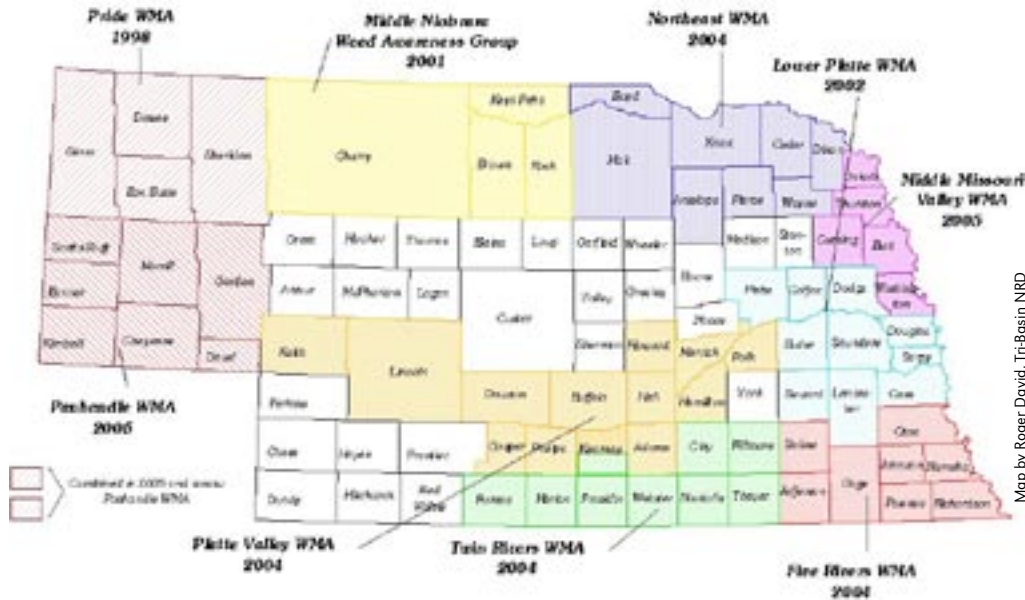


Weed Awareness

Nebraska Weed Management Areas

Much of the state is now organized into weed management areas (WMA). Eight of the nine have formed in the last four years. The Lower Platte Weed Management Area, which includes Lancaster County, was formed in 2002. It began as an organized effort to fight the non-native weeds invading the lower Platte River and then encouraged counties upstream to organize and fight these weeds before the seeds could come downstream. The purpose of creating a WMA is to facilitate cooperation among landowners and others to manage common weed problems in a common area. County weed control authorities had been developing annual noxious weed control plans and have been cooperating with public and private landowners and others in carrying out the noxious weed programs. But the WMA's allow for a more formalized way to involve others and to address common problems across a common area and not stopping at county lines. A recently recognized common problem of three



Map by Roger David, Tri-Basin NRD

non-native plants invading riparian areas along streams, has been a major impetus to become organized. Purple loosestrife became a noxious weed in 2001 and saltcedar became a noxious weed in 2005. Phragmites or common reed is not yet designated as a noxious weed, but is a major concern. Recent amendments to the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act allowed for emergency designation of saltcedar and provided for a matching grant

program to encourage the formation of multi-stakeholder WMA's with provisions for federal and other sources of funding. The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund awarded a \$250,000 grant to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to initiate this matching grant program. Five of the WMA's, including the Lower Platte Weed Management Area, just received approval for grants from this program.

Lower Platte Weed Management Area

Lancaster County Weed Control Authority is participating in the fourth year of the 10-county Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA)

This project targets non-native invasive weeds invading the natural plant communities along 170 miles of the Platte and Missouri Rivers and their drainage areas. This project is detecting, preventing and controlling three invasive weeds (purple loosestrife, salt cedar and phragmites) in 10 counties of east central Nebraska. The three targeted weeds are invaders of the riparian area along the Platte and Missouri Rivers. These plants are still in the early stages of invasive plant population dynamics. If left uncontrolled, they will enter the colonization phase (population explosion phase). This would create major impacts on native vegetation and reduce the quality of wildlife habitat, restrict stream flows contributing to flooding and ice jams and using twice as much water as the vegetation they replace. The Lower Platte River is the mainstay of the endangered interior least tern breeding habitat in Nebraska and contributes significantly to the threatened piping plover habitat. These birds nest on sandbars and sandpits along the river. Nearly 10 percent of the entire interior least tern breeding population rests along this portion of the river. Sandbar habitat is also critical to migrating shore birds, waterfowl and other wading birds. Purple loosestrife and phragmites invasion makes these areas less desirable habitat. A natural restoration process will take place by removing invasive plants and allowing for natural regeneration from existing native plant seed bank.

