

Wyoming gets tough on invasive weeds

Posted: Wednesday, May 14th, 2008

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Last Friday, Gov. Dave Freudenthal signed a proclamation declaring this week as the first annual Wyoming Invasive Weed Awareness Week.

According to the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council, noxious weeds impact everyone, and it is everyone's responsibility to take care of them. Taking care of invasive weeds could be as simple as learning to identify the weed and contacting the local weed and pest office to assist in its control.

"Wyoming has a lot of development of five-acre tracts of land not associated with agriculture," said Slade Franklin, Wyoming Weed and Pest Coordinator. "Some of these landowners feel that the noxious weeds they see are native wildflowers. We need to get the public involved in controlling invasive weeds."

According to Goshen County Weed and Pest supervisor Steve Brill, noxious weed control is an ag issue.

"In controlling invasive weeds, early detection and the required response is a money saving and ecological tool," Brill said. "We need to be aware and control these weeds before they get out of control."

The Wyoming Weed and Pest Control Act has a designated list of 25 noxious weeds for Wyoming. According to Brill, each county can then add county declared weeds to their individual list. In Goshen County the species of noxious weeds of particular concern are Salt Cedar, Russian Olive, field bindweed, Canadian thistle, Russian knapweed, Musk thistle, Scotch thistle, Houndstongue and Puncturevine.

"Some of the weeds on the designated list of noxious weeds look nice and pretty," Franklin said. "Dalmatian toadflax looks like a pretty flower. If it looks out of place, report it. It could be a protected species, but don't be embarrassed to bring it in. We will get it identified."

Brill said Goshen County is in its second phase of a Salt Cedar and Russian Olive Removal Program.

"We are just getting started forming a plan to develop the direction we should go," Brill said. "Last year we cleared 300 acres of Russian Olive by cutting them off at ground level and spraying the stump. We plan to clear another 300 acres again this year. So far we have cleared 100 acres.

"We have a grant of \$250,000 just for the Russian Olive and Salt Cedar," Brill said. "We sprayed all of the Salt Cedar we are aware of in Goshen County. This made a big dent in the Salt Cedar population. We also have a site with defoliating beetles, a natural predator of the Salt Cedar. This bio-control agent has been approved by the USDA and the beetle helps prevent the Salt Cedar from producing seed."

Spraying the Salt Cedar was a first step to eradication.

"The Salt Cedar produces 50,000 seeds per tree," Brill said. "From what I have seen we did a good job spraying last year. Salt Cedar is very prolific and grows quickly. It is not an ordinary plant. Now we have to go back and continue a long-term reclamation effort."

According to Brill, Wyoming Invasive Weed Awareness Week is a good tool for bringing the weed problem to light.

"We are trying to get the public to be aware and take appropriate steps," Brill said. "It is everyone's responsibility and we (Goshen County Weed and Pest) are here to help them control the problem.

"If a weed has the potential to be on our designated noxious weed list, we need to get a handle on it."

Goshen County uses funding for invasive weed control from a number of sources, including Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust Grant, Pesticide Registration Fee Grant, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Game and Fish, Turkey Federation and Goshen County Coordinated Resource Management Team.

"From the state's perspective, Goshen County uses limited funding to be very proactive - making every dollar stretch," Franklin said. "They go after grants and are very well organized. They find ways to get things done."