

Tamarisk Coalition Newsletter

May 2004

Newsletter: The newsletter in the past has been more sporadic than the Coalition had hoped for. Our intentions are to provide better information and to be timelier in its distribution. One problem we have faced is keeping up with our database of people which seems to be growing exponentially, and now exceeds 1,000 – a big jump from 125 two years ago. We will be sending the newsletter out every two months and will concentrate on partnerships being developed within states to tackle the tamarisk problem, as well as legislation (both state and federal), control and revegetation techniques, and education. The Tamarisk Coalition is seeking broader input by having each state represented by a designated liaison to provide information on what is happening at that state's level. Periodic special reports will be sent out detailing specific actions a particular state or watershed is doing. We are hopeful that these changes will better fit your needs. Another change this summer will be updating the Coalition's website to include more links and information.

Legislation: The bills before Congress, HR 2707 EH and S1516, continue to be moved and supported. The House bill was passed in late February and the Senate bill is anticipated to pass in May. Funding under this legislation would provide approximately \$100,000,000 over 5 years to western states at 75% federal/25% local match. Both bills can be viewed at www.thomas.loc.gov If you get the chance, thank your Representatives and Senators for their efforts in moving these bills forward.

Bio-control Activities: Over the winter, the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issued an Environmental Assessment that supported the releases of the Chinese leaf beetle (*Diorhabda elongata deserticola*, from Fukang, in Xianjiang Province of NW China). It has been tested extensively in quarantine to ensure safety with respect to non-target impacts. Proposed releases would occur in the northern western states. Currently, APHIS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are in discussion on the conditions for issuing permits for these releases. The Coalition will provide information through this Newsletter when a decision is made.

Mapping: The USGS in Ft. Collins, Colorado is preparing a comprehensive database for mapping tamarisk throughout the country. The Tamarix Cooperative Mapping Initiative (T-Map) is a cooperative partnership designed to combat the invasion of tamarisk into North American landscapes. The primary mission of T-Map is to provide real-time, accurate, locational information on current tamarisk populations and infestations. USGS aims to provide a 'bulletin board' like setting in which trusted land managers, scientists, and concerned public may contribute data about known occurrences. Information on the T-Map Initiative can be found at <http://squall.nrel.colostate.edu/cwis438/tmap/index.html>

Team Tamarisk: On March 31, 2004 in Albuquerque, NM, over 300 federal, state, local, and tribal representatives from all levels of government, the public and private sectors came together

to discuss the challenges of managing tamarisk and developing sustainable habitats in their place. The conference included representatives from approximately 19 states, with the focus on the Southwestern states where tamarisk is a problem.

The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture, the National Invasive Species Council, the Tamarisk Coalition, and 13 other organizations and was called *Team Tamarisk: Cooperating for Results*. The outcome of the two-day workshop was a set of 12 guiding principals that can help to establish a framework for forging close working partnerships among states and federal agencies. See <http://www.invasivespecies.gov/teamtam/> Other information contained, or soon to be added, on this website that could be of interest includes: agenda, attendees, speakers, grant information, Tamarix Cooperative Mapping Initiative, volunteerism, and abstracts on posters presented at the conference.

Brief Summaries of Some Western State Actions on Tamarisk Presented by State Weed Coordinators at the Team Tamarisk Workshop

Colorado – In 1997, Colorado designated tamarisk as a noxious weed (*T. chinensis*, *T. parviflora*, and *T. ramosissima*) and banned its sale in 1998. Over the past several years a number of local watershed initiatives have developed with the cooperation of public and private interests to address tamarisk and riparian plant community health. Increasingly, these efforts are maturing to include larger and larger segments of particular watersheds such as the Upper Arkansas, Upper Colorado, and South Platte River watersheds. In 2003, Governor Owens issued an executive order to state agencies requiring the removal of tamarisk on all public lands. This executive order also tasked the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with other agencies and public interest groups, to craft a 10-year strategic plan to address tamarisk and restore riparian plant communities throughout Colorado. This plan is now in its very early phases of implementation (see http://dnr.state.co.us/Complete_Tamarisk_10_year_%20plan.pdf). In addition, Colorado plans to commit its extensive resources and facilities for biological control toward the rapid development and implementation of tamarisk bio-control in Colorado and the region.

Montana – Montana has a Tamarisk Plan in place and a State Task Force Committee that deals with this problem. The state is trying to take an aggressive approach to this weed, the counties are trying all types of different control methods and it is being mapped when it is found. One problem that has been found is that the weed is showing up 30 to 50 miles away from the rivers that have infestations. Most of these infestations are around stock ponds and small reservoirs. The state has good cooperation with all agencies (some better than others) but the state is working to make sure all agencies work on this problem and become a part of the solution.

