

Pulling Together

Purgatoire Watershed Weed Management Collaborative



African rue



Russian knapweed



hoary cress



Scotch thistle

Noxious Weed Photos Courtesy of the CO Department of Agriculture and Tamarisk Coalition



musk thistle



Russian-olive



tamarisk

The High Cost of Noxious Weeds

Counties within the Purgatoire Watershed depend on their natural resources for economic well-being and quality of life. Agriculture, recreation, and energy production; each of these industries depend upon quality natural resources and informed resource management as the basis to a sustainable economy. Experienced land managers recognize that invasive plant species, or “weeds”, pose one of the biggest threats to the long-term health of the Purgatoire Watershed. Whether through declining agricultural productivity, degraded wildlife habitat or simply the ongoing costs associated with noxious weed control, the economic costs are staggering.

Colorado State University conducted research (2014) on the economic impacts of weeds <http://www.cwma.org/docs/2014%20Econ%20Impact.pdf>. The report indicates that the annual direct cost to the State of Colorado is \$14 million with agriculture, wildlife and recreational values all being similar. This cost is too high, and will only increase unless local communities become more proactive and collaboratively tackle noxious weeds.



Tamarisk infestation in the Chacuaco drainage—Photo SL Simmons

Is there a Solution?

Weed control can be expensive and difficult, *especially* if landowners tackle it on their own. But there is a long-term solution for weed management that can effectively and substantially reduce negative economic and environmental impacts:

The Purgatoire Watershed Weed Management Collaborative – An independent, strategically focused, financially self-sustaining weed collaborative for the Purgatoire Watershed

In January of 2016 the **Purgatoire Watershed Weed Management Collaborative (PWWMC)** was formalized by three key partners entering into an MOU: Tamarisk Coalition, Spanish Peaks-Purgatoire River Conservation District, and the Purgatoire Watershed Partnership. Las Animas County is also a key partner and is working in tandem with the PWWMC coordinating resources, mapping and control efforts, and education and outreach efforts. There are many other active partners supporting this effort as well.

Can it be Done? What will it Cost?

Implementation efforts are already underway: In April 2016 PWWMC hired a coordinator as a result of receiving several grants. The coordinator's focus is watershed-wide and will be centered on establishing the PWWMC as a permanent organization that is:

INDEPENDENT – An entity that can partner with public agencies, landowners, NGO's and other organizations while maintaining its independence and sticking to its strategic priorities.

STRATEGICALLY FOCUSED – An entity with clear priorities and realistic goals that address 1) threats to agricultural, natural resource and local economic sustainability, and 2) opportunities to attract additional partners and resources to increase effectiveness and sustainability.

FINANCIALLY SELF-SUSTAINING – An entity with support from replicable/predictable local sources, with robust fundraising and grant writing to also draw support from outside resources.

Partners are currently putting together an organizational business plan for the PWWMC so estimated annual operating costs are roughly *estimated* at approximately \$150,000 to support staff and operational materials such as sophisticated mapping technology and field equipment. Minimum permanent personnel include a coordinator, field crew supervisor and one crew member, and possible seasonal crews.

Pulling Together: We Need Your Help!

In order to realize the full potential of the PWWMC as a permanent independent organization, support and active participation from local governments, communities, landowners, organizations, businesses and corporations is essential. The high cost of noxious weeds affects *everyone* and time is of the essence. The longer we wait, the more new weed infestations emerge, the larger existing weed infestations become, and the more damage is caused to the environment, recreational opportunities and agricultural production, translating to negative economic impacts. The time to act is now to ensure long-term, lower-net costs to local economies, and long-term protection of the Purgatoire Watershed.

Contact Information

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