



Gallatin County Weed Board

Regular Monthly Meeting

October 3, 2019 1:15 pm

ATTENDEES:

- **Board members:** Keith Mainwaring, Fred Bell, Noelle Orloff, and Bob Hofman.
- **Others:** John Ansley (Coordinator), Mike Jones (Assistant Coordinator), and Danielle Jones (Program Assistant)

MINUTES: Fred moved to accept the September minutes as written, Noelle seconded, and all approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

- There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Public Comment:** No public were present.
- **Monthly Report Q&A:**
 - Discussion included the number of subdivision Weed Management Plans that have been received recently.
- **Commissioner Report:**
 - Commissioner MacFarlane was not present.
- **Coordinators Report:**
 - **Ventenata Tour.** On September 16, John and Mike attended a tour of ventenata sites in the Rocky Mountain Road area. One of the properties had a significant infestation of ventenata that had doubled in size over the past year. Jane Mangold's (MSU) ventenata research plots on private land in that area were also toured.
 - **Ophir School/GISA Field Trip.** On September 13 Mike and Danielle attended a field trip in Big Sky with 2nd graders from Ophir School. The students were divided into groups and then rotated through various stations throughout the day. Each station used games to teach the kids about different aspects of weeds (weed id, AIS, spread of seeds, etc). The new Southwest Area education trailer was used for one of the stations and was a hit.
 - **Spray Update.** John reviewed the areas that were sprayed in September, as well as the areas that will be sprayed in October, weather permitting. Jim Simon, the manager of the landfill, has agreed to pay the Weed District for any weed control activities from this year and last year using money from the landfill Enterprise fund. In the future, he may hire an applicator to helicopter spray since it is such a large area (a section of land) and then hire a ground applicator to spray areas around the buildings.
 - **Complaints/Enforcement Update.** John gave an update on active complaints. The invoice was sent out for the property that was sprayed in the Springhill area, and was not paid, so the request was sent to the Clerk and Recorder to attach the bill to the taxes. A court order was obtained for a property owned by Meadow Creek Partners. This same property was previously sprayed by the

Weed District in a 2014 enforcement treatment. John and Mike will spray the property (about 30 acres). Mike reviewed the status of other complaints that will likely carry over into next year, including a 2 ½ acre property in Sypes Canyon, a 300+ acre property in the Trail Creek area, and ½ an acre of knapweed and musk thistle on a 600 acre+ property on Toohey Road. There was a discussion about how previously the county attorney had informed the Weed District that commercial applicators that are hired to treat properties for enforcement are not covered under the county insurance policy. This effectively eliminates the use of commercial applicators for enforcement, which greatly increases the work burden on the Weed District when complaints are filed. During one of the recent enforcement actions there was an encounter with the landowner while spraying, which spurred a discussion about safety. There was a suggestion that a county Sheriff's Deputy could be present during enforcement to deal with irate landowners and present the court order if necessary.

- **Enforcement Policy.** John and Mike stated that they would like to revisit the enforcement policy and potentially make some changes this winter. They discussed many factors contributing to the need for changes. These included: the increasing population in the county and changing demographic which results in more complaints and more time spent on complaints; the inability to use commercial applicators for enforcement and the increased work load this causes; the use of court orders that last three years, creating a long term commitment to treat properties; the fact that complaints are not necessarily filed against the worst properties, raising questions about fairness and the effectiveness of putting so much time into a complaint that will not improve the weed problem in the county overall. All of this results in a loss of time for other important services provided by the Weed District. It was suggested that outreach efforts might be more effective for achieving long term weed management in the county by reaching more people that may be interested in managing weeds on their property for the long term. Potential changes to the policy that were suggested included: covering applicators under the county insurance policy; contracting out more county properties to make time to deal with the complaints; focusing only on priority weed species such as new invaders or those that are not already widespread, where the result of management is more significant; and referring complaints within subdivisions to the home owners association for resolution. John asked the board to bring to the next board meeting any ideas and suggestions they might have for revising the enforcement process to increase its' effectiveness.

- **Roundtable, Discussion Included:**

- A large infestation of purple loosestrife was potentially identified along the Madison River in Gallatin County, between Cobblestone fishing access site and the interstate.
- Winter projects include drafting a drone policy and possibly some more common buckthorn removal and treatment.

Meeting dismissed at 2:35 pm

Next scheduled meeting: November 7th, 2019, 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Danielle Jones, Program Assistant