

# Clallam County Integrated Roadside Weed Management Plan

## Commonly Asked Questions

***Q: What are noxious weeds?***

A: Noxious weeds are aggressive, non-native plants that are difficult to control once they get established. These exotic invasive plants are designated as noxious weeds by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board because they cause serious economic or environmental damage. The current list of noxious weeds can be found in WAC 16-750.

***Q: What's wrong with noxious weeds?***

A: Noxious weeds can have severe consequences for our economy and environment. Noxious weeds negatively impact natural resources, watershed function, wildlife habitat, human and animal health and recreational activities. Noxious weeds displace native plant species, reducing the amount of food and habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. They displace complex native plant communities with simple, non-native ones that support less wildlife and don't provide ecosystem services that our communities rely on, such as flood control and water filtration.

Noxious weeds negatively impact agricultural and forestry production as well as property values. It is estimated that invasive plants cause about \$123 billion in damage and losses to the US economy annually (HarperLore, Johnson and Skinner, 2007). Non-native weeds cause an estimated \$34 billion in losses to crops and pastures alone. Left unchecked, noxious weeds will spread between properties and infestations will increase over time.

***Q: What is being done about noxious weeds?***

A: Washington State law requires the control of certain weed species by all landowners, public and private (RCW 17.10.140). The purpose of the law is to limit economic loss and adverse effects to Washington's agricultural, natural and human resources due to the presence and spread of noxious weeds in all terrestrial and aquatic sites in the state. Local Noxious Weed Control Boards are tasked with ensuring compliance with state weed laws. Federal agencies also take noxious weeds seriously and most have detailed weed control plans in place for federally managed lands. Local Tribes are also concerned about the spread of noxious weeds and impacts on natural resources. Weed Boards, state, federal and tribal entities as well as many environmental groups and private landowners are working together to control invasive weed populations across jurisdictional boundaries.

***Q: Does the County have noxious weeds on its lands and what's being done to control them?***

A: The County is a large landowner. The County's road system alone encompasses over 500 miles, which equals over 1,000 acres of green space! Roads connect most properties and are a main vector for weeds spreading throughout the County. The Roads Annual Reports, found on the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board website, contain a list of weeds treated on county roads and other properties, as well as maps showing the general locations.

The County Road Department is responsible for operating and maintaining a safe and efficient transportation system, which includes ensuring that vegetation does not impede drainage, line of sight or cause damage to road surfaces, in addition to other safety considerations. The County relies heavily on mowing and tree and brush cutting to carry out these important vegetation management responsibilities. However, multiple studies have shown that mowing and cutting alone does not control many noxious weeds and can even increase their spread. In 2017, the Clallam County Commissioners passed an ordinance requiring that all County departments that manage land create annual integrated weed management plans that list priorities and methods for weed control. Those reports can be found on the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board website.

***Q: Isn't the problem so big, it's hopeless?***

A: No! We have made great progress in reducing noxious weed infestation on County roads since the implementation of the Integrated Weed Management Plan. Since 2017, we have seen weed populations decrease 73% on County roads.

***Q: Why can't we just mow more?***

A: Unfortunately, mowing does not remove roots, allowing most weeds to grow back. Weeds that have been mowed often flower low to the ground, allowing the mowing to pick up seeds and spread them further.

***Q: Why don't you use methods other than herbicide? Herbicides need to be the last resort.***

A: We do use other methods, in addition to the select use of herbicide, to control weeds on County roads. The current Roadside Integrated Weed Management Plan lists all the methods used to control noxious weeds and other invasive plants. In 2025, we manually removed over 15,000 plants from County roadsides. Herbicides are always used sparingly and are only applied selectively to weeds using handheld equipment. In 2025, only 1.2 gallons of herbicide was used on all County roads. A complete list of herbicide treatments

can be found in our annual reports, posted on the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board website.

***Q: Won't you harm people, pets and wildlife, pollute water resources and kill pollinators if you use herbicide?***

A: We only use a very select number of herbicides on County properties that have low toxicity to people, pets, wildlife and pollinators. A complete list of herbicides that could potentially be used are found in the current Integrated Weed Management Plan. The Integrated Weed Management Plan also includes resources from outside organizations about the safety of the herbicides to non-target organisms, such as pollinators, fish and mammals. We only apply herbicides using handheld equipment, which allows us to precisely target just the weed and prevent herbicide runoff or drift. We partner with the WSU Extension Master Gardener program, who monitor our herbicide treatments for effectiveness and whether we accidentally sprayed any plants that are not weeds. At the end of the year, they write an independent report that is included in our annual report. The Master Gardeners have found that we only target the weed and leave surrounding plants alone.

***Q: Others don't spray, why should we?***

A: Almost all counties in Washington have at least a limited herbicide program for noxious weed control. Like us, Jefferson County also allows for limited herbicide treatments for noxious weeds. Most entities in our county already use targeted herbicide applications as part of their strategy to control their noxious weeds.

***Q: How can I learn more about weed control on County roads?***

A: Our annual Integrated Weed Management Plan is on the front page of our website. It contains a description of the methods used, a list of noxious weeds and invasive plants that are targeted and the priority list of roads and other sites that could be treated each year. We also post our Roads Annual Report that lists all treatments on County roads and other properties, as well as observations on weed trends. You can also reach out to the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control Board to learn more. Feel free to call us at 360-417-2442 or [web\\_weed@clallamcountywa.gov](mailto:web_weed@clallamcountywa.gov). If landowners are interested in maintaining the right-of-way in front of their own property free from weeds, they can fill out and submit the Owner-Will-Control form, found on our website.