

5-year Strategic Plan

Invasive Noxious Weed Control Program Oregon Department of Agriculture



MISSION:

Protecting Oregon's natural resources and agricultural economy from the invasion and proliferation of invasive noxious weeds.

Water primrose, Ludwigia petiolata, encroaching on the Willamette River

Executive Summary

The Oregon Department of Agriculture Invasive Noxious Weed Control Program (ODA) has 40-years of successful leadership working with cooperators to implement invasive noxious weed prevention and control programs.

The investment in invasive weed control has tremendous value to Oregonians. For example, a recent study, *Economic Impact from Selected Noxious Weeds in Oregon* looked at 25 of 128 state listed noxious weeds and estimates that noxious weeds have an \$83.5 million a year impact to Oregon's economy. If uncontrolled the impact potential of these weeds could go up to \$1.8 billion. For every dollar invested in Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) projects, there is a \$34 benefit to Oregon's economy.

To ensure ODA's future success there needs to be adequate flexible funding to support the program. Over the last decade, operating costs have increased while funding support has declined and the program has reached a critical point where funding is not adequate to maintain essential service levels.

This situation provides the opportunity to take a critical review of the program structure, the policies and priorities of the state, and the needs of federal and county partners, and then identify the most valuable services that ODA can provide. This 5-year plan gives direction for restructuring to address current and future needs.

Vision

Provide a stronger statewide presence that fully utilizes our staff's exceptional skills and experience, focus on state invasive weed priorities and emerging needs (e.g., water quality, EDRR, and sensitive species protection), and serves state, federal, county, local, and private land managers. This will require shifting away from dependence on inflexible funding sources to those that allow for priority-driven adaptive management that will best protect Oregon's natural resources from the impacts of invasive weeds.

Where We Are, Where We Should Be, & How We Get There

To better understand our program three basic questions were asked “where are we, where should we be, and how do we get there?” A baseline assessment and economic assessment were completed with input from ODA staff and cooperators. This identified what ODA is doing well (our core priorities and services), constraints of the current structure, and improvements to better serve statewide priorities.

Where we are: A baseline assessment of the program

Program assessments completed:

- **Internal ODA Review:** Staff meeting and outcomes, SWOT Analysis (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats*)
- **External Review:** Noxious Weed Strategic Plan, Listening Session Report that provided County Weed Association and stakeholder input for program needs.
- **County Survey and Assessment**
- **GAP Analysis:** Identified how current resources are being used and how they can be better directed to address current and future needs.
- **Economic Assessment Findings:** *2014 Economic Impact from Selected Noxious Weeds in Oregon*. A study that looked at 25 of 128 state listed noxious weeds and estimates an \$83.5 million per year impact.



A crew prepares to cover recently detected A-listed flowering rush plants in the Columbia River to prevent spread.

Vigilance -Maintaining a solid state and county presence will help ensure invasive weeds are detected early and controlled in a coordinated fashion. It is essential that Oregon maintain a vigil as trade and travel, easy access to exotic species through internet sales, and other intentioned or unintended means provide pathways for more invasive plants to be introduced.

Current Status:

- There is a need for stronger integration of weed management an integral part of restoration and conservation efforts.
- Baseline assessments show partners and cooperators would like a focus on program’s core priorities and services.
- Increasing program costs and declining budgets at the state and federal levels made it difficult to maintain current staffing levels.
- ODA is dependent on federal funding to maintain current staffing levels:
 - ⇒ *Federal contract obligations tie-up core staff time and restricts restructuring process.*
 - ⇒ *Future federal funding is not as reliable for maintaining core staff as it has been in the past.*
- There is a need for county and local capacity to help with state and federal priorities.
 - ⇒ *Need planning and local programs to maintain projects and jointly work with cooperators to sustain viable projects.*
 - ⇒ *Current trends at the local level complicate the issue. Historically strong county programs are struggling due to limited resources (i.e., Wasco, Jefferson, Umatilla).*

Where we are: A baseline assessment of the program

ODA Program Core Priorities and Services:

