

Noxious Weed Plan For Morgan County, CO

I. Introduction

Noxious weeds present a variety of concerns including decreased crop and forage production, soil erosion and toxicity to wildlife, livestock, and people. Noxious weeds are not native to the United States and, therefore, have no natural predators to control them. As a result, noxious weeds can displace native vegetation, reduce habitat for native and endangered species, degrade riparian areas, and decrease property value. These detrimental effects to the natural ecosystem justify the need for creating and implementing a county noxious weed management plan.

II. Background and History

Morgan County has had some form of formal weed control program since 1962. In 1962, a group of farmers in the Wiggins Community petitioned the board of County Commissioners and formed the Wiggins Pest Control District, which encompassed XXXX acres, located in the western part of Morgan County. In 1968, the Northern Pest Control District was formed, encompassing 107,842 acres. The Northern Pest Control District voted to disband approximately 5 years later. In 1969, the Fort Morgan Pest Control district was formed which encompassed 40,044 acres in the central part of Morgan County. In 1991, The Board of County Commissioners adopted Ordinance 91 ORD 1, an ordinance that “Regulated Management and Control of Undesirable plants in accordance with the Colorado Weed Management Act.” Since that time, the activities of the districts have varied, and most recently, Noxious Weed management has primarily been complaint driven.

In 2016, because of recent historical flooding events, and a renewed effort by the state of Colorado in carrying out the Colorado Weed Act, as well as increased interest by The Natural Resource Conservation Service, the town of Brush! and the Board of County Commissioners, there was an interest to become compliant with the Colorado Weed Act and reform the Morgan County Weed Advisory Board. Discussions also ensued regarding attempting to market a county-wide Pest Control District that would make noxious Weed control within the county, and specifically the county right of ways, more effective and affordable to Morgan County citizens. It would also provide a platform for enforcement of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, and possibly provide a platform to aide in control of range damaging rodents.

III. Requirements of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act (Colorado Revised Statutes 35-5.5) was originally signed into law in 1991 and emended in 1996 and 2003. Also referred to in the document as “ACT”, it directs the Board of county Commissioners from each county in the State to adopt a Noxious Weed Management Plan for all unincorporated land within each county (CRS 35-5.5-105). The

“ACT” further directs each Board of County commissioners to appoint a local Weed Advisory Board whose power and duties are as follows:

Local advisory boards shall have the power and duty to:

- a.) *Develop a recommended management plan for the integrated management of designated noxious weeds and recommended management criteria for noxious weeds within the area governed by the local government and governments appointing the local advisory board. The management plan shall be reviewed at regular intervals but not less often than once every three years by the local advisory board. The management plan and any amendments made thereto shall be transmitted to the local governing body for approval, modification, or rejection.*
 - b.) *Declare noxious weeds and any state noxious weeds designated by rule to be subject to integrated management.*
 - c.) *Recommend to the local governing body that identified landowners be required to submit an individual integrated management plan to manage noxious weeds on their property.*
1. **List A:** rare noxious weed species that are subject to eradication wherever detected statewide in order to protect neighboring lands and the state as a whole. All populations of List A species are designated by the commissioner for eradication.
 2. **List B:** noxious weed species for which the commissioner, in consultation with the state weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, develops and implements state noxious weed management plan designed to stop the continued spread of these species.
 3. **List C:** noxious weed species for which the commissioner in consultation with the state weed advisory committee, local governments and other interested parties, will develop and implement weed management plans designed to support the efforts of local governing bodies to facilitate more effective, integrated weed management on public and private lands. The goal of such plans will not be to stop the continued spread of these species but to provide additional education, research and biological control resources to jurisdictions that choose to require management of List C species.

A list of the current State A, B, and C-listed noxious weed species can be found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/agconservation/noxiousweeds> and by contacting the Morgan Conservation District. This list is updated annually based on the status of a particular species.

The 1996 “ACT” allows for cooperative planning and plan administration among counties and municipalities. Additionally, the “ACT” establishes the position of State Weed Coordinator in the Colorado Department of Agriculture, and creates a State Noxious Weed management Fund. The Department of Agriculture may make special grants from this fund to local entities for the management of State noxious weeds.

IV. Status of Noxious Weeds in Morgan County/Wiggins/Fort Morgan/Brush/Hillrose.

The recent flood events of 2013 and 2015, along with a lack of a weed management plan and strategized weed control in the county right of ways, there is currently a noxious weed population found both in the county right of ways and on private and state lands.

