

Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area Management Plan

Purpose and Description

The impacts of invasive weeds and the importance of their management are becoming apparent to a wide variety of organizations. After habitat loss, invasive species have been recognized as the second largest danger to threatened and endangered species (Precious Heritage: The status of biodiversity in the United States, The Nature Conservancy).

Throughout the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the Mt. Hood and Gifford Pinchot National Forests, and surrounding lands, there are a multitude of impacts which arise as a result of noxious and invasive weeds. Some of the most prevalent and intrusive impacts include degradation of water quality, loss of wildlife habitat, loss of rare and typical native plants in natural areas and open spaces, and increased right-of-way maintenance costs.

The Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) exists to foster and support collaborative weed management among public land managers and private landowners. Because weeds travel over the landscape and extend across multiple ownerships and jurisdictions, collaboration and partnerships are essential for effective weed management. In addition, partnerships increase capacity, professional expertise, efficiency, and access to new and diverse funding sources. The intention of the Columbia Gorge CWMA is to provide guidance to local government and land managers on methods for utilizing available resources to control invasive weed problems regardless of political boundaries. The Columbia Gorge CWMA promotes weed education and outreach, weed inventory and prevention, and weed control activities.

List of Members

- • Army Corps of Engineers Portland District
- • 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
- • Klickitat County Noxious Weed Control Board
- • 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
- • Washington Department of Natural Resources

- • Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District

**This is an actively growing list and may be revised as needed*

Boundaries of Columbia Gorge CWMA

In Washington, the Columbia Gorge CWMA includes lands in Clark County within the boundary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; In Skamania, the CWMA extends northward along the Clark-Skamania County border to the USFS 90 Road, where it travels east to Curly Creek Road, along Curly Creek Road east to USFS 30 Road, then North to USFS 24 Road along the border of Indian Heaven Wilderness continuing on USFS 24 Road southeast to USFS Rd 8821, east onto the USFS 88 Road to the Klickitat County line. The border follows the northern Klickitat County line east to State Highway 97, then south where it meets the Columbia River. It includes the Wild and Scenic segments of the White Salmon and Klickitat rivers.

In Oregon, the Columbia Gorge CWMA extends eastward along the Columbia River from its confluence with the Sandy River to the Deschutes River, then upstream to its intersection with Highway 216, and then westward to Highway 26, continuing westward until the town of Sandy, then north on Ten Eyck Road to where it meets the Sandy River, then along the Sandy River to the confluence with the Columbia River.

Management Principles

The Columbia Gorge CWMA utilizes Integrated Weed Management practices based on the following principles:

- Projects are designed using an ecologically grounded, multidisciplinary management strategy based on weed biology, weed ecology, and landscape level processes.
- Treatment strategies use an approach similar to a ‘wildfire management’ model with the following priorities:
 - a) Target sources of spread and isolated populations while protecting high value localities.
 - b) Determine the perimeter of larger infestations and contain them to the area.
 - c) Control larger infestations or widely dispersed weeds using biocontrols when available.
- Control projects are designed after serious consideration of a range of treatment options so the control methods are the most effective and appropriate to a given situation.
- Treatment strategies are adaptive and iterative in regard to treatment efficacy, changes in project scope, technological advancements, and resource availability.
- Projects will include clearly defined thresholds for action.
- Projects will include a vision and plan to achieve desired future conditions after the weeds are gone.

- Education and outreach activities are targeted to specific audiences, with clearly defined desired behavioral changes.

Goals

Prevent the introduction and control the spread of harmful invasive plant species in the Columbia Gorge CWMA region by facilitating cooperative management among all willing land managers.

Objectives and Activities

1) *Manage the Columbia Gorge CWMA through information sharing and relationship building.*

Activities

- a) Hold quarterly CWMA meetings.
- b) Use the Columbia Gorge CWMA list-serve to share information and seek advice.
- c) Involve new and existing partners to represent all major land owners, managers, and representatives who work on invasive weed issues within the CWMA.
- d) Track and inform partners of legislative issues, funding opportunities, and developments.
- e) Develop and maintain a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Management Plan, and Operating Plan*.
- f) Develop and maintain a *Weeds of Concern* list of invasive weeds on behalf of the Columbia Gorge CWMA members and partners.
- g) Conduct tours and trainings for CWMA members and partners.
- h) Actively seek and secure funding to support and enhance the activities outlined above.

2) *Inventory and assess weeds.*

Activities

- a. Encourage members to track and assess weed spread and update the appropriate state noxious weed database(s).
- b. Connect partners with unmet mapping needs to those with the capability and capacity to assist them.
- c. Improve members' ability to inventory and assess weeds through education, communication, and access to funding.
- d. Develop and review the weed list on a biennial basis. Address important new species as needed.
- e. Work on developing a Columbia CWMA information hub for noxious weed locations and management activities within the Columbia Gorge CWMA.

3) *Conduct outreach to raise awareness about weeds among the wider public.*

Activities

- a) Develop awareness, education, and training programs for partners and the public.
- b) Host at least one noxious weed workshop annually for CWMA members and partners.

- c) Prepare an annual report showing accomplishments and distribute to funding sources, media, government, citizen groups, etc.
- d) Conduct other outreach as opportunities arise.