Nebraska – Currently in Nebraska salt cedar is on the state's "Watch List." This list has no legal authority but it is used as a way to track new invasive plants and conduct public awareness concerning these invasive species. Within the state several weed management areas have been formed in the past 12 months. While salt cedar is not the only and main focus, it is being surveyed and in many areas being treated aggressively. There may be a push to add salt cedar and phragmites to the state's noxious weed list. Fortunately, many counties are looking for salt cedar and in most cases trying to treat it with limited resources. Unfortunately, some don't do any

more than they have to. The state is continually trying to educate the counties as well as the public about the devastating effects that salt cedar can have in Nebraska.

Nevada – Tamarisk is listed as noxious in Nevada. Currently *T. ramosissima* and *parviflora* are listed; a request will be presented to the Board of Agriculture as of the May 2004 meeting to list all species and cultivars of tamarisk. Bio-control efforts are ongoing in Nevada and are quite successful in the north (Lovelock) with continuing efforts for the southern parts of the state (Schurz and Stillwater). ARS and NDOA are working together diligently in this arena. Southern Nevada controls are centered on the efforts of the NPS exotic plant management team, the BLM, and the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Many areas on the Virgin and Muddy Rivers are currently under or being considered for control (mechanical and chemical). There are currently no groups or policies set up specifically for tamarisk. As a state listed noxious plant, sales of tamarisk are illegal; the listing of all species/cultivars will further strengthen this ban. Several of the newly formed Cooperative Weed Management Areas around the state are conducting tamarisk control and have listed it as a priority species for their groups.

New Mexico – To date, New Mexico State Government has appropriated \$11.3 million for non-native phreatophyte control run by the soil and water conservation districts. With this year's appropriation, \$500,000 was earmarked for the development of a strategic plan for saltcedar control. Additionally, the Interagency Weed Action Group has developed a statewide strategic plan for the management of woody riparian invasives. Subcommittees have been formed under this effort to prioritize research needs and create a plan for developing an inventory of these species.

North Dakota – Saltcedar was first documented in ND in 2001 along the Yellowstone River. In 2001, a joint effort between the ND Dept. of Ag, ND Game & Fish, and McKenzie County Weed Board scouted ~ 60% of the Yellowstone River in ND. A large-scale saltcedar survey and control venture along the Yellowstone and Lake Sakakawea was conducted in 2002 to determine the extent of saltcedar spread. The data collected in 2002 were used to leverage \$250,000 from the state legislature to survey and control saltcedar for the 2003-05 biennium. In January of 2002, the USACE, with assistance from the ND Dept. of Ag, started a Lake Sakakawea Saltcedar Taskforce. Cooperating entities are the USACE, USFS, USDA-APHIS, USFWS, ND Dept. of Ag, ND Game & Fish, ND Parks & Rec. Dept, Three Affiliated Tribes, and six county weed boards. Today, the Western North Dakota Weed Management group encompasses the Little Missouri River from the SD border to Lake Sakakawea, the Lake Sakakawea Saltcedar Taskforce, and the recently formed Lake Oahe saltcedar Taskforce. The Lake Oahe group was started by the ND Dept. of Ag and the Emmons County Weed Board. This group consists of USACE, USDA-APHIS, USFWS, NRCS, BIA, ND Dept. of Ag, SD Dept. of Ag, ND Parks & Rec, ND Game & Fish, SD Game, Fish & Parks, (SRST) Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (ND & SD), Cheyenne Tribe (SD), SRST-EPA, SRST-Game & Fish, four counties in ND, and eight counties in SD. In ND, the state is on the forefront of saltcedar, thus an eradication mode. Currently, the state has ~ 350 infested acres of saltcedar and all but ~ 5 known acres have been treated chemically. As of now, there has not been found a site suitable for biological control agents, as the largest single infestation is .4 acres.

South Dakota – During the past three years South Dakota has mapped tamarisk on all or major portions of the Cheyenne, Belle Fourche, White, and some portions of the Missouri Rivers. The Department of Agriculture will continue with tamarisk mapping this summer by mapping the

James and Sioux rivers in Eastern SD. The state has started a cooperative management program with the Tribes, BIA, USFS, USF&WS, US Army COE, SDGFP, S&PL, DOA and six western counties. The emphasis of the management area will be control and, if possible, eradication of tamarisk in these counties this summer. A tamarisk task force has been started for Lake Oahe bring in the all the bordering counties in North and South Dakota, USF&WS, APHIS, US Army COE, BIA, the Tribes ND and SD GFP, NRCS, and both Departments of Agriculture. The state is also working on finding suitable sites for release of bio-control agents this summer. In addition, tamarisk will be placed on the SD quarantine list so it will be illegal to sell or transport it.

