prioritize based upon distribution, toxicity and complaint have reinforced this effort.

### Law Enforcement & Noxious Weed Law Compliance

2010 was a productive year in assisting landowners to become compliant with the Washington State Noxious Weed Control laws (Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 17.10). Following 2009, staff and the program coordinator redesigned the process of Skamania County's weed enforcement procedures to make them more streamlined, transparent and stronger.

Following intense study of other county program procedures statewide, the new process was developed and implemented in 2010 with great success. By keeping detailed records on every contact and development in a compliance case, staff was better prepared to ensure compliance and to build stronger cases of evidence in the event the landowner did not rectify their situation and further legal action proved necessary.



Based upon landowner feedback in 2009, an initial survey contact mailer was developed and implemented in 2010. This initial contact card indicated that the surveyor noted a specific noxious plant on the landowner's property, and it was the landowner's legal duty to control this plant and to contact the weed program office as soon as possible. This new procedure, before the mailing of a certified letter, saved the weed program both staff time

and cost as many landowners became compliant without further county actions.

In total, 20 private landowners in Skamania County were contacted about their noxious weed violations. With new procedures in place, over 25% of violations were reconciled with no further law enforcement actions beyond initial survey mailer and follow-up survey to ensure compliance.

50% of landowners did not respond directly to the initial contact mailer and required further enforcement actions outlined within RCW 17.10. However, after receiving formal notice of the law violation and threat of further action, the landowners voluntarily became compliant. The remaining 25% of violations took considerably more time and energy from staff as the parcels were owned by absentee landowners or held by banks.

The mortgage crisis created many interesting challenges for the weed program and staff members. Many roadblocks and frustrations arose as landowners and banks tried to "pass the buck" in keeping their parcels compliant with RCW 17.10. By Washington State law, the property owner is responsible for noxious weed control no matter who they are. The strength of the law, with the diligence of staff and reinforcement of new procedures paved the way to resolve the compliance issues for these remaining cases. In total, all 20-violation cases in 2010 were remedied without requiring the citation of a landowner for non-compliance and court events.

### **Washington Weed Free Hay and Forage**

In 2009 the US Forest Service changed the code of federal regulation (CFR) about the use of certified weed free hay and forage. Effective January 1, 2009 all hay and forage brought onto the National Forest System lands must be certified to North American Weed Management Association standards (NAWMA). In Washington State, the process is even more stringent and product must have been certified via the Washington Weed-

free Hay and Mulch (WWHAM) certification system that includes both the NAWMA list, as well as the entire Washington State noxious weed list.

This move prompted an outcry from forestland users citing lack of available product. Based upon board direction, staff members actively sought out hay and mulch growers who would be interested in marketing such a specialized product in the local area. Two staff members, Justin Bush and Cyndi Soliz became qualified to certify fields.

In 2010, hard work and persistence prevailed and two landowners sought to have fields inspected for potential certification. In total, three separate fields were inspected in 2010, with one field being rejected until noxious weed treatment would occur. Once the field in question was free of propagating parts, staff returned in order to re-inspect the field. In all, 12.5 tons of hay was certified as weed free product that went to market.



## Education and Outreach

The Skamania County Program has placed a heavy emphasis on outreach and education, believing that educating the public, and especially school-aged children, is key. Creating awareness through learning is the key to stopping invasions of noxious weeds and controlling invasive species. Teaching kids they can improve ecosystems with something as simple as weed control often inspires greater efforts and the will to understand and protect ecological relationships.

The annual flagship event for staff is the Skamania County Fair, the last free fair in Washington State. In order to increase public interest and educate residents, noxious weed videos were shown, and a coloring contest for young residents was held. A noxious weed mascot suit known as “Lucy Loosestrife” was loaned to weed program staff from the Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board. The Skamania County staff also partnered with Beacon Rock State Park and their traditional mascot, “Eager Beaver”, which assisted in drawing public interest. Staff informed members of the public of the negative impacts of noxious weeds, the noxious weed laws and what they can do to protect and assist local habitats.



Free services, such as home weed inspection and identification were offered to all, as well as brochures, posters and handsome magnets with weed program contact information for their convenience to call on the weed program in the future.

Numerous other education and outreach events also took place in 2010, such as several newspaper highlights, the development of weed watcher trainings and a number of lectures to classes and interested public. It is estimated that over 2,000 people received education via site visits, fair booth discussions and through various other venues.

## Collaboration

### Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area

2010 proved to be a historic year for the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). In years past, the group had simply met to discuss and disseminate information. After three years of this, the group decided that it was ready to begin designing and implementing projects as one entity. The Washington side of the management area's geographic boundaries was also expanded beyond the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area to encompass more area in Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties.