4) *Sponsor effective and innovative weed control and native plant restoration projects.*

Activities

- a) Assist partners in conducting control projects through the development and sharing of technical information, community support, and assistance with procurement of funding when available. Encourage members to detect and report new invaders and to share identification and control information.
- b) Generate news coverage, recruit volunteers, and share monitoring photos to display successful demonstration projects.
- c) Assist members in determining appropriate restoration strategies for affected sites using the following management levels:
 - **Eradicate:** The weed species is eliminated from the management area, including all viable seeds and/or vegetative propagules.
 - **Control:** Dispersal is prevented throughout the target patch and the area coverage of the weed is decreased over time. The weed is prevented from dominating the vegetation of the area but low levels are accepted.
 - **Contain:** Weeds are geographically contained and are not increasing beyond the perimeter of the infestation. Treatment within established infestations may be limited, but areas outside are controlled or eradicated.
 - **Reduce:** The density and/or rate of spread of the weed is reduced across a geographic area.
 - **Custodial:** Specific treatment for a particular plant is deferred at this time. Infestations may be treated as a result of other weed priorities. The species may not be inherently invasive, habitats are not susceptible to invasion, or the infestation is not treatable with current technology.

Structure and Process

A. *Steering Committee*

Roles:

- Share information.
- Supervise Columbia Gorge CWMA staff as needed to support coordination of the CWMA.
- Assist Coordinator in decision making and CWMA related tasks.
- Facilitation of CWMA meetings.
- Fundraising for the CWMA.
- Update the MOU with current members as necessary.
- Maintain the *Management Plan*, *Operating Plan*, and the *Columbia Gorge CWMA Weed List* and assist with coordination of their implementation.
- Interact with media and interested citizens to support the Columbia Gorge CWMA. (CWMA Members and Partners will take the lead on their particular projects.)

Composition and Process: The Steering Committee will be composed of representatives of signatories to the MOU, but meetings will be open to any other interested parties.

The Steering Committee shall consist of 7 to 9 voting members.

- 2 – Oregon Representatives
- 2 – Washington Representatives
- 1 – Fiscal Agent Representative
- 1 – Education and Outreach Committee Chair
- 1 – Western Invasives Network (WIN) Coordinator
- 2 (*optional*) At-Large Representatives as interest allows.

The Steering Committee, at its discretion, may also appoint Associate Steering Committee Members. Associate members shall have the same roles and responsibilities as other Steering Committee members, but are non-voting and serve in an advisory capacity.

The Fiscal Agent representative will be an *ex officio* representative to inform Steering Committee business and CWMA administration. The WIN Coordinator will also serve as an *ex officio* representative to allow the CWMA and WIN to provide support to each other as needed. Additional Steering Committee members are voluntary. Members will be voted upon by the CWMA membership during general meetings. Steering Committee members will elect co-chairs from amongst Steering Committee members. Co-Chairs shall be represented by 1 Washington and 1 Oregon representative. Interim appointments may be made by majority of the Steering Committee members to fill vacant positions, but must be voted on by all members at the next general meeting. A quorum of 4 members must be met to conduct CWMA business.

Steering Committee members will serve two-year terms. Every year, half of the members (1 Oregon Representative, 1 Washington Representative, and 1 At-Large Representative) will be nominated and voted upon by the CWMA signatories at the general meeting. The Steering Committee will convene as needed to administer CWMA tasks but will meet a minimum of four times a year. Consensus will be sought, but decisions will be made by a majority of the Steering Committee.

Administration: The Steering Committee Co-Chairs will sign all agreements and documents pertaining to the operation and administration of the CWMA when authorized by a majority of the Steering Committee.

For business and administrative activities by the Fiscal Agent, the Steering Committee delegates expenditure authority to the Fiscal Agents needed to conduct Columbia Gorge CWMA operations in a method consistent with the accounting and administrative practices of the Fiscal Agent's organization. The Fiscal Agent will provide a report to the Steering Committee of any resource expended on behalf of the Columbia Gorge CWMA.

B. *Subcommittees.* For specific projects or tasks, *ad hoc* groups will be formed which can exist for a short time or indefinitely. Subcommittees will elect a chair and/or co-chair from their ranks

to lead meetings and prepare agendas; subcommittees must also appoint a secretary to record meeting minutes. Minutes will be submitted to the CWMA Coordinator for distribution to CWMA members and partners.

- C. *CWMA Coordinator.* The CWMA Coordinator is a staff position to help facilitate the CWMA, raise funds, manage projects, and deal with public relations related to the CWMA as a whole. The CWMA Coordinator will be overseen by the Steering Committee. The CWMA Coordinator will be administered and supervised by the Fiscal Agent on behalf of the Columbia Gorge CWMA. The CWMA Coordinator will adhere to all personnel policies of the Fiscal Agent's sponsoring organization.
- D. *Meeting Management.* The Co-Chairs will lead the Steering Committee and General meetings. In consultation with the Co-Chairs, the CWMA Coordinator will prepare agendas and distribute meeting minutes for both the Steering Committee and General meetings.
- E. *Funding.* The CWMA will not handle funding directly. Partner organizations will apply for and manage grants themselves. Where resources need to be shared, separate agreements between the relevant parties will be developed.
- F. *Fiscal Administration.* Funding for CWMA administration and CWMA Coordinator staff time will be administered by a fiscal agent appointed by the CWMA Steering Committee members.

Modifications and Term

The *Management Plan* is a living document and can be revised as needed. Any revisions to the *Management Plan* will be approved by the majority of the Steering Committee and reported to CWMA members and partners.