

Photo Credit: Jeanette Burkhardt

# 2025 Annual Report

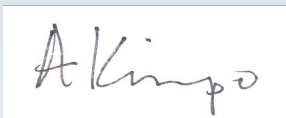
2025 was a year that brought a lot of uncertainty across the noxious weed world and the natural resources field in general. There was a good deal of chaos in funding, agreements, and ongoing projects for many Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) partners. Fortunately, the Columbia Gorge community experienced relative stability with our usual cadence of meetings, another well attended Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop, a sunny Field Day, and even an impromptu EDRR survey.

The notable deviations in activity took place near the end of 2025, when a confluence of factors led to the transfer of administration from Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District to Skamania County Noxious Weed Program. This transition was not only necessary from a fiscal perspective, it was also a great opportunity to bring the coordinator into an organization that sits much closer to Columbia Gorge activities. This required a great deal of effort from the steering committee, and a lot of flexibility in order to make it happen in a timely manner. The result is that the CWMA now has a wonderful new coordinator in Courtney Comer! She brings a lot of noxious weed experience out from the Oregon coast area and will not only be handling CWMA coordination but also juggling treatments and education & outreach work at Skamania. She is eager to continue to support and advancement the partnerships that have made weed coordination strong in our region year after year, and the CWMA will surely continue advancing from it's new home.

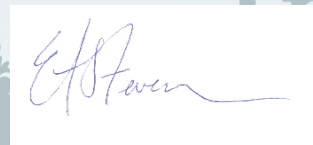
One way that the CWMA has continued to evolve is in renewing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This process began at the beginning of 2025 on it's regularly scheduled 5-year cycle to denote the renewal of the partnership that is the CWMA, and it is very fitting that it happened during such a year. At the time of writing, 18 organizations have signed the MOU. More are expected to follow in recognition that managing invasive species happens across jurisdictional boundaries and is most effective through cross-agency communication, cooperation, and coordination.

If your organization benefited from information at a General Meeting, a talk at ISEP, or was connected to a resource through our coordinator, then please consider signing the MOU or contributing funds towards this partnership. The CWMA has remained strong in tumultuous times with your support, and it can only remain so through 2026 and beyond through continued engagement from partners old and new.

Sincerely,



Angie Kimpo  
Vegetation Stewardship Program Manager  
City of Portland—Portland Water Bureau  
Columbia Gorge CWMA Co-Chair



Emily Stevenson  
Program Coordinator  
Skamania Co.—Noxious Weed Control Program  
Columbia Gorge CWMA Co-Chair

## WHO ARE WE

The **Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)** exists to create and support collaborative weed management among land managers and practitioners within the Columbia River Gorge. Invasive plants extend across multiple ownerships and move around the landscape, making collaboration and partnerships essential for effective management. The Columbia Gorge CWMA promotes weed education and outreach, weed inventory and prevention, and weed control activities. The intention of the Columbia Gorge CWMA is to foster partnerships amongst local organizations to enhance available resources and help maximize efficiency and effectiveness of noxious weed management, regardless of political boundaries.

## OUR MEMBERS

- Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development
- Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District
- Columbia Land Trust
- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Hood River County
- Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District
- Mount Hood National Forest
- The Nature Conservancy
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Portland Water Bureau
- Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex
- Skamania County Noxious Weed Program
- Underwood Conservation District
- US Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District

## 14th Annual Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop



The 1st-3rd Place Winners of the famous Invasive Species Quiz during 2025 ISEP Photo Credit: Brendan Fordyce

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Invasive Species & Exotic Pest Workshop (ISEP) was once again held at the Hegewald Center in Stevenson, WA. 93 attendees showed up to learn about various invasive species shortly before the 2025 field season began in earnest. The 2025 turn-out was heavily impacted by various changes in the federal government, but we hope our agency partners are able to make it out in 2026!

The agenda of 2025 captured a bit of everything, but there was a bevy of new weeds to cover including roundleaf bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), and marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*). Specific applications scenarios for roadside weeds were covered along with a regime to mow down reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). One topic that was covered in multiple talks, and featured in this year's poster, was pollinator habitat and how to improve it through reduced weed pressure. Of course, ISEP wouldn't be complete without the continuation of our traditions including lightning talks, cowbells, and the return of our favorite MC, Hannah Brause!

Of course, it wouldn't be an ISEP Workshop without an Invasive Species quiz! This year, the mantle of quiz orchestrator was passed on to Kimberley Quayle from Washington Department of Natural Resources. She included a post quiz review of the tough to identify species. Attendees all agreed that the quiz was in great hands, even though she didn't make it much easier than Marty had in previous years!

## Field Day

The 2025 Columbia Gorge Field day was once again lucky enough to take place on a sunny and flower filled day! The first stop was an exciting opportunity to follow up on a topic discussed at the 2025 ISEP; prairie restoration at Sam's Walker Day-Use Area. After a coffee stop, the group followed Dr. Sandra Haigh through this picturesque collaboration between the United States Forest Service and the Center for Ecodynamic Restoration (CEDR).