Efforts are being made throughout the area to promote awareness and provide organized control efforts. Assistance is being provided to the 855 landowners along the Lower Platte River in developing control plans.

Accomplishments in 2005 include:

- Almost 2,000 acres have been



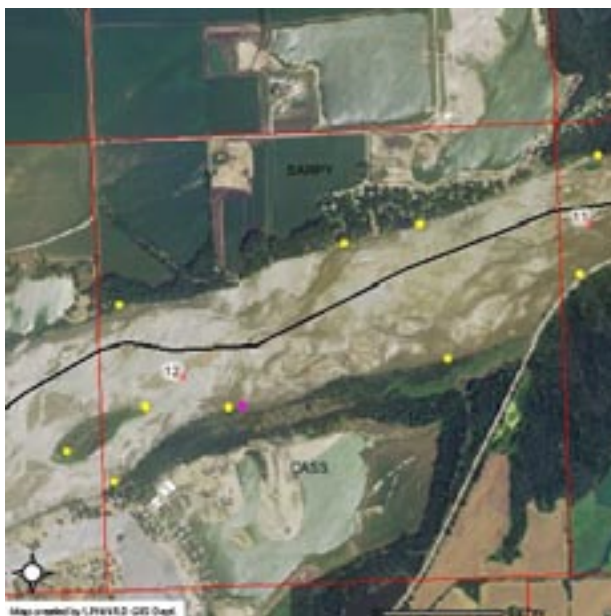
Map by Steve Cacioppo, LPWMA

controlled by partners and landowners exceeding the goals set.

- A public service billboard is being displayed for 12 months at sites along the interstate in the project area.
- There are 7 kiosks placed at high traffic locations including the Henry Doorly Zoo.
- A Web site has been developed and

maintained.

- A Web-based mapping program has been developed.
- A Lower Platte Weed Management Area brochure has been completed.
- Exhibits and displays placed at several events.
- Informational tours given to public and landowners
- Numerous newspaper articles have been printed on invasive and noxious weed control.
- Efforts to increase local funding has included presentations at seven Natural Resources Districts.
- Letters to all landowners and meetings with public and corporate landowners.



An example of the Web-based mapping program showing purple loosestrife infestations along the Platte River, online at <http://www.lowerplattewma.org>

LPWMA is promoting aggressive organized control efforts upstream. We encouraged 42 counties upstream in forming five weed management areas with our assistance. Monthly mailings are shared with eight weed management areas and joint meetings will be held four times a year. An effort is being initiated to plan a statewide summit conference on "Threats to Nebraska Rivers."

Professional Invasive Weed Associations

Participation in the Nebraska Weed Control Association (NWCA) and the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) has benefited the Lancaster County and Nebraska noxious weed programs. The control authority has contributed to these associations by its membership and participation of its staff. Following is a summary of some key benefits obtained.

Professional Improvement and Certification

NWCA sponsors four continuing education sessions a year. NAWMA has a program that provides a Certified Manager of Invasive Plants which includes Internet available training and resource materials, certification exam and continuing education requirements.

Funding Needs

NAWMA has been a part of the steering committee of the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Pulling Together Initiative grant program that has provided funds for five areas in Nebraska including Lancaster County. A federal "2004 Noxious Weed Control & Eradication Act" was passed with the support of NWCA and NAWMA. When funded, this law will make federal matching funds available to local weed control efforts. NWCA worked with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Committee of the Unicameral making noxious and invasive grants available and to get dedicated funding for the Nebraska Noxious Weed Program. Eight projects received grants from funds provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust including the Lower Platte Weed Management Area.

Improved Laws and Authorities

NAWMA prepared a model invasive plant management act. NWCA working with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Committee of the Unicameral used some ideas from the model act to amend the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act to provide a grant program, emergency noxious weed designation and dedicated funding for the noxious weed program. This helped trigger the formation of seven weed management areas in the state.

Sharing Information

Both NWCA and NAWMA have Annual Conferences and NAWMA publishes a quarterly newsletter that provides for an exchange of information, education, training, weed management practices, programs and technologies. Both associations have information Web pages. The NWCA address is <http://newweed.org> and NAWMA address is <http://nawma.org>.

Coordinated and Uniform Efforts

NAWMA worked with states (including NWCA) and provinces in establishing standards for a Weed-Free Forage Program and coordinating the development of invasive plant mapping standards. NWCA is making a state-wide Web-based weed mapping program available with funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The continued interaction of weed management professionals not only provides these and other benefits, it reenergizes the participants and improves the quality and quantity of performance.