- **Statewide coordination/organization** (ORS authority, focus on priorities statewide, best use of limited resources, implementing effective control projects, serving on regional/national committees)
- **Focus on high return activities** (prevention, implementing EDRR and priority control projects)
- **Education and outreach activities** (prevention and awareness, OINW Symposium, Oregon State Fair, regional meetings, presentations, materials/brochures, webpage and social media, field tours and demos, research and publications)
- **Technical expertise** (treatment knowledge, increase effectiveness/efficiency of projects and programs, knowledge transfer, statewide experience)
- **Facilitating partnerships** (working with state and federal partners, equipment resource, contracted services, leverage resources, intermediary assistance)
- **Special knowledge and expertise** (statewide management planning, risk assessments, mapping capability, economic assessment, biological control)
- **Noxious weed control grants** (funding local projects, help/guide grantees craft cost effective and efficient projects)
- **Help develop local/county-based programs** (e.g. County programs, CWMAs, etc.)



Illinois Valley *Alyssum murale* treatment site -The Illinois Valley contains the largest concentration of serpentine soils in Oregon and supports a diverse and unique flora. Fifteen plant taxa have conservation status in the area. The invasive alyssum is native to Eastern Europe and infests serpentine soils.



Dalmatian toadflax, an emerging success in biological control - Studies are documenting the positive results in the decline of Dalmatian toadflax by 50% of historic levels from the establishment of stem-boring weevil (*Mecinus janthinus*). Some sites have been documented to have reduction of 90%. The results are protecting a potential 3,172,400 acres of range and cropland resources in core sage grouse habitat.



Yellow floating heart was discovered on the Willamette River in 2015.

Protecting Oregon's Investment -Millions are invested in restoration projects for habitat and water quality improvements. Invasive species can undo all of this. Two A-listed noxious weeds, flowering rush and yellow floating heart, have the potential to clog irrigation canals, alter water quality, and threaten native fisheries. ODA and partners are implementing EDRR projects to detect and control these species.

Where we should be: A shift in program priorities and funding

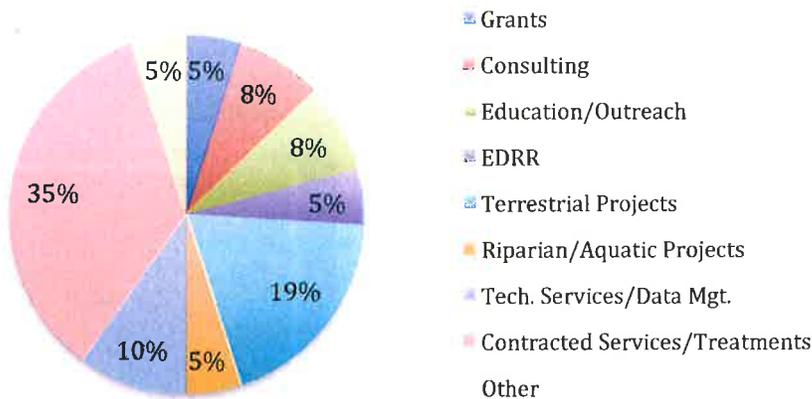
- **Redirect ODA staff toward core priorities**
- **Support core staff with state funding**
- **Reduce dependency on federal contracts**
- **Expand focus to ecosystem function, water quality, threats to sensitive species, etc.**
- **Align ODA's Noxious Weed Management Program with priority policies of the state** (i.e., Oregon's 10-Year Healthy Environment to manage natural resources to sustain economic, environment and human health).
- **Support local services** and funding of county weed support through ORS 569.520
- **Expand county and local roles:** move counties into some current ODA activities, federal contracting, B-listed weed management
- **Complete administrative rule for county funding process**