A native planting area at Sam's Walker Day Use area filled with lupine. Photo Credit: Kristen Currin



Jeff DeBell speaking on the establishment of a native plant nursery at Wind River. Photo Credit: Brendan Fordyce

The next stop was at the Historic Wind River area to look at an important piece of Columbia Gorge history as well as ongoing projects to revitalize the area. Jeff DeBell, vice-president of the the Wind River Trust, gave us a tour of the new nursery project and historic ranger house before the group took a stroll through the arboretum to close out the day.

Afterwards, members gathered at Backwoods in Carson, WA to celebrate the retirement of Skamania County's Cyndi Soliz, and relax after another successful Field Day!

## Changes at the CWMA

In 2026, administration of the Columbia Gorge CWMA is transitioning to the Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program. The original job-share between the 4-county CWMA, Columbia Gorge CWMA, and Clackamas SWCD could not facilitate the amount of staff time requested by all parties. This constraint also coincides with the retirement of program staff at Skamania County Noxious Weed Program. The formerly three-quarter time position at Skamania County left a quarter time available to pair with the CWMA Coordinator. This created an ideal opportunity to transition CWMA coordination and bolster the Skamania County position.

This also resulted in a new coordinator for the CWMA, although Brendan will continue to assist as needed with the transition of tasks over the coming year. Functional efficiencies previously shared with the 4-County CWMA and Clackamas SWCD may increase some operational costs in the coming year. So, as we enter our upcoming budget cycles, we are asking member organizations to consider your current level of support for the CWMA and explore opportunities to help enhance your organizational contributions.

We are excited to welcome Courtney Comer as the new Facilitator for the Columbia Gorge CWMA! Courtney started working as the Education and Outreach Specialist for Skamania County's Noxious Weed Control Program in December, and began transitioning into her joint-role as the CWMA Facilitator in January. She has a background in wildlife science and invasive vegetation control. She is excited to help weed-wise professionals share their knowledge about noxious weed management within the Columbia Gorge!



Courtney in the field. Photo Credit: Courtney Comer

## 2025 Financial Update

The Columbia Gorge CWMA operates through the generous support of its member organizations, whose financial contributions and volunteer efforts are essential to advancing our shared mission and collective goals.

The support received by our member organizations is used to support our CWMA Coordinator position. This position is a vital resource to facilitate communication and information between partners and improving invasive weed management across our region.

In 2025, our CWMA Coordinator was supported through a job-share agreement between the Columbia Gorge CWMA, the 4-County CWMA, and the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). This job-share agreement was drafted in 2014 and laid the foundation for us to hire our first paid Columbia Gorge CWMA Coordinator position. Since that time, the Clackamas SWCD has housed the CWMA Coordinator and has served as the CWMA fiscal admin.

For the past 12 years, the CWMA has been well-served by this arrangement. The job-share position has provided a stable foundation for our coordinator and has helped us to leverage inherent efficiencies from having a shared position with another CWMA and the Clackamas SWCD.

## Member Contributions

The monetary resources to fund our coordinator position and CWMA-led activities in fiscal year 2024-2025 were provided by the following organizations:

- Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District
- East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
- US Forest Service, Mt. Hood National Forest

The resources received from the Columbia Gorge CWMA partners, grants, and agreements totaled \$10,150 in FY24-25. We are grateful for all our contributing members and their ongoing support!

Total contributions did decrease in 2025 compared to previous years. This reduction was due in part due to the disruption of federal grants and contracts. We remain hopeful that these disruptions will be ameliorated in the coming year.

# Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop

In 2025, the annual Invasive Species and Exotic Pest (ISEP) Workshop, also helped generate funds for the CWMA. Through the voluntary support of our members, the ISEP workshop is implemented with limited expenses. This allows our ticket revenue to be directed back to support CWMA efforts.

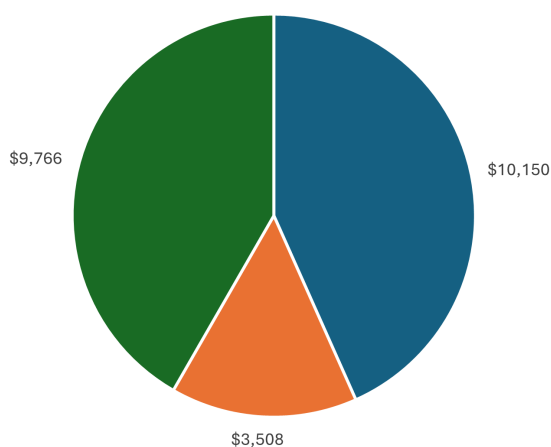
We have also received some funding from ISEP sponsors, which have helped to offset operational expenses. Many thanks to our sponsors!

