INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet is one in a series on community partnerships formed to address natural resource issues in Elko County. Beginning in the late 1990s, community members from all walks of life began to cooperatively review, evaluate, and tackle several natural resource issues that had the potential to affect the quality of life in Elko County. For several years prior to these efforts, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Department of Agriculture, and others had been conducting workshops and distributing educational material about noxious weeds, an enemy to all who work and play in Nevada’s rangelands. The noxious weed challenge still remains near the top of conservation issues that affect Elko County citizens (McAdoo 2001).

SPRING CREEK WEED ACTION TEAM (SWAT) HISTORY

In the mid 1980’s, a localized population of dyer’s woad (Isatis tinctoria) was discovered in the community of Spring Creek. Concern about the potential spread of this plant became the catalyst for specific efforts to control this weed and expand educational efforts about the significant problems caused by noxious weeds in northeast Nevada. A group of agency specialists and concerned citizens first educated themselves about the biology and management of this species, then took appropriate actions. The “Woad Warriors,” as this group eventually called themselves, began formulating a plan of attack. The infestations of dyer’s woad were relatively small and localized, so the group decided to pull the weeds instead of using chemicals. This allowed citizens to work together side by side with little training, at low cost, and with simple tools (shovels). The result of these efforts was an annual “Dyer’s Woad Pull,” with participation increasing annually to approximately 230 participants in 2002 (McAdoo et al. 2002). Education about noxious weeds in general has been a critical component of this event, with noxious weed posters displayed and pamphlets distributed.

In 2000, a handful of Spring Creek residents, who participated in and were inspired by the annual “Dyer’s Woad Pull” described above, began meeting to discuss the alarming spread of several noxious weed species in the Spring Creek area. By August of the same year, this handful of concerned citizens had grown in number to 25 individuals from diverse walks of life. During initial monthly meetings that included weed specialists from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Department of Agriculture, BLM, and U.S. Forest Service, the group formulated a mission statement and began a plan of attack. Originally calling themselves the “Spring Creek Area Volunteer Weed Group,” the group eventually
adopted the name “Spring Creek Weed Action Team” (SWAT), which more accurately reflects the group’s aggressive approach to weed education and management.

**SWAT GOALS**

Although noxious weed eradication is the ultimate goal of this group, their mission statement identified education as the primary goal, followed by identification and mapping of noxious weed infestations and interaction with appropriate government agencies. Target weeds for control and eradication have been identified as: leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), perennial pepperweed or tall whitetop (*Lepidium latifolium*), Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthemum*), musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*), spotted knapweed (*Acrotilon repens [Centaurea maculosa]*)), Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*), hoary cress or whitetop (*Carderia draba*), and dyer’s woad.

**INITIAL SWAT EDUCATION EFFORTS**

Early in SWAT’s development, the group submitted an article entitled “Alien Invasion - Spring Creek Area Declares War,” which was published in the local *Spring Creek Journal* (summer 2000 issue). Within the context of this article, SWAT noted that “Noxious and invasive weeds are terrorizing the Spring Creek area by launching a full scale invasion. If not controlled, these alien species will consume large areas of land and reduce property values.” The article went on to identify SWAT’s mission to educate area residents about the threat of noxious weeds, identify and map infestations, and eventually control and eradicate the weeds. SWAT described the competitive nature of noxious weeds:

> “Noxious weeds are often found where the soil has been exposed or disturbed by construction, planting activities, or maintenance activities. In the Spring Creek area they are a problem on private land, community use areas, and road rights-of-ways. Noxious weeds steal moisture and nutrients from native species, shade out older plants, and some emit chemicals into the soil to prevent other plants from growing. They have no respect for property lines and will continue their advance.”

The article went on to urge Spring Creek residents to learn to identify noxious weeds, understand their lifecycles, report infestations, and eradicate weeds on their own property. This article was the first in an educational series about invasive weeds written by SWAT. The group has also contributed other newspaper articles and letters on invasive weeds to area residents. SWAT’s message continues to be that noxious weeds are characterized by the “3 D’s”: (1) difficult to control, (2) damaging to the environment and local economy, and (3) dominant, smothering other vegetation and taking it over.

**SWAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

As identified below, accomplishments by SWAT in their three short years of existence have been extensive:

- **Education**
  - Held monthly membership meetings (March - November), with appropriate educational presentations by weed specialists (2000 – 2002)
  - Conducted weed identification tours, Spring Creek area (2000 - 2002)
  - Provided a noxious weed information booth at Spring Creek Property Owner’s Annual Meeting (2000 - 2002)
  - Published additional weed articles in the *Spring Creek Journal*
  - Made weed management presentations to Spring Creek Board of Directors
Provided a noxious weed information booth at Elko Home and Business Expo (May 2001 and 2002)
Made invited presentations at the 2001 and 2002 Nevada Weed Management Association Annual Meetings

**Identification and Mapping**
- Transferred locations of noxious weeds to a database for digital map production

**Interacting with Agencies**
- Invited and received ongoing support and input from the Spring Creek Association, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Division of Forestry, BLM, U.S. Forest Service, and Lamoille Weed District
- Persuaded the Spring Creek Association to put aside $15,000 for spraying and weed control in the 2001-2002 budget cycle
- Persuaded the Spring Creek Association to send three of their employees to herbicide applicator training classes

**Control and Eradication of Target Weeds**
(Note: much of the labor, herbicide costs, and equipment listed below was provided directly by SWAT members)
- Conducted knapweed pulls along three rights-of-ways (2000 and 2001)
- Provided adult supervision and manpower during annual “Dyer’s Woad Pull” (2001 and 2002)
- Followed up “Dyer’s Woad Pull” with a second pull, including the hiring of a prison crew for assistance (2001)
- Applied herbicide to large (“unpullable”) infestations of dyer’s woad near Spring Creek Marina (2001 and 2002)
- Conducted Scotch thistle pull (2002)
- Persuaded utility companies working in the area to buy seed for revegetating corridors to provide competition against weed invasions
- Seeded utility corridors (2002)
- Conducted other miscellaneous weed pulls

**FUTURE PLANS OF SWAT**
- Fundraising
- Preparing a weed management presentation for Elko County Commissioners
- Preparing a weed management presentation for realtors
- Mailing specific weed control information to homeowners in targeted areas
- Lobbying state legislature for disclosure of noxious weeds on property that is sold
- Constructing a SWAT Website

**THE SWAT EXAMPLE**
The SWAT team members have shown that community volunteers can work together to successfully produce a viable program of community weed management, focusing on education and eradication. In 2000, SWAT’s president won the Nevada Weed Management Association’s Weed Warrior of the Year Award for her exemplary efforts in increasing community weed awareness and control efforts. SWAT’s list of accomplishments continues to grow as the group “pulls together” to effectively address the noxious weed challenge in northeastern Nevada.

**REFERENCES**
McAdoo, J.K. 2001. Northeast Nevada Natural Resources Opinion Survey. Univ. of
