Lancaster County Weed Control Authority’s purpose is to educate the public concerning noxious weeds, exercise the necessary authority to obtain effective control of noxious weeds concerning the problem concerning weed abatement and to exercise the necessary authority to control the spread of weeds and worthless vegetation in the city of Lincoln. We accomplish this by:
- educating the landowners of Lancaster County about the legal requirements and benefits of cutting and clearing overgrown weeds and worthless vegetation,
- efficiently and effectively exercising the authority to control weeds, particularly noxious weed, to ensure the county’s health is protected, and
- improving efficiency and effectiveness of operations through management techniques.

Noxious Weed Program

Lancaster County Weed Control Program is a three-phase program to assist landowners in reducing the number of noxious weed infested acres in the county.

1: Prevent the development of no weed infestations — Prevention is the least expensive and most effective way to halt the spread of noxious and invasive weeds. Integrated weed management includes preventing spread through keeping no weeds in the soil that is not infested, identifying the pathways in which weeds are spreading, and controlling new weed introductions, containing large-scale infestations using an integrated approach and often re-vegetation.

2: Provide education and public awareness of noxious and invasive weed control — The public is generally not aware of the economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds. There is a need to improve awareness of noxious weeds and to provide educational information to cooperators, land managers and the general public. As people become more aware of noxious weeds, the probability of detecting them is greatly increased, which allows for more effective and timely control.

Education and awareness assist:
- weed identification
- reporting of infestations
- prevention
- control
- fostering cooperation and partnerships

3: Provide for ongoing management — Noxious Weeds in Nebraska State of Nebraska-mandated noxious weeds — Noxious weeds are plants in the systematic approach to minimize noxious weed impacts and optimize intended land use. It is very important for all infested areas to be treated with effective methods. Integrated management is a program of noxious weed control that properly implements a variety of coordinated control methods. Types of control methods include mechanical, cultural, chemical and biological. Integrated management greatly improves the success rate for your weed control plan. All noxious weed management must be documented and evaluated over an extended period of time to be successful.

Noxious Weed Overview

No piece of land is safe from noxious weeds. They are found wherever they are able to establish a root system. In 2014, our inspectors documented 1,487 sites infested with noxious weeds. Of those sites, 398 were located within city limits. Due to their introduction as ornamentals saltcedar, purple loosestrife and knotweed are more commonly found in the city than in rural areas in Lancaster County. In order to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, this aggressive management plant is required on all noxious weed no matter where they are found.

Musk Thistle — Musk thistle is a commonly-reported noxious weed due to its easily- identifiable cutleaf purple and rose-purple colored head. The key to successful musk thistle control is to prevent seed production. A total of 903 inspections were made on 497 sites. There were 371 sites found to be in violation amounting to 1,398 acres infested.

Phragmites — Phragmites is an aggressive noxious weed and immediate action is required to keep this noxious weed under control. In 2014, we identified 441 sites to be in violation with phragmites.

Leafy Spurge — Leafy spurge is the noxious weed that seems to sneak up on us in the spring. It is very easy to detect when the grasses are still trying to grow. Leafy spurge continues to be very difficult to control and requires years of monitoring. In 2014, we made 799 inspections and found 490 infestations. Leafy spurge infests 1,521 acres in the county and city. Purple loosestrife — Purple loosestrife is known as the greatest noxious weed success story in Lancaster County. Wild purple loosestrife has been found in Lincoln city limits and in rural Lancaster County. Most commonly, purple loosestrife is found as ornamental plantings within the Lincoln city limits. Purple loosestrife was added to the State Noxious Weed List in 2001 and in that time, we have identified 490 locations. In 2014, we had 33 sites of ornamental or wild purple loosestrife.

Knotweed — The majority of knotweed in Lancaster County is found in the city. The key to successfully eradicating knotweed is educate the landowners about the impact knotweed can have on the environment and on proper control methods. In 2014, there were 18 known sites of knotweed in Lancaster County. The number of infestations is down 62% from 2013. This year, we did one force control on knotweed within Lincoln city limits.

