



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

*Bringing the University to You*

---

Fact Sheet: 99-75

## Nevada's War on Weeds Steps to Success Step 1 – Create Effective Coalitions with Awareness, Education and Training

Robert E. Wilson, Extension Educator, White Pine County  
Wayne S. Johnson, Cooperative Extension IPM Specialist  
Sherman Swanson, Cooperative Extension Range Specialist  
Susan Donaldson, Water Quality Specialist, Western Area Cooperative Extension

Awareness, education and training change people's perceptions about invasive weeds. Looked at as part of a continuum, awareness is necessary for people to be exposed to see that something is important. Education is understanding the problem and opportunity sufficiently to solve the problem. Training is learning the skills needed to become personally effective. Together they motivate people to action while equipping them with the tools they need to be successful. A coalition of weed fighters multiplies the effectiveness of the weed management efforts and has a greater chance of weed management success.

**Awareness** is created by education to persuade key people that there is a problem. People responsible for supporting or taking part in a weed management program can identify and address undesirable invasive weeds.

**Education** is a learning process about invasive weed impacts to natural resources, wildlife, and the economy provides a framework for prioritization of efforts. People frequently have some experience with common weeds and may have tried to control them, but few know which weeds are noxious. Citizens often believe that noxious weeds are part of the natural ecology of an area, or that they are simply an agricultural problem. Until they recognize the impact of invasive weeds they often fail to assume a responsible role.

**Training**, a student/teacher teaching process, provides necessary information on the effective management of problem weeds. It is the next step after people can identify invasive weeds and recognize their impact.

Through awareness, education, and training people move from passive bystanders to responsible enthusiastic participants in an effective weed management program. Their willing participation in protecting natural resources, ecosystems, and economies makes strategic invasive weed management achievable.

This social process is frequently more difficult to instigate and achieve, and is often more important, than the biological aspects of the actual management or control of a particular invasive species. If this aspect of invasive weed management is neglected or is inadequately or incorrectly done, the other steps in the effort cannot succeed.

### **What Motivates People to Manage Invasive Weeds?**

Most people who control weeds understand the impacts invasive weeds have on something they value. If their motivation is solely to kill weeds, the only motivated people may be those who are comfortable with biological controls, herbicides, and other control measures. If the goal is to **preserve and enhance our natural resources** rather than simply controlling weeds, then more people will become motivated and involved. More important, they remain motivated longer, and more effectively manage weeds.

A weed management program built on this vision focuses both agencies and individuals on their common interest in the problem. They will be more likely to consider a wider variety of alternative solutions. However, if the goal is only to control weeds, many groups will not participate. Groups that resist the use of herbicides will not agree with some tactics and may not support weed control efforts. However, if everyone supports the goal to protect our present and future natural resources, an atmosphere of inclusion rather than exclusion is created.

Once people understand that the overall goal of weed management is to enhance and protect natural resources, they willingly multiply each other's efforts based on their common ground. This is the primary goal of awareness, education, and training – to unite diverse groups of people in the struggle against invasive weeds and to create a positive synergism among them. This multiplies community efforts, making the job easier and more effective.

### **A short exercise to begin the awareness process:**

In organizing a weed planning meeting or speaking to a group about invasive weeds, try writing "What is the goal of every weed management effort?" on a flipchart or blackboard. Ask your audience to discuss this question for a minute or two in small groups of two or three people and record their answers on the flipchart or blackboard.

Most people will answer "To control weeds", "To clean up our roads", "To have better livestock feed", or "To comply with state law." These are all good answers, but the best answer is "To protect and enhance our natural resources".

## **Set Awareness, Education, and Training Objectives Within the Invasive Weed Management Plan**

Effective weed management is not something you do once. An invasive weed management plan covers more than one year and involves everyone potentially affected by invasive weeds. The plan should raise their awareness and provide for education and training. In the plan, identify specific target audiences to make aware, educate or train. The following steps help create a process for their inclusion:

### Steps to Awareness:

1. Make available and promote existing weed information sources and materials, such as weed identification articles, posters, literature, videos, "success story" newspaper articles, and announcements of meetings, and tours.
2. Develop a relationship with individuals and firms involved with mass marketing, public relations (PR), media production, newspapers, radio, and television to develop and implement a public awareness program.
3. Hold annual tours to update residents on the progress of weed invasion and invasive weed management programs.
4. Build and maintain displays and programs on selected invasive weed species, weed invasion and invasive weed management. Place them in busy locations so many people see them.

### Steps to Education:

1. Make available and visible news articles, videos, meetings, tours, and demonstration areas that educate people on the adverse impacts invasive weeds on our economy, wildlife, natural resources, and human health.
2. Develop and maintain public demonstration plots that illustrate the results of different management techniques and treatments. Teach people when each method of control in a demonstration area is an acceptable choice for that specific area.
3. Hold meetings to educate landowners through meetings on a process to develop individual weed mapping and weed management plans. Help them help you complete your weed mapping goals.
4. Develop and maintain public display maps that track the invasion of selected weeds.
5. Establish and maintain a group of volunteers to provide outreach and program development within their communities. Once trained as "Weed Warriors," volunteers can educate and train others, multiplying the effect.

