

# San Luis Valley Noxious Weed Management Association Newsletter

July 2016

On June 23, the San Luis Valley Noxious Weed Management Association held their bi-monthly meeting at the Bureau of Land Management Building in Alamosa. Minutes of the April meeting were approved. The partner list has been updated as much as possible, however suggestions are always appreciated. Anyone who might be interested in or is a stake holder in the conservation and preservation of the San Luis Valley is welcomed. The Rio Grande County Weed Management Plan has been approved by the County Commissioners. A link can be found on the SLVNWMA web page at <http://slvnoxiousweeds.org/>

Myron Price reported on the Colorado Department of Agriculture Grant and the requirements each participating partner has to meet to receive funding.

The various county representatives gave a quick rundown on the progress of spring and early summer weeds and weed control efforts. Spraying and mowing is in full swing in all counties. We urge you to give the sprayers a wide berth and a wave as you see them along the roadsides doing their job. Chances are, they have been up since before dawn and have been out in the hot sun several hours!

The next meeting of the SLVWMA will be August 18<sup>th</sup> at p.m. at the RGWCD Bldg in Alamosa. Thank you Cary Aloya and Cleave Simpson for arranging this!



*At left: Ben Nutsch, Rio Grande County; Brenda Felmlee, Gov. Tiptons office; Myron Price, Conejos County Weed Supervisor; Solomon Archuleta and Jeremy Arellano, city of Alamosa. At right; Dan Neufeld; Larry Garner, BLM.*



*At left: Cary Aloya, Wetland Dynamics LLC, and Charlotte Bobicki with Senator Bennet's office, listen as minutes are read. At right: Jim Clare President SLVWMA*



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The San Luis Valley Weed Management Association and our partners would like to give a big welcome to Mineral County and Andrew Marino. Andrew is the new Weed District Manager in that county. Andrew hit the ground running with the new MAP IT FAST program and lots of great ideas and questions.

We are so happy to have Mineral County on board and look for great things to happen at the headwaters of the Rio Grande!



**The Conejos County Weed District** is busy assisting landowners within the County to control noxious weeds. One of the best ways we have found to do that is offer a cost share program where we financially assist landowners in their efforts to control noxious weeds on their property. So far this year we have 38 landowners who have signed up to participate in our cost share program. We will assist in controlling noxious weeds on more than 3000 acres. We also spray Leafy Spurge where ever it is located at no cost to the land owner. It is our goal to eradicate Leafy Spurge in our county; Our problem weeds most of which are our target weeds for control is Hoary Cress, Perennial Pepper Weed, Russian Knapweed, Canada Thistle, and Bind Weed. There are a couple of areas containing Tamarisk and we are vigorously trying to eradicate Tamarisk as well. We also loan out back pack and 50 gallon sprayers to landowners who wish to spray their own weeds. The Conejos County Weed District is fortunate to receive financial assistance through grants received in cooperation the San Luis Valley Weed Management Association and from assistance by Conejos County Commissioners. We are proud of the program we are running and feel that it is quite successful.

**Myron Price, Supervisor**

**Tom Acre, city Manager for the town of South Fork hosted a clean-up day on April 21. There was free trash dumping for residents. They were accepting everything from old appliances to tree limbs and general clean up items. Marvin Davis from the CSU Extension office and Kathy Ellithorpe, the SLVNWMA Coordinator, were there as well with weed booklets and information on weed control and removal.**

**The town of South Fork also hosted a training session for all valley municipalities on the importance of weed control. Brianna Brannan from the Rio Grande Weed Control District showed a PowerPoint on weed recognition and weeds common the area. The group also took a field trip to identify weeds such as Black Henbane, Canada thistle, Common mullein and Bind weed.**

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## Canada Thistle Biocontrol

**What is Canada thistle?** *Cirsium arvense* (Canada-, California-, Creeping thistle) is an invasive plant known to invade open, disturbed habitats. It colonizes new areas through the production of nearly 1,500 seeds per stem. Once established, it spreads through clonal underground shoots.

**How do I recognize it?** Canada thistle is a perennial weed that can grow over 6 ft. tall (more commonly ~3 ft.). Each branch of the plant typically bears 3-5 (dandelion sized) flowers that range from white to purple (more commonly pink). Canada thistle leaves are rigid and glossy, and stems are virtually spineless.

**Effects of Canada thistle** It was introduced to North America in the 1600's from Europe. Today, it is distributed throughout temperate regions of the globe and has become one of the most problematic weeds of crop, range, and pasture lands. Canada thistle is generally unpalatable to grazing animals and continues to cause severe economic losses. Canada thistle can form monocultures that outcompete and replace native plants, invade critical riparian habitat, dominate lawns, and congest roadsides.

**Biological control of Canada thistle** Since the 1970's, a Canada thistle gall-fly (*Urophora cardui*) and a stem-mining weevil (*Hadroplontus litura*) have been used to control Canada thistle in North America. However, these two insects have been very limited in field settings and are ineffective overall. Recent research now allows us to utilize a host-specific pathogenic rust fungus (*Puccinia punctiformis*) that was likely introduced with early Canada thistle infestations and is present in nearly every location where Canada thistle occurs.

**Life Stages and Cycle of Rust Fungus** In early spring, diseased Canada thistle shoots emerge that appear unusually tall, sparse, and are covered with yellow speckling (spores) on the underside of the leaves. During this time the diseased stems emit a sweet floral fragrance. In late spring to early summer, diseased shoots will cross with other nearby diseased shoots and the spores on leaf tissues will turn a rusty red-brown color. Spores from diseased shoots from the spring will infect neighboring Canada thistle stems throughout the summer via wind-blown spores. Finally, during late summer or fall, diseased stems die and the leaf tissue falls on fall emergent rosettes that allow the fungus to quickly move to the roots where it overwinters.



**Karen Rosen, Biocontrol Specialist and Mike from the Palisade Insectary** searching for a standing patch of Canada thistle to be used as a test plot for biocontrol. There are currently plots in Conejos County, and Alamosa County. They will be back in the fall to begin a Rio Grande County test plot. Brianna Brannan, Rio Grande County Weed Control Manager and Kathy Ellithorpe Rio Grande County Weed Management Coordinator assisted in the search of a suitable stand of thistle to be used. There is a three year tracking process to see the effects of the spores on Canada thistle. The spores are *host specific* and do not affect or invade the plants surrounding them. They are only found in Canada thistle. For more information on biocontrol in Colorado go to [www.palisadeinsectary.com](http://www.palisadeinsectary.com)

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Ben and Juan digging Black Henbane



Mario and Juan



16 year RGWD veteran Juan, left and Ben digging Black Henbane. Look for a follow up in our next newsletter!



Abby



Pictured is the Rio Grande County Weed District spraying crew. The days are long and hot. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to keeping your part of the San Luis Valley beautiful!

*Black Henbane contains hyoscyamine and other alkaloids which can cause livestock poisoning. It is considered a poisonous plant to humans.*

Bob



Brianna, Rio Grande County Weed Supervisor