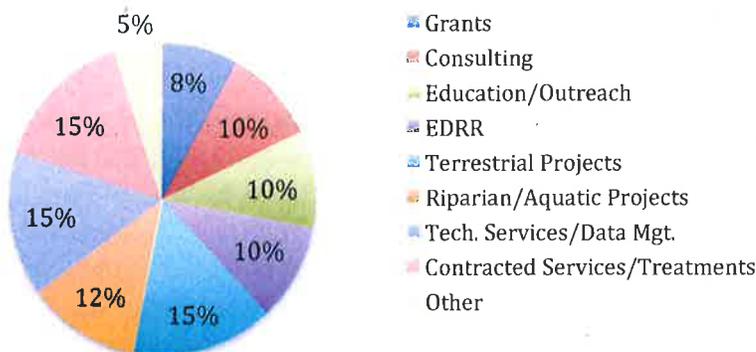
Noxious Weeds Impact our Streams and Rivers - For example, purple loosestrife invades riparian habitats where it excludes native vegetation; in-turn reduces the numbers of indigenous insects that rely on the native vegetation. Expansive populations of purple loosestrife can impact native salmonids by altering food cycles. Fortunately, less than 1% of Oregon's rivers are impacted. ODA implemented a highly successful biological control program for loosestrife, which resulted in fewer river miles impacted.

Water Primrose, *Ludwigia peploides* - Aquatic invader, water primrose, invades and impacts water resources along the Russian River in Mendocino County, CA. This invader has begun to propagate and spread in the Willamette River system in Oregon.

2014 Staff Time Breakout



5-Year Shift of Staffing Time to Core Services



How we get there

Years 1-2:

Develop funding package for 2017-19 and request funds

- Identify the amount of funding needed at ODA and county levels and how that funding will be used
- ODA core program funding package for core staff and infrastructure
- County funding

Year 3:

Establish county weed program base funding

- ODA rule making for administrative rule, OSWB to fund county programs ORS 569. 520
- Transition ODA to Core program functions (Coordination, EDRR, Biological Control, Aquatics)
- Assist counties to develop assistance grant RFP's for base programs
- Select and fund county programs that meet outlined criteria (*Ex. Must be a county weed district*)

Year 4-5:

Review and evaluate progress

- Evaluate ODA transition to core program functions and priorities
- Evaluate first year of County funding program grants

Performance measures

- ODA Legislative Benchmarks
- Establish targets and standards to measure ODA's core activities
- Grant monitoring and review
- Establish targets for County and local capacity

Evaluation

- Continue ODA Benchmark evaluation
- Measure ODA core standard
- Measure County capacity, local capacity achievement
- Seek internal and external feedback on what is working and not working
- Review progress and feedback and take corrective measures where needed to refine processes to increase efficiencies

ORS 569.180, Noxious weeds as public nuisance -In recognition of the imminent and continuous threat to natural resources, watershed health, livestock, wildlife, land and agricultural products of this state, and in recognition of the widespread infestations and potential infestations of noxious weeds throughout this state, noxious weeds are declared to be a public nuisance and shall be detected, controlled and, where feasible, eradicated on all lands in this state. It is declared to be the policy of this state that priority shall be given first to the prevention of new infestations of noxious weeds and then to the control and, where feasible, eradication of noxious weeds in infested areas.

State noxious weed control laws

ORS -Provides authority to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Counties, Oregon State University, and the Oregon State Weed Board.

County Weed Control Programs

-Formation of county weed control district authority is outlined in ORS 569.360. For success throughout Oregon an essential component is local capacity and infrastructure. County noxious weed control programs are responsible for working with local land managers in implementing many of the B-designated noxious weed control projects. County Weed Control Programs can be run through the county road departments or county soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs).

Conclusion:

The goals of the ODA Invasive Noxious Weed Control Program are to provide the leadership, communication, and capacity for technical support to stakeholders for invasive weeds management, and have the staff and equipment infrastructure in place regionally to both coordinate and implement invasive weed management projects. These projects are directly tied to natural resource management strategies at federal, state, county and local levels.

Controlling invasive noxious weeds is a critical component in achieving success in areas of water quality/quantity and fish and wildlife habitat preservation, especially salmon and the greater sage grouse. This also includes preserving recreational opportunities, ensuring a robust agricultural economy, and achieving overall functioning watersheds free of invasive weeds. To achieve the above goals, the program needs support of policy makers through stable flexible funding.



Douglas County -Paterson's curse, *Echium plantagineum*, invading oak woodland and pasture