In order to address group concern that barriers and hindrances to working together in a bi-state setting would always be persistent, the group elected two group chairpersons that share authority and responsibilities as one. Jordan Kim, Assistant Manager of the Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District to represent CWMA members in the State of Oregon and Justin Bush, Program Coordinator for Skamania County's weed program to represent the Washingtonian members of the CWMA.



The group performed a number of activities in 2010, many involving Skamania County's weed program. An education project was accomplished with assistance from the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board. An informational flyer on the CWMA was created and printed for all members to educate other agencies and landowners about the benefits of membership. On the Washington side, three of the CWMA members, with Skamania County acting as lead entity applied for and received a grant award together. In addition to this, both sides of the CWMA worked together to apply to The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation: Pulling Together Initiative grant program for a collaborative project affecting both Oregon and Washington. The proposed project

involves compiling member weed infestation data and inputting it into statewide databases, invasive plant inventory as well as related early detection/rapid response activities.

The Skamania staff and CWMA created a poster to display at the Oregon Interagency Symposium on Noxious Weeds that occurred in December. The group's poster received praise statewide and is servicing as a model for CWMA activities and collaborative efforts.

### **Southwest Washington Cooperative Weed Management Area**

After noting the success of the Columbia Gorge group, Skamania staff prompted a discussion of partners around the upper half of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest to also begin a working group collaborative to bring weed managers together. While still in early stages of formation, the group has held an initial meeting and is planning further activities.

### **Forest Youth Success Program**

In 2009, the Skamania weed program worked collaboratively with the Forest Youth Success (FYS) program on a pilot project for the National Scenic Area in order to enhance habitat for the rare plant *Rorippa columbiana*. At St. Cloud Day Use/Picnic Area along the Columbia River, indigobush—an invasive plant from the Southeast was controlled manually followed by a cut stump herbicide application.



After receiving treatment, treated areas were intensively replanted with willow and red osier dogwood cuttings in order to provide competition to indigobush. After monitoring the initial success of this project, and noting the improvement of rare plant habitat located within the project area, treatments were planned to expand in 2010.

At the St. Cloud pilot plot location; new methodology was tested in 2010. Manual cutting by FYS crews, and no cut stump herbicide application. The cut stump application was replaced with a foliar application once regrowth on the indigobush had occurred. FYS and county crews then took the methodology developed in 2009 and partnered with Beacon Rock State Park in order to enhance riverside habitat at the park. Work complimented salmon habitat enhancement work with the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement group. The indigobush projects in Skamania County have produced useful information for partners to utilize for indigobush treatment in Oregon.

## Projects

### US Forest Service Projects

2010 proved to be the most successful year to date for work done on and adjacent to National Forest Service lands. With the site-specific invasive plant treatment NEPA document becoming adopted in 2009, and initial pilot processes proving successful—2010 ushered in full implementation of enhanced herbicide treatments. Skamania County weed crews performed weed control on over 5,500 acres of National Forest System lands on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Of note, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest supplemented Resource Advisory Council (RAC) funds to the Skamania Program in two instances. Staff treated Scotch broom on the Smith-Muddy River Confluence as part of an endangered species listed, fish habitat enhancement project. In addition, staff treated invasive plants within timber sale units, to protect seedlings from adverse impacts of noxious weeds while the forest canopy closes following cutting.

#### 2010 Gifford Pinchot National Forest Invasive Plant Treatment Results

<u>Cooperator/District</u>	<u>Sites</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Cowlitz County	34	87.9
Cowlitz Valley District	25	306.3
WS DOT	5	8.1
Klickitat County	5	341
Lewis County	104	571
Mt Adams District	8	90.1
Pierce County	2	3.2
Skamania County	200	5582.4
Mt. St Helens NVM	5	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>6993</b>

In addition to these treatments, the US Forest Service Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area funded Skamania County with direct funds in a project near Collins Creek and Wind Mountain. The Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Scenic Area staff and Skamania County all partnered on a western pond turtle enhancement project which included control of Scotch broom and evergreen blackberry that was adversely affecting sensitive pond turtle

habitats.

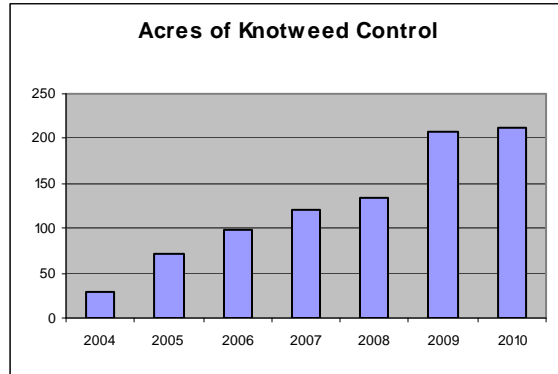
### Knotweed Control Project

The knotweed project continued in 2010 having been granted \$43,035 from the Washington Department of Agriculture. Initiated in 2002, the project continues to substantially reduce the knotweed population in Skamania and Klickitat Counties.