### Steps to Training:

1. Develop cooperative training programs to educate and inform all participants about the latest and most effective weed management options and technologies. These programs should involve all land managers within the area including private, city, county, state and federal land managers.
2. Develop a training program in conjunction with Cooperative Extension and other agencies to ensure all weed management techniques follow approved procedures. This includes proper use of all herbicides and calibration of application equipment.
3. Maintain a regular training program to ensure that all cooperators including private landowners maintain proper certification throughout the life of the project. Individuals able to provide training may include weed district personnel, university extension staff, other agency personnel, and trained volunteers.

## Effective Communication for Key Audiences

Effective communication occurs when the target audience receives and understands the chosen message. In almost every area, there are five groups that must be involved for invasive weed management to succeed:

1. **Landowners** own a part of the weed problem and they must agree to assume some responsibility, therefore becoming a portion of the solution, funding, and cooperative action.
2. **Local government officials** (County and/or City) are the first level of political influence. In most instances, they will direct the weed management effort. They should know the scope and impact of the weed problem. If they do not, enhancing their awareness and education becomes a first priority.
3. Defined **public groups** (wildlife groups, sportsmen, recreation users, service clubs, etc) can stop or slow weed management, or they can accelerate a program if they are involved in a positive way.
4. **Land management agencies** (State and Federal) manage much of the land in Nevada. As significant landowners, agency land managers need to assume responsibility. They may either hinder or help local weed management efforts depending on their willingness to participate.
5. The "**scientific**" community, business sector, and other groups can provide tremendous amounts of expertise and resources, but they can also divert attention away from weed management goals to other issues if not convinced of the seriousness of the invasive weed problem.

Effective communication **EDUCATES, MOTIVATES, and POSITIVELY INFLUENCES** target audiences. The goal is to align people with similar goals using facts and sound judgement. The purpose in working with numerous audiences is to achieve results that are collectively greater than individuals or groups working alone. The goal is a community spirit based on recognition that each has an important part in something much bigger than themselves and their narrow interests. This requires that people assess what others are doing and what collectively is not yet happening. People must see their role as essential and their tasks as do-able, effective and efficient. Key players then recognize that others notice and care about what they do and how well they do it.

## Communication Methods

People learn best from a variety of communication methods. Different methods work better for different messages. To decide on the best method for the job, consider the following:

1. The most familiar form of communication is personal contact with individuals or a group. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and personal contact is neither appropriate nor economical for reaching large numbers of people.
2. Telephone calls are fast and effective for networking. However, they are limiting for the same reasons as personal contact and prevent the use of visual aids.
3. E-mail and web pages may be a rapid way to transmit photos and written or even audio material to dispersed audiences, but not all critical audiences are on-line.
4. Traditional mass media reaches many people simultaneously. However, mass media reaches most people only once and only if they are tuned in. Repetition tends to become very expensive unless it's a short public service announcement.
5. Fortunately, mass media productions or other messages can be made into a tape for later replay at home or in meetings. However, they usually become dated since the material cannot easily be altered.

6. Newspaper articles capture timely events and reach many people. However, fewer people read newspapers today than in previous decades.
7. Slide presentations are flexible and can easily be modified to include new weeds or information, and status updates. However, effective presentations require a knowledgeable presenter.
8. Newsletters can target a specific audience, but they require an investment in maintenance of the mailing list and production of the newsletter.
9. Other publications such as bulletins and fact sheets tend to be more durable than newsletters. They work especially well to convey a standard message, finding or technique that will remain relevant and useful for some time.
10. Permanent displays in prominent locations continue to educate long after the initial investment. Regular changes guard against fading or boredom. A display map showing the extent of weed invasion and new weed locations encourages public participation in scouting for new problem areas.
11. Portable displays can be brought to the audience and shown in poster sessions at symposia or other conferences, fairs or meetings. They can also be moved from one public place to another to reach new audiences who frequent different areas.

When communicating with a large number of people, select the communication tool that best fits your purposes and your budget. Better yet, select a combination of techniques to get beyond exposure to actual influence, learning, and conviction.

All successful communication efforts have one thing in common—they are completed on time. If not planned and executed in a timely manner, they lack impact. Timing is the key to good communications and the key to correct timing requires following a well thought-out plan.

**REFERENCES:**

Alley, H., L. Andreson, R. Baumberger, B. Benjamin, D. Bergland, P.K. Fay, F. Henderson, G. Hittle, J. Johnson, R. Lorenz, H. McNeel, P. Nicholson, B. Otten, W. Pearson, D. Phillips, A. Steffenson. *Noxious Weed Management Planning Guidelines Workbook*. Dow Chemical Co., 9002 Purdue Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268

Anonymous. *Blueprint For Success, Weed Management Training Materials*. DowElanco, 9002 Purdue Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA RENO	The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, creed, national origin, veteran status, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, in any program or activity it operates. The University of Nevada employs only United States citizens and those aliens lawfully authorized to work in the United States.
---------------------------------	---