

**MINUTES
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
February 13, 2008**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Graham, Mike Koivula (chair), Jim LaRue, Chris Melotti, Jan Nelson, Ross Penhallegon, John Sundquist

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kai Williams

STAFF PRESENT: Ollie Snowden, Orin Schumacher, Debby Woodruff

B/CC PRESENT:

GUESTS PRESENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT: Jan Wroncy, John A

Koivula called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. John Altshuler: He is a resident of Crescent Meadows and has concerns about County property that borders/runs along N.Game Farm Rd for about 1/4mile from Crescent to the end of the development that is about 10ft wide. He stated that It belongs to the County and the County has been derelict in their duties maintaining this property. He is a member of the Board of Directors and they have discussed what to do with this property. They would like the County to take care of it and clean it up so they could plant something like ground cover or plants 2-3ft high. He is not sure if the property owners would do this but he wanted to know if it is even possible. He also asked if the County could water this site 1-2x if it was planted.

Schumacher stated that this would have been a site that the Sheriff's inmate crew would have maintained, but now that is gone. There is a neighborhood association on that Crescent side that has a contractor that maintains the landscape. The backside is not being maintained.

Altshuler stated that the Association wants to work with the County to get something done. He stated that he does not have a commitment from the Association and doesn't know if he will get one since some have not even paid their dues and the annual meetings are not well attended.

2. Jan Wroncy: She would like to request that the County extend the public comment period that began on January 2. She also thinks the comments should be available under the public records law for VMAC members to view. She has had her attorney review the State Weed Laws handout and states that there is nothing that defines "control" as having to use herbicides. She stated that if it says control & destroy, these are 2 different things and this document cannot be used to indicate that the County is mandated under State Law to use herbicides to control weeds. The County has to mow for safety reasons and timing is a good prevention method to control seed heads and that would comply with the ODA language. She would like the committee review the products list. She stated that dirt bikes use County roads and they ride up the banks along County roads and they are spreading the weeds and destroying County structure. She believes that the Sheriff should enforce the law regarding this illegal dirt bike use, and they would obtain some funds.

Schumacher stated that it is not the obligation of the County to review the products list. He stated that the Board of Health may review this list and it is up to the Board to review the products. VMAC can discuss the list.

Snowden suggested that Jan Wroncy follow the budget process closely regarding funding, which could result in less rural patrols. He stated that if the County doesn't get the Secure Rural Schools funding, the County may not be mowing all the roads as is usually done. Maintenance on local roads could be cut back. He suggested bringing the road fund budget to VMAC at the next meeting to show where the County is at.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Sundquist moved to approve the Minutes of January 9, 2008 as amended. Melotti seconded it. All present voted in favor. Motion passed.

III. GENERAL COMMENT

LaRue commented on a new flip chart handbook put out by the ODA.

Schumacher stated that he would bring some to the next meeting.

LaRue commented on an article in the Register Guard regarding the Zebra Muscles in California worry Oregon Wildlife officials. This is not an indigenous species of the US. In the Great Lakes area they spend \$100,000-400,000 to control the plant. His point is that if we ignore invasive plants in Oregon, it could have horrendous repercussions. The biggest agricultural crop in the state is not grass, but is the nursery industry. A lot of money and time is spent making sure the product is safe for transport. He stated that if there are invasive weeds in the area, we need to take steps to control those weeds so we don't have a drag on the economy.

J.Nelson asked if she missed the tour of the proposed spray sites.

Schumacher stated that the committee was going to come up with a date for the tour and present to Schumacher, based on the decision from the committee at the last meeting.

Koivula suggested that those who are interested in the tour get together to organize it.

J.Nelson asked why all the items on the minutes listed on the current agenda.

Schumacher stated that due to time, everything can not be on the agenda.

Koivula suggested the 2 items (review of bylaws and definition of last resort) J.Nelson referred to be included on the next agenda.

J.Nelson agreed to both items on the agenda with time constraints.

Snowden stated that the Board directed staff to bring the budget back to the committee and they can decide if they want to discuss it or not.

Sundquist asked if the budget would include previous fiscal years. Snowden stated it would have fiscal years 05, 06, 07, and budget for fiscal 08 and proposed budget for fiscal 09. He stated that the vegetation items would be listed under road maintenance and not a separate item.

Sundquist said that VMAC is mandated to look at items broken out in the budget.

Snowden stated there is not a specific budget for vegetation program going forward. It may be March or April before the budget can be presented to the committee.

J.Nelson presented an article from "The Collaborative on Health and the Environment" for staff to print for members for the next meeting.

Schumacher shared slides of a project called the "Shoreview Vegetation Projects" for Scotch Broom and Thistle control. 8mm felt fabric that lets water through but no light in was used at this site. The fabric was used on the slopes on Shoreview Dr. This site had been covered with Scotch Broom as seen on the sides of the slope. Most of the Scotch Broom was removed prior to the fabric being placed. The 3 rolls used were about \$1000. This does not include labor which was about 3 days of work with 6 people. The land is County land and the project came about from a culvert issue there. The culverts are huge and if they backup, there could be a blowout on the road. The fabric work can help control the run-off and the supervisor can see better when checking on the culvert issue. After the fabric project is over, they will hydro-seed with low growing native grass.

Sundquist moved that agenda item IV (Review Board of Health Meeting) be moved to the last

agenda item and have a Vegetation Management report from Schumacher as the first item. Koivula seconded it. All present voted in favor. Motion passed.

IV. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT REPORT - SCHUMACHER

Schumacher explained that the crews are doing top trimming in the Pleasant Hill area north of Hwy 58. Next will be River Road area. He will bring a map to the next meeting to show areas. They are far behind on the urban area work. There is crack sealing going on in the Silver Meadows area. They use the door hanger process to let owners know that they have 10 days to respond and do the work themselves or the County will do the work.