Two weed program staff members were dedicated to treating knotweed species throughout Skamania and Klickitat Counties (via agreement with Klickitat County). In total, 215.11 acres of knotweed received treatment totaling 300 sites, and 232 landowners received assistance.

Skamania County has led the way statewide for knotweed control and has been a model to be replicated. Consistent funding for over eight years, and treatment efficacy of approximately 98% has proven that a statewide effort targeting a single species for control can be accomplished.

Because state budget reductions in the last quarter of 2010 the Washington State Department of Agriculture terminated Skamania County's contract six months early, thus eliminating remaining funding to be used before June 30, 2011. Many different counties have faced similar reductions in support from the agency, and all are looking for ways to continue knotweed control.



In fiscal year 2011 and 2012, the weed program will continue this ongoing project with a new funding source—the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the Community Salmon Fund with the goal of transitioning knotweed control to landowners.

### State and Private Forestry Grant Class A Eradication Project



This year, collaboration and cooperation rewarded Washington members of the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area. With Skamania County acting as lead entity, supported by Klickitat County and Washington State Parks, a proposal was submitted for funds from the Washington Department of Agriculture. A total of \$50,000 was made available to counties and groups from WSDA in pass-through funds from the Pacific Northwest Region of the US Forest Service. The Skamania County project was fully funded, and the group received a \$10,000 award.

As part of the project criteria, Class A listed noxious weeds within the Washington portion of the Columbia Gorge would receive treatment. Within Skamania County, program staff treated garlic mustard sites, and a false brome patch located at Beacon Rock State Park. Park staff assisted in the false brome effort.

Within Klickitat County, Klickitat staff treated johnsongrass and Mediterranean sage. In a first for the Skamania program, the two boards enacted an Interagency Agreement (IA) allowing Klickitat County to invoice Skamania County for their portion of the granted funds following treatments. Skamania County, in turn will receive full reimbursement

from the Washington Department of Agriculture. This project held a series of firsts, and served as a model to other Columbia Gorge agencies to prove that partnership and collaboration has rewards.

### **Washington State Weed Board Class A Eradication Project**

In order to supplement funds awarded by the State and Private Forestry grant to control garlic mustard, Skamania County program staff reached out to their sister program in Clark County. To maximize treatments efficiency, Skamania County, Clark County, Camas School District and the City of Camas all worked together on garlic mustard in a regional context.

The group was awarded \$6,775 for the purpose of controlling the class A listed invasive plant, garlic mustard. Because of the short grant timeline of one month to complete the project after the award, Skamania staff traveled to Clark County to conduct treatments via agreement with Clark County and the City of Camas. In total, approximately 35 acres within Clark County received treatment, as well as 15 acres within Skamania County.



### **Wind River Weed Control Project**

As part of the Wind River restoration and enhancement project the Underwood Conservation District (UCD) is performing on behalf of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), UCD staff contacted Skamania County for assistance in their expertise of weed control.



At three locations along the Wind River, Skamania County staff assisted with weed control operations on both public and private lands under Interagency Agreement (IA) with the Underwood Conservation District and liability waivers obtained from landowners. The Underwood Conservation District reimbursed Skamania County \$3,200 for services rendered within their restoration project area.

To enhance the effectiveness of this project, Skamania County worked with the US Forest Service: Mt. Adams Ranger District to facilitate their internal review of a Forest Service owned parcel adjacent to Beaver Campground. After interdisciplinary team review and analysis, weed staff funded by the US Forest Service treated noxious weeds upstream of the UCD project in order to assist in keeping sites weed free.

### **Washington State Weed Board Special Project**

Shiny geranium (*Geranium lucidum*) was added as a Class A listed noxious weed to the Washington State weed list in 2009. At that time, shiny geranium was only known to be in one location within Washington State— at a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed Natural Area Preserve (NAP) on the Clark-Skamania County border.

Weed program staff, with assistance from the DNR Natural Heritage Program, delineated significant habitat, then designed a project to survey sensitive oak woodland habitat near the known infestation within Skamania County in order to protect these special resources.



The Washington State Noxious Weed Control board funded \$1,914 as a designated special project, and weed program staff surveyed approximately 80 acres within the county within and adjacent to high-risk habitats outlined by the DNR. A total of 30 landowners received contact, and staff surveyed 47 parcels.

Results of the survey provided information on six sites within Skamania County, and highlighted approximately seven acres of shiny geranium. With this information, it is expected that in 2011 staff will find funding to assist landowners and managers with treatment, as this is a species of extremely limited distribution in Washington State.