Canada thistle — In the past couple of years, Canada thistle has been on an increase in Lancaster County. Currently we have 15 known infestations in the county and city. This is up 66% from 2011. Canada thistle is being transported with root stock and is commonly showing up in landscaping.

Saltcedar — Currently Lancaster County has four infestations of saltcedar. This low number is due to Early Detection-Rapid Response (EDRR). Saltcedar was identified early on as having the potential to cause problems and action was taken to eliminate them.

Sericea lespedeza — Now in our second year of dealing with sericea lespedeza as a noxious weed, we are starting to get a better understanding of it. Sericea lespedeza is a noxious weed that is not one on the list of wildlife management areas, but has been found in other areas. The number of sites infested has increased since last year and we expect the number to continue since it is a new noxious weed. In 2014, we inspectors found 102 sites infested, totaling 213 acres.

Teasel — In July 2014, cutleaf and common teasel were added to the Lancaster County Noxious Weed list. Our inspectors have already found 13 infestations. Our office is hopeful that EDRR will be effective with these plants. We plan to target teasel hard in 2015 in hopes the teasel will not spread. In our second year of dealing with sericea lespedeza, we are completing the control work and follow-up inspections are completed.

Noxious Weeds in Roadside Areas

Landowners are encouraged to control noxious weeds along property they own. If not controlled by the owner, Lancaster County Weed Control will control them. The key to successfully eradicating knotweed is educate the landowners about the impact knotweed can have on the environment and on proper control methods. In 2014, there were 18 known sites of knotweed in Lancaster County. The number of infestations is down 62% from 2013. This year, we did one force control on knotweed within Lincoln city limits.

City of Lincoln Weed Abatement — Weeds & worthless vegetation above 6”

The fall of 2014 was the first year when all perennial noxious weeds were attacked at the same time. Our contractor used two separate tanks of herbicide, which allowed them to drive the county roadsides only once, treating three different species in the same pass. This program ensures a better kill and saves the county money.

City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program

The City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Ordinance requires landowners within city limits to maintain the height of weeds and worthless vegetation below six inches. This includes all areas to the center of the street and for alley that adjoins their property. Three seasonal inspectors assist in administering this program. The seasonal employees complete inspections based on pre-selected properties due to their history, complaints from the public that are received in our office and by observing severe yards while conducting other inspections. In 2014 our office received 1,279 complaints from the public and additional 821 properties were inspected that were observed as having violations. Our office made 8,310 initial and follow-up inspections on 3,607 sites. Property not in compliance were notified of the violations with 2,391 letters, 1,485 legal notices, 627 reminder letters and 40 personal contacts. Landowners cut 2,707 sites and forced cutting was contracted on 299 sites. Landowners are responsible to pay the cost of control plus an administrative fee. A lien is placed against the property until the bill is paid.

City Landfills

The Weed Control Authority is responsible for managing noxious weeds at the 48 Street landfill and the Bush Road landfill. Presently, we deal with musk thistle and leafy spurge at both landfills and phragmites at the 48 Street landfill. The landfills are annually inspected and mapped. This helps us keep track of the spread of noxious weeds and the effectiveness of the control. Maps are provided to a contractor to complete the control work and follow-up inspections are completed.

Lancaster County Abandoned Cemeteries

Mowing and general maintenance on six abandoned cemeteries throughout the county falls under the supervision of the Weed Control Authority. Cemeteries included are the County Poor Farm Cemetery, Evangelical, Highland, Jordan and Uphoff. Special recognition goes to the following volunteers:

- Lincoln Tree Service for tree trimming and removal
- Steve Wedge for mowing Jordan
- Terry Briley for mowing Evangelical
- Boy Scouts of America Troop 64 for mowing Dietz
- Troy Huffman for mowing Highland and Uphoff