



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bringing the University to You

Fact Sheet: 99-76

Nevada's War on Weeds Steps to Success Step 2 - Build Coalitions Through Collaborative Planning and Management

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Working with neighbors is essential for the successful management of invasive weeds. Even with consistent, sustained and dedicated effort, individual efforts to stop weed infestation will eventually fail because repeated reintroductions will result from neighboring lands. Since it is expensive to fight weeds and reintroduction is a common problem, the frequent response is to do nothing because control is "impossible" anyway. This is not the time to place blame. That only slows or stops progress.

The collaborative social process is frequently more difficult than on-the ground weed control. But it is absolutely necessary because of the size and importance of the invasive weed problem. With inadequate, ineffective, or incomplete collaboration, invasive weed populations explode.

Through coalitions, individual landowners or land managers work with others to collectively achieve control of invasive weeds. Successful coalitions include private landowners or managers, concerned citizens, special interest groups, state or federal agencies and those managing cities and counties.

Some county or local weed management organizations may be well organized and may have operated smoothly for many years, but in Nevada, most programs are just getting started.

In several other states, the established weed districts often have not dealt well with the threat of invasive weeds. But inadequate historical practices, even in the face of ever-increasing threats from invasive weeds, cause narrowly based county programs to be weakened. Regardless of the history of a particular weed district program, collaborative coalition-building efforts must be broadened to be truly successful.

The following checklist provides a point to start if your program needs to be strengthened or is not yet organized. If your program is well underway, use the checklist to assess and add to your program to make it more effective.

Form an Effective Weed Program Organization

1. Initiate an inter-agency planning or organizational meeting to begin the collaborative process.
 - A. Invite representatives from all appropriate agencies within the management area.
 - B. Invite principal landowners, representatives from key properties and other groups (sports clubs, wildlife organizations, agriculture commodity groups, conservation districts, etc) within the area.
 - C. Keep the number of representatives from each agency, property owner and local interest groups to a small enough number to allow effective discussions and decision-making.
 - D. To assure good attendance set the time and place of the meeting to avoid conflicts with seasonal work schedules, community or school events, and holidays.
 - E. If the group is large, select or elect from the group a steering committee to initiate and oversee the development of the organization.

2. Establish clearly defined and logical physical and operational action boundaries for the group.
 - A. Management areas may be created according to political boundaries, watersheds, topography, weed species, land usage, rights-of-way, and/or the area served by key agency offices.
 - B. Consider the likely sources and vectors for the key invasive weeds the group will be addressing (See Step 5 – Avoiding Exploding Weed Populations with Prevention and Early Detection, Fact Sheet 99-79).
 - C. Coordinate the boundaries and any shared responsibilities with other agencies, weed control organizations, and counties. Establish a memorandum of understanding and working agreements or guidelines among the neighbors at the boundaries.

3. Select a leader/chairperson
 - A. Select a leader based on the abilities, motivation, qualifications, and time available to dedicate to the effort, and not on an agency bias.
 - B. Allow the chairperson access to office facilities and personnel to facilitate completion of communications and reports.

4. Establish goals based on a shared vision
 - A. Consider the interests of all members in relation to the bigger picture of protecting the natural resource base to maintain the health and stability of waterways and lands for access and use by wildlife, livestock, recreationists and others. Local economies depend upon healthy resources.
 - B. If the group needs more information prior to working on this important task, do not hesitate to focus first on seeking to understand the issue before turning the understanding into a detailed plan (See Step 1- Create Effective Coalitions with Awareness, Education, and Training, Fact Sheet 99-75).
 - C. Consider the invasive weeds that are likely to enter the area and become problems (See Wilson and Young, 1996)
 - D. Consider the invasive weeds that are already present (see Step 3 – Map Important Weeds for a Living Inventory, Fact Sheet 99-77) but do not get caught up in unimportant work or urgencies that are no longer opportunities (See Step 4 - Prioritizing Weed Management, Fact Sheet 99-78).

