

Fremont County Weed Control

Honorable Commissioners

December 28, 2009

Lasha, Norden, Stiehl

Fremont County Manager

George Sugars

Fremont County Weed Board Members

Paul Telck, President

Fremont Conservation District

RE: Weed Control Report 2009

2009 was an exceptional year for weeds following good rains in the Spring. Off-season grant applications for numerous grants offered an opportunity to increase our administrative work schedule. Four Mile grants to enhance local landowner support were sought in support of Fremont County residents and landowners along the major drainages leading into the Arkansas from the south for the fourth year. Other fourth-year projects supported by the NRCS were WHIP, EQIP and EPA's Five Star.

Southern Colorado experienced a super crop of weeds especially White top and Scotch thistles. Once again, infestations of weeds brought numerous requests from landowners and political decision-makers throughout Southern Colorado. Part-time assistance from Jana Gregg eased the work load and reinforced the increased need for manpower for 2009. Putting the two Side by Side's, Teryx and John Deere XUV's respectfully into daily production increased efficiencies measurably.

Elongated Mustard at Wellsville continues to thrive but under control. Colorado Department of Agriculture committed to funding a control effort again this season. Larry Walker of Chaffee County, Fred Singleton his assistant, Kelly Uhing, State Weed Coordinator, Jana Gregg, and other Colorado State Weed Board personnel participated in a field tour onsite early in the year. Regrowth treatment was provided during the same growing season.

This past year's development and implementation of mining property related "Weed Management Plans" provided a significant opportunity to become more involved with present and future decision-makers and landowners in the Gravel industry. Once again our department assisted Fremont Planning and Zoning in reviews and the establishment of site specific "Weed Management Plans. Major involvement included the development of Weed Management Plans for Rocky Mountain Materials and Aggregate Source here in Fremont

County. An arrangement to treat tamarisk and related research was made with HOLCIM.

Once again, fall brought a return to aerial Tamarisk control; Eastern Fremont County, Pueblo, Huerfano, Otero and Bent Counties were sprayed. The area comprised numerous drainages in Southern Colorado and yielded application on nearly 923 actual acres. Due to years of experience in the area local NRCS offices, State Forest Service, DOW and major landowners banded together to treat or retreat over 878 acres aerially utilizing the services of Olathe Spray Services. Again, I was asked to coordinate the entire operation that spanned a four week period. An overall cost of less than \$142.00 per acre was set even though our costs-per-acre in 2008 was just under \$200.00.

Highlights of 2009:

- Attended required training to maintain Colorado Department of Agriculture Qualified Supervisors license.
- Spot-Sprayed extensive stands of White-Top in Canon City (North Canon drainage ditches, selected Canon City areas).
- Supported City of Florence River Park and Pathfinder Park under the Five- Star grant in final report phase.
- Sprayed Airport, County shop, Justice Center and other county facilities and roads.
- Provided some Leafy Spurge, control effort for BLM in Custer and Rye Colorado.
- Supported Custer County in Landowner, County Roads and State CDOT, Weed Board meetings and tours.
- Provided limited landowner support in Custer County (Cost Share).
- Tamarisk effort from funded support grant allowed a follow up effort in Chico Creek and a field trip to PCD. NRCS (Rick Romano, Janet Barnhart and Patty Knupp) again supplied significant field support and technical backup for all activities.
- Canada thistle and Knapweed were treated in Custer County and Fremont with Milestone herbicide.
- Provided a spring Weed Identification Weed Tour.
- Managers' position continues to have a limited support to Road and Bridge for Safety compliance, Water Rights/Mine permitting. This year, herbicide and service was not charged to R&B for budget purposes.
- Provided cost share benefits to local landowners.