### **Yellow Flag Iris Control Pilot Project**

In response to requests by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery Complex, weed program staff investigated the efficacy of treatment methods for control of the aquatic noxious weed yellow flag iris in 2010.

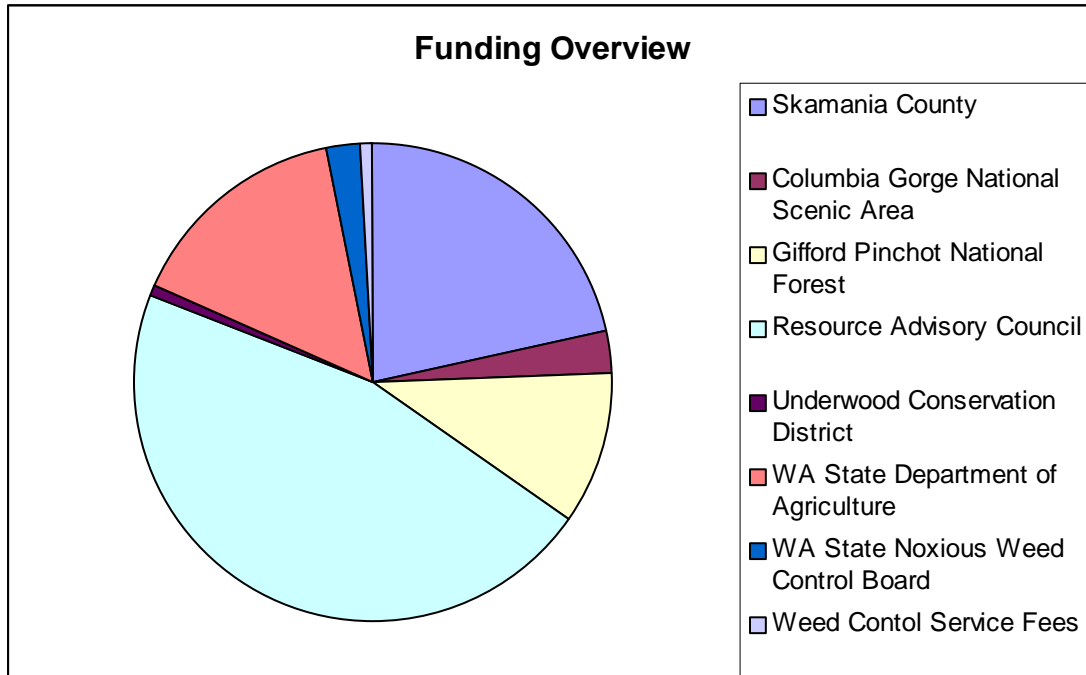
A permit was obtained and assistance was provided by the Washington State Department of Agriculture to allow for the treatment of this noxious weed. The use of a state aluminum jet boat allowed staff to work in efficiently with the Fish and Wildlife Service to perform initial control testing.

After treatment, plot results were monitored in Drano Lake, the Little White Salmon River and Rock Creek Cove to evaluate efficacy of treatments. Because initial survey success noted results of approximately 80% control staff pursued the Washington State Department of Ecology's Aquatic Weed Management Fund for treatment funding in 2011 to increase the scope of the project.



Partnerships and scientific evaluation through cooperation with multiple tiers of agencies have proven this as a project that may lead to larger efforts in the future. Aquatic noxious weeds are of high priority to the Skamania County weed board and staff because of the impact on recreation, fish and wildlife habitat and other aspects of the natural system.

**2010 Funding**



## Future Directions

- A National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant spanning fiscal years 2011 and 2012, will enable staff to assist landowners in transitioning control of remaining knotweed sites county control back to landowners.
- The county will increase focus on Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR) of class A species and species of limited distribution in Skamania County including false brome, shiny geranium and flowering rush.
- Increase awareness of aquatic noxious weeds and seek funding to assist with control when feasible. The weed staff will seek to create working groups and collaboration of interested parties to facilitate control.
- Support research and development of biological controls and educate the public as to their benefit in providing long-term weed management of widespread species.
- Work with adjacent weed boards and programs to coordinate activities in order to actualize efficient comprehensive control and enact Early Detection Rapid Response efforts.
- Complete a site-specific countywide lands inventory of noxious weeds in order to compile best management practices for a noxious weed comprehensive management plan. Weed staff will work with county land managers to implement this systematic, planned approach to weed management.
- Expand the resources and efforts in stewardship activities on private and public lands in order to build local capacity for ongoing weed control. Cooperate with WSU Extension to offer private pesticide applicators trainings.
- Increase the capacity and capabilities of program staff and projects through collaboration and the pursuit of funds to provide further opportunities for noxious weed control in Skamania County.

# Partners