Texas – The state has been treating tamarisk primarily on the Pecos River with a combination of local water district, state appropriations, and federal EQIP funds. \$1.375 million in new EQIP funds are available, but there may be difficulty finding money for the 25% match. Streamside landowners often benefit little from matching programs - the real benefit accrues to the State itself. Farm Bill money such as EQIP is geared to contracting with the individual landowner so in some ways it's not a great fit. The funding is very helpful but EQIP is not designed to attack invasive species at a watershed scale.

The Colorado River Municipal Water District is working with our State Soil and Water Conservation Board on an EPA 319 Water quality improvement project using brush control on upland species in the tributaries of an impaired segment of the Colorado River in Texas to serve as match for EPA fed funds to control salt cedar on the Colorado River. Virtually every major river and tributary west of the 100th meridian in Texas is heavily infested with salt cedar, from the Canadian to the Rio Grande Rivers. This is more river miles than several other states combined. The state is also cooperating with Dr. Jack De Loach at the ARS field Station in Temple in the use of *Diorhabda* beetles from Eurasia to assault new infestations and follow-up where major herbicide treatments have already been made. So far control efforts using helicopters with Arsenal herbicide applied under a Section 24 c special registration appear to be getting excellent results with a high margin of environmental safety.

Utah – Utah has organized a tamarisk task force. This was done through the Utah Weed Control Association. The task force has developed a very rough draft of a strategic management plan. The state has not declared tamarisk as a noxious weed, but is considering it.

Washington – In Washington State, *Tamarix ramosissima* and *T. parviflora*. *T. ramosissima* has spread in several areas of our state, while *T. parviflora* has not as yet. The state has had a multi-jurisdictional Saltcedar Task Force made up of Federal, State and County agencies and other concerned entities in place for over 10 years. It is currently list it as a Class “B” weed. However, it was listed as a Class “A” until 2002 when it was decided there were too many acres going untreated to defend its “A” status (which requires eradication by state law). There are currently about 300 solid acres of *T. ramosissima* in Washington spread out over several thousand acres. The majority of the plants are in two counties, Grant and Franklin. About 80% of the infestation lies on Federal lands, mostly USF&W and Bureau of Reclamation. About 10% is on State Fish and Wildlife lands and the other 10% on County and private lands. It is on the state’s quarantine list making it unlawful to buy, sell, transport or offer for sale *T. ramosissima* in Washington State. The State Legislature made available \$200,000 dollars in the 1996/1997 biennium for saltcedar control and 512 acres of saltcedar were treated. Since that time, the state has been fighting it with an extremely limited amount of funding from Federal, State and County sources.

The state still considers itself to be in eradication mode but limited resources for survey and for our Federal partners in particular make this difficult.

Wyoming – Saltcedar is increasing its range and density in Wyoming, is present in all but one county in the state, and is present in every major drainage leaving the State. Wyoming is at the top of the watershed. Weed management activities that may or may not take place in Wyoming have a dramatic effect on states downstream from us. In 1998, Wyoming listed saltcedar as a Designated Noxious Weed. Wyoming does not have a saltcedar task force, but the Weed and Pest Districts are very capable of establishing priorities and developing programs based on the needs of local cooperators. They have been very effective at reducing the population size of a number of species through communication and cooperation between the Districts, the Wyoming Weed and Pest Council, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture and other state and federal agencies. Every Wyoming Weed and Pest District (23 Districts are county-wide) is now required to have an effective program to control saltcedar.

Districts with small acreage are completing herbicide treatments on small infestations as they are located. Districts with large infestations are trying to contain the advancing edge of infestations and eradicate small infestations outside of the main infestation. Large infestations will require biological controls to reduce the problem to a manageable size. Biological control agent research is in the limited open field release stage for the last few years with some promising results. USDA APHIS is planning more far-ranging open field releases in Wyoming and other northern states in the summer of 2004. Funding for weed management activities is always an important issue in every state involved with saltcedar management, and Wyoming is no exception. Weed species needing management continue to increase, and management funds are always less than what is needed to meet the scope of the problem. The Wyoming State Weed Team is focusing its efforts of early detection and rapid response to new threats. Any new funding for saltcedar control in Wyoming would be welcome, and the benefits of a reduced seed source for downstream neighbors would be appreciated.

Funding the Tamarisk Coalition

As with all non-profits, funding is an ongoing issue. We are working on grants and private donations, and any assistance and suggestions will be greatly appreciated. The Tamarisk Coalition's work has mushroomed this spring and we need YOUR help to accomplish it. Please send in your membership dues if you haven't already. See www.tamariskcoalition.org. Your continued support is essential for the Tamarisk Coalition so we can help you on your tamarisk control efforts and the long-term reestablishment of native vegetation along the West's rivers and streams.

Thanks for your patience with us on getting this latest Newsletter out.

Happy trails,

Tim Carlson

Tim Carlson, Executive Director