



## Gallatin County Weed Board

### Regular Monthly Meeting

October 5, 2023 1:15 pm

#### ATTENDEES:

- **Board members:** Steve Saunders, Ed Brainard, and Noelle Orloff.
- **Others:** John Ansley (Coordinator), Danielle Jones (Assistant Coordinator), and Elizabeth D'Imperio (Gallatin County Extension Agent). Remotely: Mike Jones (Assistant Coordinator).

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no members of the public present.

**MINUTES:** Ed moved to approve the September 7, 2023 meeting minutes as written, Noelle seconded and the motion passed.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

- **Witchgrass Management.** The discussion continued from last month about the explosion of witchgrass along roads in the county. There is concern that the weed will move into adjacent grain fields and cause problems for farmers. Roadsides are a vector of spread, and management of roadsides may be influencing the spread of the plant. Since witchgrass is a native plant, it will never be listed as a noxious weed and there was a discussion about the role that the Weed District should play in managing and educating the public about this plant. Elizabeth from Extension also participated in the discussion, which included potential opportunities for education within the grain grower community since many farmers may not be aware of this grass. Elizabeth mentioned that many grain growers attend Crop School, and this could be a good place to include a discussion about witchgrass. Local ag businesses, such as Circle S Seeds, Ag Depot, and Nutrien may be good places for getting the word out to producers as well.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

- **Monthly Report Q&A, Discussion Included:**
  - Apparent slowdown in subdivision weed management plans that have been received.
  - Questions about the Woody Invasives Task Force meeting.
- **Commissioner Report:**
  - Zach was not present.
- **Coordinators Report:**
  - **Recognition Award.** John gave an update on the presentation of the landowner recognition award. Mel Chrichton, who was nominated by Jen of Grow Wild, will receive the award this year. The award will be presented at a Commission meeting in December because that is the soonest that Mel and Jen can attend. The exact date will be determined in the near future and the Board will be informed so that they can attend the meeting.
  - **Spray Update.** John summarized the areas that had been sprayed by the Weed District over the past few weeks, including the Regional Park and the dog park, Glenn Lake Rec Area, the West Yellowstone area, and around the Fairgrounds. John will probably start putting signs up a few days in advance when spraying the dog park in the future (instead of one day), because this park is very heavily used and people have asked for more notice.
  - **Complaints Update.** Complaints are still being received, especially from the Big Sky area.

- **Grants Update.** The Weed District will be writing a new grant application this fall for the Willow Creek/Milligan Canyon area. A meeting was held last week at the Willow Creek Fire Hall to share information about the grant with landowners, answer questions, and get the forms that are needed to write the application. Seven landowners attended, but around 14 landowners will likely be participating. The grant area will be large and will include land from Gallatin, Jefferson, Broadwater, and Madison counties. The North Bridgers WMA grant is in the last year and should close out soon. Landowners in the Lyman Creek WMA grant had spraying done this year, but there will be some money left over for spraying next summer. Landowners in the Bill Smith WMA grant were not able to get the spraying done this year so will use up all the money next summer.
- **Upcoming Meetings/Trainings.** John summarized the upcoming meetings that will be attended, including the Fall Weed Managers training on October 17 and 18 in Livingston and the SW Area meeting in Whitehall on November 14.
- **Common Reed.** The Weed District recently confirmed an infestation of invasive Common Reed in the county. A woman had purchased cut plants at the farmers market and notified the Weed District when she realized that they may be Common Reed. The Weed District tracked down the vendor and found the location where the plants were harvested. Common Reed is a Priority 1A noxious weed and is currently confirmed in only two other locations in the state, so containment and eradication are the goals. Positive identification of Common Reed is difficult because it closely resembles a native subspecies that also grows in the county. The Schutter Lab (Noelle) and other experts (Matt Lavin) have agreed that it is likely the invasive subspecies of Common Reed. The plants are growing in two separate ditches in the Woodland Park subdivision south of Huffine. Luckily, the ditches seem to be mainly for storm drainage, and inputs and outputs of water are limited. However, there is a stagnant wetland connected to one of the ditches that will have to be monitored in the future. Josh from MDA came down yesterday to look at the area and will return next week to help with management of the infestations. The plan is to remove and bag the seed heads and then spray the cut plants with herbicide. The seed heads will be incinerated. The infestations are on private land, and the landowners have been notified and are cooperative. One of the ditches is slated to be piped and paved over soon, and Mike has been working with the developer to ensure that the weed is properly disposed of and that rhizomes are not spread around in fill dirt or on equipment. It was agreed that it would be good to try to spread the word to other groups (e.g. irrigators, HOA and subdivision residents) to keep an eye out for any additional infestations in the area. MDA will do a statewide press release and provide information on social media as well.
- **Roundtable, Discussion Included:**
  - The list of commercial applicators kept by the Weed District.
  - Another infestation of Palmer Amaranth was found in Montana growing in a crop field. It was thought to have come from contaminated millet seed.
- **Proposed Agenda Items for Next Meeting.**
  - Update on Common Reed.
  - Update on Willow Creek grant and other grants.

Meeting dismissed at 2:25 pm.

Next scheduled meeting: November 2, 2023, 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Danielle Jones