

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Rush skeletonweed
Chondrilla juncea

Other common names: skeletonweed

USDA symbol: CHJU
ODA rating: B and T



Introduction: Native to Eurasia, this invader of rangeland and cereal grain production now infests several million acres in the Pacific Northwest and California. This deep-rooted species is able to draw water deep in the soil profile enabling it to be very drought resistant. Tough latex-filled stems can bind up combines where it has grown thick in cereal grain fields. Skeletonweed is the target of a concerted effort to reduce the spread and impact throughout eastern Oregon.

Distribution: The first documented site in Oregon was 1974 in Douglas County. It is common in SW Oregon counties, Columbia River counties and in Malheur and Baker Counties. It is only a roadside invader in the Willamette Valley.

Description: Rush skeletonweed is a deep-rooted perennial with tough, wiry, latex-filled stems. It grows 1 to 4 feet tall. Bloomtime occurs July to September. It is identified by coarse, downward pointed hairs on the lower 4 to 6 inches of the stems. The stems have almost no leaves. The flowers are yellow, 3/4 inch in diameter with 7 to 15 petals. It spreads primarily by seed, but roots scattered by cultivation can aid in dispersal.

Impacts: Rush skeletonweed is an aggressive plant in both rangeland and cropland, particularly in lower elevation, light textured soils. Cereal grain and potato production areas are impacted by skeletonweed invasion. Impacts include: reduced yield due to competition, harvest difficulties with combine harvesters gumming up with latex sap exuded from the plant. Extensive efforts have been implemented to eradicate or contain outbreaks, but new sites emerge each year.

Biological controls: Four biocontrol agents are approved for release. Three of these, a gall midge, a gall mite and a rust fungus, have been established in Oregon, but have only been effective in reducing seed production. A root-mining moth is established but the long-term effects have not been fully determined.