V. Objectives of this Plan

The main objective of this plan is to meet requirements of the 1996 “ACT” and its yearly revisions. This plan provides policy and guidance for noxious weed management in Morgan County. This plan is for the use of all landowners and manager, both public and private.

VI. Noxious Weed Management Approaches

The Morgan County Weed Director and licensed staff will advise landowners of the need for and feasibility of weed control. Only licensed applicators will make chemical recommendations. Private landowners who should to apply herbicides on their property will be advised to strictly follow the manufacturer’s label.

Morgan County Weed Management prefers an integrated approach to weed management. An integrated approach implements cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical control methods. Utilizing a variety of methods helps prevent chemical-resistant weeds, decreases “bare ground” situations, and allows for weed control efforts tailored to each individual site or scenario.

Cultural and Mechanical Control: First and foremost, good land management is always encouraged to prevent an invasion. The key is to create conditions favorable for desirable plants, thus increasing competitions for undesirable noxious weeds. Methods include proper irrigation, mowing, burning, properly timed livestock grazing, plowing, and seeding. When properly applied, these methods are effective as control measures as well as preventive measures.

Biological Control: Many noxious weeds become prolific due to the fact that they have no natural predators. The Colorado State Insectary tests insects and pathogens to control invasive species. Care is taken to be sure they will not move to native species or crops. Biological management of noxious weeds will continue to grow as more biological controls are developed. Biological controls are not a valid eradication method when used alone, but can be integrated with other methods of weed control.

Chemical Control: The use of herbicides is expected to remain our most effective tool for managing noxious weeds. Due to a variety of factors, herbicides are often most effective, but can still be used in conjunction with other management methods. Morgan County Weed Control prefers applying selective herbicides using a spot-spraying technique. Spot spraying (when compared to broadcast spraying) is more cost-effective, reduces the amount of herbicide

in the environment, and prevents unnecessary damage to surrounding vegetation. Integrated noxious weed management calls for the sensible application of chemical herbicides. According to the policies stated previously, Morgan County will use chemical control methods when appropriate.

VI. Management Tools

- A. Education and Outreach: The Weed Control Director and Morgan County will distribute educational materials concerning the identification, propagation, and control of noxious weeds. Various outreach and educational tools will be utilized, such as news releases, presentations, publication, and handouts, site evaluation, and weed tours.

- B. Monitoring and Mapping: Tracking the invasion and control of noxious weeds in Morgan County requires an effective system of monitoring. Morgan County GIS Mapping system includes a mapping layer with GIS locations of noxious weed infestations. This map will provide clarity and specificity to the Mapping resource provided by the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

- C. Resources: The noxious weed control program in Morgan County is funded by various entities (please refer to the list of partners below). Now, the “ACT” provides for appropriations by the state legislature “for the purpose of funding noxious weed management projects”. The Colorado Department of Agriculture is authorized to award grants from these funds to local weed control agencies. The Weed Control Director, with the consent of the County Commissioners, will apply for such grants (and others) as needed.

Cost Share
Fee for Service

- D. Enforcement on public lands, private lands, and on utility ROW and state ROW easements will primarily be complaint or identification driven. Morgan County public works department will use County owned and maintained technology to identify noxious weeds and report locations to the County Weed Manager and the Board of County Commissioners. The County Planning and Zoning Office will coordinate and collaborate with other agencies in providing an effective reporting system that allows for the effective functionality of this noxious weed plan.

VII. Noxious Weed Management Plan/Timeline

Weeds covered under this plan are all included in the state noxious weed list designated by rule. The state provides an updated species list each year based on the spread of and concern for specific varieties. The current year’s lists can be found through the following link:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/agconservation/county-weed-programs> and copies can be provided by Morgan Conservation District.

VIII. Coordination and Cooperation

Morgan County Weed Control collaborates with a variety of agencies and landowners. Local, State, and Federal agencies along with researchers, private organizations, interest groups, ag land managers often contribute funding, time, labor and expertise to create large scale weed management efforts.

In Morgan County, partners include:

- Town of Wiggins
- City of Fort Morgan
- Town of Log Lane
- Town of Hillrose
- City of Brush
- Morgan County
- Department of Wildlife
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Colorado State University Extension
- Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Irrigation Companies
- Landowners and Land Managers
- Colorado State Land Board
- Wiggins Pest Control District
- Fort Morgan Pest Control District

IX. Review and Amendments

The 1996 Colorado Noxious Weed Act requires that local noxious weed management plans be reviewed at least once every three years. Implicit in this language, is that the Weed Advisory Board can conduct review and updating at any time. The County Commissioners must approve any changes to the Noxious Weed Management Plan.