

Weed Management Areas in California

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Introduction

County-level Weed Management Areas(WMA), and other weed-specific coordination groups have brought invasive plant prevention and control to a more local level and have increased the sophistication and effectiveness of invasive species management in California. Between 1997 and 1999 the number WMAs has risen from 7 to 33, comprised of 47 individual counties.

A Weed Management Area (WMA) is a local organization that brings together landowners and managers (private, city, county, state, and federal) in a county, multi-county, or other geographical area for the purpose of coordinating and combining action and expertise in combating common invasive weed species. It is intended to be at the grassroots level where participants in the group are actually the people who are directly controlling weeds or doing education work with those who do.

For current information on Weed Management Areas, in general, and for each local WMA see the California WMA website:

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/wma>

A WMA may be voluntarily governed by a chairperson or a steering committee. To date, groups in California have been initiated by either the leadership of the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office or a Federal Agency employee. WMA's are unique because they attempt to address agricultural (regulatory) weeds and "wildland" weeds under one local umbrella of organization. WMA's have printed weed I.D./control brochures, organized weed education events, written and obtained grants, coordinated demonstration plots, instituted joint eradication and mapping projects, as well as, many other creative and effective outreach and weed management projects.

Often WMA groups form to address management concerns (Suppression) for the crisis weeds in their area.

As the group gains momentum and members it can address an adaptive management model of regional weed control activities:

- Planning (strategic plan, MOU, management plan)
- Prevention - Education(at all levels), Regulations

- Detection - Finding, Reporting, Mapping (GPS,GIS)
- Suppression - Fire Model, Integrated Pest Management
- Re-vegetation - Forage crops, natives - depends on objectives
- Monitoring - Then back to planning for the next season

History

Traditional agricultural weed control and the Pest Prevention System have been implemented by the California Department of Food & Agriculture, County Ag Departments, US Department of Agriculture, and private individuals for the past century. With the inception of the modern environmental movement, groups such as the California Native Plant Society, California Exotic Pest Plant Council, the Nature Conservancy and others began to promote the focus of invasive weeds in wildlands. The first attempt at a weed management area was the Greater Yellowstone WMA which brought together three different states in to a collaborative effort which was deemed a great success. This led to dissemination of the coordinated weed control model to federal employees throughout the nation. California had 5 early adopters by early 1997. By mid 1999, 40 new counties had joined in by forming 33 WMAs. The future of these groups relies on finding stable funding sources and partnerships between WMAs to share information and resources.

Who Participates

- County - Ag Department, Roadways, Parks, Fire abatement
- State Agencies- CDFA, Parks, Fish & Game, Forestry & Fire, CalTrans, UC Cooperative Extension, Etc.
- Federal Agencies- BLM, Forest Service, NRCS, Park Service, Military
- Growers, Cattlemen, RCDs, Forest Industry, Landowners, Volunteers, Native Plant Society, Pest Control Operators, Open Spaces, Water Districts, Cities, Railroads, Utilities, Nurserymen

Benefits

There are four levels of benefits that can be progressively attained as the inputs of time and money are increased.

- Enhanced Cooperation & Sharing
- Weed Education & Awareness, Symposia
- On the Ground Demonstrations - Tests Plots, Workshops, Mapping
- More Weeds Killed through Cooperative Projects (Holy Grail)

Examples of Projects

County Fair Display, Brochures & Posters, Shared Personnel War-on-Weeds Conference, Treatment Test Plot, Grant Applications, Adopt-a-highway for Weed Control, Newspaper Articles, Field Days/ Workshops, Shared Equipment, Boards of Supervisor Tours, Weed ID Book, Report-a-weed contests, Student Weed Mapping, Speakers Bureau

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, Weed Management Areas are the result of local organization and initiative to further coordinate and elevate the activities to control, prevent, eradicate, and contain noxious and invasive weeds at the county level in California. They have established a track record of success primarily based on dynamic leadership and a number of funding programs within the state.

There is a growing momentum to solve resource based conflicts and address planning with coordinated local efforts which involve multiple stakeholders and agencies. WMAs can be viewed in this context although coordinated weed control is usually a win-win effort.