5. Develop a plan for successful weed management
 - A. Write down important, achievable, measurable, and worthwhile objectives that will accomplish the goals and work toward the shared vision.
 - B. To help the group think about the entire management area and the diversity within it, identify preliminary special management zones such as:
 1. Aquatic areas.
 2. Threatened & endangered species habitat or species of special concern.
 3. Recreational/special use areas.
 4. Transportation corridors. (Rights-of-way may need to be excluded from the general weed program or treated as a separate management objective and a cooperative agreement developed with the appropriate entities).
- For each objective, list the actions needed to accomplish it. For each action, list the responsible parties. (See Step 6 – Plan Projects for Success, Fact Sheet 99-80).
- Develop an adequate inventory (see Step 3 – Map Important Weeds for a Living Inventory, Fact Sheet 99-77) and appropriate monitoring process. The inventory provides historical perspective and a benchmark to evaluate management efforts. Inventories are critical to the cooperative process. (See Step 7 - Monitoring Results to Work Smarter Next Year, Fact Sheet – 99-81). Evaluation and analysis of monitoring data are necessary for feedback.
- Use the series of steps detailed in these fact sheets to develop an effective program.

Review funding, labor, equipment, and other available resources to make sure that it is feasible to implement the plan. If it is not possible to implement with current resources, then the plan will need to be rewritten to focus on the most important and urgent items first. (See Step 4 - Prioritizing Weed Management, Fact Sheet 99-78.) Alternatively, the plan may address procurement of needed resources.

The plan should:

- A. Show group agreement that established actions and priorities are appropriate and justifiable.
- B. Discuss available funding and establish accounting guidelines.
- C. Review manpower, equipment and time needs and capabilities of individuals and agencies.
- D. Seek additional funding if necessary.
- E. Prioritize the list of actions in the plan to make sure that the funds and other resources available will be focused on the most important tasks first rather than the most visible weeds.
- F. If the information needed for mapping and analysis is not available for the whole area, the inventory type information found in the form can help set priorities (Step 6 – Plan Projects for Success, Fact Sheet 99-80).
- G. Identify potential volunteers and volunteer organizations and incorporate their contributions into the plan.

Review appropriate federal and state weed laws and agency weed regulations and policies.

- A. Determine if these provide tools that were not previously considered.
- B. Discuss the situations where legal options should be pursued and where the social processes of building an effective coalition can accomplish more with less conflict.
- C. Ensure that all the planned actions are within the letter and spirit of the law. The last thing you want is for a volunteer to become liable for well intentioned, but inappropriate, actions.

Set dates, times, and places for public meetings to allow input from all individuals within the management area.

- A. The public awareness and education component of the program is critical for public administrators or others who will provide dollars. It is important that the public understands the issue and that key players can answer important questions competently. Without citizen support, the program will fail.
- B. Capture important new information that attendees contribute. Displays of photos and maps of target invasive weeds stimulate people to add new data about a weed's location from personal experience.
- C. People must feel that the process is open-ended and inclusive. Participants must feel valued and new members welcomed. Each new weed warrior will need a role that is appropriate for their abilities, knowledge, level of commitment, and role in the community. People enjoy contributing when they can successfully meet a new and meaningful challenge and be recognized for their effort.

Plan future meetings where the group successes will be recognized and plans will be made for future accomplishments.

- A. Keep the vision and goals as the centerpiece of the process.
- B. Realize that people are more likely to keep commitments when they know that others depend on them and that they will have a chance to report what they have done.
- C. Recognize people for their hard work and accomplishments. It's one of the most effective ways to motivate people for more important work in the future.
- D. Stay focused by being hard on the problem, not the people. When things do not go as planned, fix the problem rather than place blame. Realize that no matter how motivated people become and how hard they work, it is unrealistic to expect that meaningful plans will always be accomplished perfectly.
- E. Communicate that every plan needs amendment based on experience. This is why the group needs records and monitoring information to evaluate their progress.
- F. Develop the understanding within the group that there are no mistakes, only learning experiences. Lessons will be repeated until the group learns from them, then the group will go on to new and more interesting lessons.
- G. Develop the understanding that with invasive weeds, the lessons get harder or the tasks get easier each year. They never stay the same.

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