

WHAT IS A NOXIOUS WEED?

Noxious weeds are non-native plants that have been introduced to Washington through human actions. Because of their aggressive growth and lack of natural enemies in the state, these species can be highly destructive, competitive or difficult to control.

Noxious weeds are everybody's problem. Each year, these plants cost Washington millions of dollars in lost agricultural production, environmental degradation and maintenance and control costs. Noxious weeds result in losses estimated at 24% of Washington's gross agricultural product. In addition, introduced species are the second leading cause of reductions in biological diversity. These exotic species not only reduce crop yields and destroy native plant and animal habitat, they can damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways, lower land values and poison humans and livestock.

DOES THE LAW REQUIRE WEED CONTROL?

Washington's weed law (RCW 17.10) mandates the control of many weed species. "Control" is defined in Was 16-750 as the prevention of all seed production. Each year, the list of noxious weeds is updated. The complete weed list (found in WAC 16-750) encompasses three different categories of weeds:

Class A weeds are non-native species with a limited distribution in the state. Therefore eradication of all Class A weeds is required by state law.

Class B weeds are non-native species that are established in some regions of

Washington, but are of limited distribution or not present in other regions of the state. In regions where a Class B is unrecorded or of limited distribution, prevention of seed production is required. In regions where a Class B species is already abundant or widespread, control is a local option.

Class C weed species are already widely established in Washington or are of special interest to the state's agricultural industry. Placement on the state noxious weed list allows counties to enforce control if locally desired.

WHO ADMINISTERS THE WEED LAW?

RCW 17.10 also establishes a program for administering the weed law. Education, coordination, and enforcement activities are carried out by three groups:

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board

Washington's weed program is coordinated through the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board. The State Weed Board's mission is to serve as responsible stewards of Washington's lands and resources by protecting and preserving it from the degrading impact of exotic, invasive noxious weeds. The State Board pursues this mission by:

- ✓ Increasing public awareness of weed problems through education.
- ✓ Coordinating and assisting county weed boards with their education and weed control efforts.
- ✓ Developing statewide integrated pest management plans for specific species.

- ✓ Promoting cooperation and compliance from state and federal land agencies and tribal governments.

County Noxious Weed Control Boards

The local noxious weed control boards and weed districts carry out the state's noxious weed law at the local level.

Local weed boards and districts provide many services to the communities they serve, including:

- ✓ Early detection surveys designed to identify noxious weed in the early stages of invasion - before large-scale resource damage occurs.
- ✓ Technical assistance and education on noxious weeds, prevention strategies, and control options for landowners;
- ✓ Enforcement of noxious weed control responsibilities to ensure resource protection and uniform standards; and
- ✓ Local flexibility and the ability to address local weed control priorities.

Funding of these local programs is either through a weed assessment on lands or an appropriation from the county general fund.

Washington State Department of Agriculture

The Washington State Department of Agriculture also plays a role in the state weed program by:

- ✓ Performing any necessary enforcement activities in counties without activated weed boards.
- ✓ Negotiation and ruling in intercounty disputes.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WEED CONTROL?

RCW 17.10 holds landowners, including counties and state land agencies, responsible for controlling weeds on their property. Federally owned lands are subject to the Federal Noxious Weed Act (Public Law 93-629). Since many people are unfamiliar with noxious weeds, the state and county weed boards and weed districts are available to provide information on identification and control options. Landowners can choose the control method they feel is most appropriate for their property.

HOW CAN I BATTLE NOXIOUS WEEDS?

Several weapons are available for combating these noxious invaders. Options include:

- ✓ *Prevention activities*, such as learning to recognize and eliminate weeds before they establish.
- ✓ *Cultural methods*, such as rotating crops and timing of fertilizer applications.
- ✓ *Mechanical methods*, such as hand-pulling and managing tillage practices.
- ✓ *Biological methods*, using natural enemies, such as insects and diseases, that attack weeds and help suppress infestations.
- ✓ *Herbicide control*, using EPA-approved products in compliance with the label.

In many cases, these approaches can, and should, be integrated to provide the most effective management strategy.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

Contact your local Noxious Weed Control Program:

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Or

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NOXIOUS WEEDS IN WASHINGTON STATE

AN INTRODUCTION TO WASHINGTON'S WEED LAWS

RCW 17.10
RCW 17.04
RCW 17.06
WAC 16-750