- A significant Yellow Star thistle infestation on the border of Custer and Pueblo Counties was readdressed as part of a cooperative effort with Pueblo County and the Turkey Creek Conservation District.
- Results are estimated to be just over \$200,000 inflow of funds from all sources in 2009 but with more overall expenses. One landowner has yet to pay approximately \$20,000 and the purchase of the pickup combined indicate a budget overrun of approximately \$16000. Resolving the unpaid balance and stretching the pay-back on the pickup over several years as originally planned should remedy this issue. These are estimates only at this time as it will be February 2010 before all budgetary elements are known and accounted.
- An ongoing research effort initiated at HOLCIM, Greens Centennial Ranch and Phillips Ranch on the Hardscrabble and Four Mile was initiated by Dr. Scott Nissen and Cameron Douglas. Expected results should show a significant reduction of Tamarisk and Russian olive in the treated area and provide evidence for grant reports .
- Hiring Tom Grette to assist and serve as liaison on all BLM projects is already increased our winter season production while increasing our service to BLM.

Plans for 2010

Winter 2009-10 Continue to canvas and meet with as many landowners and managers prior to the 2010-growing season. Prepare reports as required for grants in aid, attend retraining, annual state conference, serve on Board of CWMA following re-election, (Chairman of Legislative Committee), assist in CWMA Spring Training Conference. Repair, restock and modify equipment at new airport location. Modify mapping, attend local meetings, plan with NRCS, BLM and general public. Budget includes rehiring a seasonal full-time position in 2010 and to hire Tom Grette (retired BLM) to assist on BLM projects.

Spring 2010 Continued local education will be the goal for the coming year. Cooperators can be our best means to eventual control of important weeds. Training landowners to recognize properties of infestation, to contact weed management professionals, and to develop Weed Management Plans should enhance compliance. Owners are cooperating and many are seeking cooperative cost-share agreements with emphasis on Four-Mile and other drainages. Legislative efforts with CWMA lobbyist, Peak Resources shall include the development of a state bill to support local weed control expense.

Late Spring and Early Summer Providing and/or Supplying herbicides to self-help managers should be enhanced as Van Diest Supply will have a warehouse in Fremont county. Provide a field experience for active Board Members regarding Knapweed in areas of heavy infestations. Some landowners will receive compliance letters. Provide area-wide publicity on the efforts. Develop meaningful long-term Weed Management Plans and assistance as required to Gravel mining operators.

Summer and Fall Review of grant proposals for 2009-2012 efforts, funding and reporting progress to decision-makers will continue. Our goal will continue to be to cut costs to a minimum, increase weed control efforts and compliance as suggested above and to put the burden and management on problem area managers. Provide active on-the-ground education and more effort through hands-on training and notification of landowners should increase manageable control of key species.

Funding 2010-2012 Traditional Fremont County, Fremont Conservation District Funds, City of Canon City, active grants (WHIP, EQIP and Water Board) and approved proposals are the basis for 2010 funding. CDOT, BLM and Custer County are expected to remain similar with more landowner service. Fremont County area properties will receive significantly enhanced support through adequate local grants, better equipment and staffing.

Annual Operating Plan: Infestations of weeds for treatment in the coming season will offer an off-season opportunity to perform Tamarisk/Russian olive Hydro-Ax treatments. Areas of infestation will continue to be addressed as a regional long-term plan for manageable control and eradication under UACWMA and related Basin-wide scenarios. Efforts to assist Pueblo County may be provided by a growing list of local contractors in the area allowing more focus on Fremont County grant-funded areas.

General: I have once again budgeted for additional full-time/seasonal assistance during the 2010 season to support the overall efforts in the area. With our additional equipment and personnel, continued enhanced production schedule should be possible. It is apparent that the two Side by Side's coupled with well trained associates is a more efficient situation. More direct and timely interaction with cooperators should continue to increase our production in the growing season.

Meetings with Dana Angel, George Sugars and the Commissioners in January or February should yield an enhanced system of record-keeping to track grants, day-to-day billing and be more responsive to decision-makers and the general public.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement.

Respectfully,

J.R. Phillips
Manager