In 2025, this ISEP event netted \$3,508 from attendees and sponsors to help support CWMA activities.

## Member Participation

The participation of our CWMA member organizations is also significant and diverse. In the past year, the Columbia Gorge CWMA documented 268 volunteer hours from more than 20 organizations totaling an estimated value of \$9,766. Many more hours have also been spent in correspondence, planning events and meetings, and developing and implementing projects. The support for the CWMA by its member organizations and participants is significant and deeply valued!

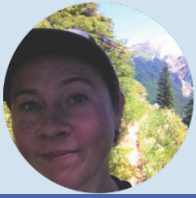
Columbia Gorge CWMA Contributions 2025



In fiscal year FY24-25, the CWMA received \$23,424 in total contributions. These resources have supported education and information sharing amongst our members, provided funding for our coordinator, and supported events and learning opportunities like ISEP and our annual field day.

The Columbia Gorge CWMA is fortunate to have such broad base of support from its member organizations. Thank you to all of our contributing member organizations and participants.

## 2025 STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS



ANGIE KEMPO (PORTLAND WATER BUREAU)

- OREGON REPRESENTATIVE
- STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

EMILY STEVENSON (SKAMANIA COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL PROGRAM)

- WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVE
- STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR
- EDUCATION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



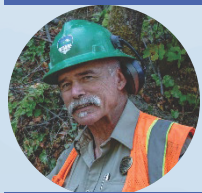
ETHAN COGGINS (WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES)

- WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVE



KATE CONLEY (COLUMBIA LAND TRUST)

- AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE



JOHN COWAN (OREGON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION)

- OREGON REPRESENTATIVE

CHRISTINA MEAD (US FOREST SERVICE—MT. HOOD NATIONAL FOREST)

- AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE



SAM LEININGER (CLACKAMAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT)

- FISCAL ADMIN, *Ex-Officio*



COURTNEY GATTUSO (WESTERN INVASIVES NETWORK)

- WIN COORDINATOR, *Ex-Officio*

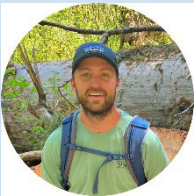


## A Parting Message from Samuel Leininger

Lastly, I wanted to thank the Columbia Gorge CWMA members and participants for their many years of collaboration and support. Over the last 12 years, it has been my pleasure to serve the CWMA as its Fiscal Admin, Steering Committee Member, Supervisor to your CWMA Coordinator, and occasional interim Coordinator. These activities take a lot of time and effort, but the support that you all have shown has helped to make a tough job feel easy.

We are grateful to our partners at Skamania County for picking up the mantle and continuing to advance our collective goals and mission. Even though our role is changing, our commitment to the CWMA is still strong. Thank you for the support and trust that you all have shared these many years!

### PREPARED BY YOUR (Previous) CWMA COORDINATOR



BRENDAN FORDYCE (CLACKAMAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT)

- 503-998-3458
- [COLUMBIAGORGECWMA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:COLUMBIAGORGECWMA@GMAIL.COM)

It was an honor and a thrill to be selected as the CWMA coordinator in 2024, and I enjoyed every minute of it! Thank you for a great two years, and I look forward to many more as a participating member, but *without* the coordination duties!

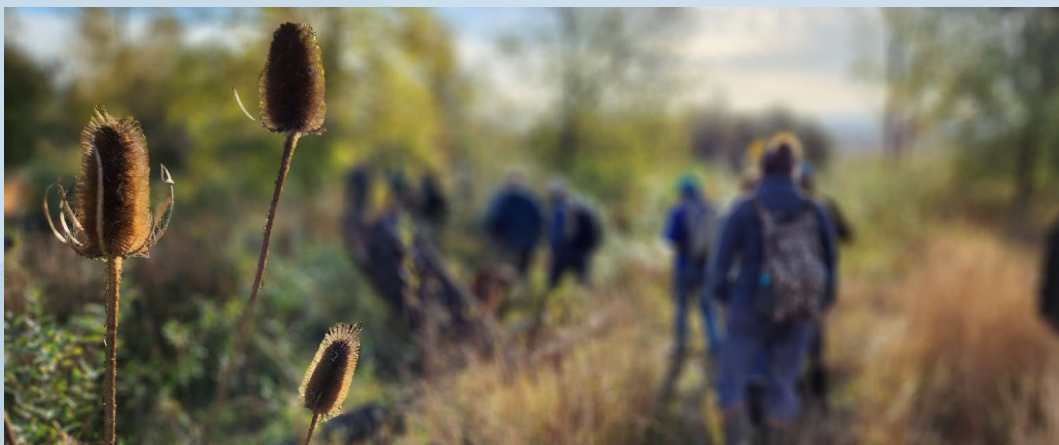


Photo Credit: Sam Leininger