Sundquist stated that Schumacher mentioned at a Mohawk Watershed Meeting that the County does not mow for seed head suppression and he states that it is the policy of the State that Counties will do this.

Schumacher stated that it is not stated in the document. He explained that he uses the, Brush Mowing Standards and Guidelines, Top Trimming Standards and Guidelines, and Grass Mowing Standards and Guidelines, as the guidelines for the activities they do. He has no literature regarding the seed head suppression other than the timing.

Sundquist stated that there is a law that states they must suppress seed heads.

Snowden explained that the overall program has to balance objectives. Safety strip mowing and other activities do not always allow for the seed head suppression on every road. He explained that the County needs more people to get all the work done and at the current level, they can't get all the work done that is needed. More money, personnel, and more equipment is needed.

Schumacher explained that height issue of plants is much more important than seed head suppression for safety reasons.

J.Nelson stated that the Last Resort Policy states desired plants should be encouraged and seed head suppression falls under that definition.

Schumacher stated that they have to mow roadside miles 2x yr. They don't treat all the miles with herbicides. They would only use herbicides at site specific areas and is a small scale issue.

Snowden reminded the committee that the County does not have the resources to do seed head suppression in a timely manner in every location in the County and still meet the mowing guidelines in the plan. Seed head suppression cannot be the #1 priority to the exclusion of safety strip mowing.

Sundquist stated that it has to be planned for since its an essential requirement of the program

Snowden explained that a choice has to be made.

Sundquist stated that the County is not doing its job right.

Schumacher stated that basically every day they mow they are doing seed head suppression.

Sundquist stated that Schumacher was at that meeting to promote herbicide use.

Schumacher explained that he was not at the meeting to promote herbicide use.

Koivula suggested Sundquist speak to the Board about his concerns for allocations of resources.

Schumacher explained that they are not engaged in the active pursuit of seed head suppression in their mowing activities which are for safety. The crew size limits them to mowing in the seasons. If seed head suppression happens during mowing then it happens and they are not obligating their services to trump safety over that.

Sundquist asked if the County has a site assessment form they use for a database.

Schumacher explained that they don't have this form. He stated that they use different forms for different sites. He has a monitoring system established. The information is tracked through the database.

Sundquist said he would bring some of the assessment forms that Washington uses for an example.

J.Nelson stated that they should see some documentation to see if it really is a last resort site.

Melotti explained to Sundquist and J. Nelson that the document does what they are asking for already.

Schumacher explained that all the information is tracked and all projects are different.

V. ORS REVIEW

Graham asked if there is a State Weed Board.

Schumacher explained that ODA has a weed board of agents that do treatment work, grant work, etc. They have quarantine inspectors that go to nurseries to make sure plants aren't imported that aren't allowed.

Koivula asked if the County has ever been contacted by ODA that they are doing something wrong.

Schumacher responded, not to his knowledge.

J.Nelson stated that the weed law is a health law and nothing else.

Schumacher referenced ORS570 which says it's the responsibility of the Counties to maintain ROW, etc. to destroy, eliminate, and control noxious weeds. The County has never been sited or received a letter from ODA. He has received calls from property owners and groups.

Melotti stated it would be interesting to get the local ODA person's opinion on the County stepping away from identifying and controlling noxious weeds.

Snowden explained that there may or may not be interest in establishing a weed board. Discussion on the meaning of "control" in the document. Control can mean herbicide control, mowing, manual control, etc.

VI. PURPOSE OF VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ALONG ROADSIDES

J.Nelson stated that the purpose is to maintain sight visibility.

Koivula asked if fire suppression is an issue

Schumacher explained that there are state fire codes regarding vegetation height. The taller the vegetation, the more fuel there is.

VII. STAFF EXPLANATION OF MAP SITES

J.Nelson shared her map of proposed spray areas.

Schumacher showed a picture of a site Scotch Brome removal site.

J.Nelson referred to Jan Wroncy regarding the proposed spray site at High Pass Rd for Meadow Knapweed.

Wroncy stated that High Pass Rd is 1/4m from her organic farm and the spray site would be upstream from her farm.

J.Nelson asked if all the areas on the map are still on Schumacher's list.

Schumacher stated that these sites are the worst sites for weeds, and largest infestation sites.

J. Nelson asked why they are not using the seed head weevil.

Schumacher explained that they are using them on Horton Valley sites. ODA has been monitoring those for over a decade.

J.Nelson asked what the problem is with the knapweed.

Schumacher stated that it is the dandelion of roadsides. It can be mowed a million times and it will continue to seed and it is a noxious weed taking over critical native habitats all over the valley. It is also shown to be carcinogenic.

J.Nelson stated that a lot of people are very poor and can use sheep to control it and Horton Organics is controlling it with cultivation.

Schumacher stated that they are doing research with partnerships on the alternative methods and if tilling works or not in the control. He explains that bio-controls have been used. He explained that Lane County is not a science based group and they have to rely on universities and other agencies and groups to do research.

Sundquist stated that the County has to keep records and evaluations

Melotti explained that ODA develops the bio-controls and once they determined that it is successful, they disseminate to Orin. There is not an accepted bio-control for this plant species.

APPROVED: _____

Sundquist stated that Schumacher's judgment needs to have a paper trail.

Schumacher stated that he uses the same methods as Sundquist does by researching and reading, etc. to determine methods and then uses his best judgment.

VIII. NEW ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – WED.,

Review of bylaws

Definition of Last Resort

Work Plan

Public Comment Time at the end of Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Debby Woodruff, Recording Secretary