

FY2012 Partnerships Report

WALLOWA-WHITMAN NATIONAL FOREST

WWNF Invasive Weeds Partnership at the Wallowa Mountains Office

The WWNF WMO invasive plant program partners are comprised of a group of various individuals, agencies, and organizations working together to manage noxious weeds. This partnership helps set priorities, create maps, monitor treatments, and implement on-the-ground weed control both on national forest land and off. Long-term partners of the WMO invasive plant program include Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), Wallowa Resources, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), contractors, and private landowners. This group typically includes 20 individuals collaborating on selected weed treatments throughout the forest.

All partners share the idea that successful weed control is integral to maintaining the multiple economic and ecological values that these lands provide. The WWNF area has a unique ecology that provides many habitat types for game and non-game wildlife, endangered plants and fish, as well as providing generous opportunities for recreation and wilderness experiences. The project area is also home to permitted ranchers that depend on healthy native plant communities for their livelihood. Our partnerships share a common goal in recognizing these resource values and realizing the urgent need to work collaboratively to preserve these values. These partnerships allow for effective coordinated weed treatments across ownership boundaries on weed infested properties thus reaching a common goal of protecting our forest from the degrading impact of exotic, invasive noxious weeds.

Our forest lies within a CWMA. Tri-County CWMA is an organization which has worked cooperatively to identify noxious weed infestations and develop management strategies. We share an agreement that encourages and formalizes the cooperative relationship necessary for effective



Leafy spurge biological control monitoring on the Grande Ronde River. Cooperating partners: Wallowa Resources, Tri-County CWMA, Oregon Department of Agriculture, BLM, and USFS weed crews.



Meadow hawkweed inventory and treatment in the Minam River Drainage, Eagle Cap Wilderness. Cooperating partners: Tri-County CWMA, Wallowa Resources, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Private landowners of the Minam River drainage, USFS weed crews, and USFS volunteers.



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management and implementation of noxious weed programs among landowners and land managers within the CWMA. Wallowa Resources took the lead in the adoption of the Wallowa County Integrated Weed Management Plan that was developed recognizing that the responsibility of managing noxious weeds rests not only on the private landowner and operator, but also the county, state and federal agencies. Forest Service involvement of this plan entails the prevention of introducing new weed species onto the forest, eradicating small infestations of noxious weeds where possible, and to manage and contain existing weed populations. ODA has been our main supplier of all our biological controls and is on the ground with us documenting and monitoring release sites as well as cooperating with private landowners. The private landowners in this area are proactive with treatment efforts and have allowed access to their land for further inventory and treatments by Tri-County CWMA, ODA, and Wallowa Resources in conjunction with the Forest Service treatments on Forest land. A total of 1,473 acres were treated on the districts managed by the WMO. Over 30% of these forest treatment acres were accomplished through partnerships alone. These targets can only be achieved by persistent management and dedication from all our working partners.



Weed treatments along the Snake River of Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. Cooperating Partners: Wallowa Resources, Tri-County CWMA, Tri-County CWMA volunteers, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and USFS weed crews.

The Wallowa Mountain Zone invasive plant program has the responsibility of managing over 40 noxious weeds species across three districts totaling over 1.3 million acres to manage. Noxious weeds can be extremely difficult and expensive to treat. Slopes are very rocky and access is limited in the best of conditions. Many places across the zone are reached only on foot, horseback or by boat or helicopter. As a result, the cost of time and labor for experienced applicators in this difficult terrain is very high and often prohibitive for private landowners and agencies. Weed projects where these partnerships have been valuable are meadow hawkweed inventory and treatment in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, whitetop control in the Imnaha River drainage, rush skeletonweed and yellow starthistle control in HCNRA, biological releases on purple loosestrife and dalmation toadflax on the Snake River, and Japanese knotweed treatments on tributaries to the Snake River.

Effective weed management is a recurring project that is proposed yearly; weed control is a long term process in which our partnerships have been valuable and successful in weed management. Although progress can seem slow, a value cannot be placed on the landscape we are protecting from noxious weed infestations. Throughout weed treatment projects, these partnerships have generated an educational component in educating landowners and managers as to the threat and treatment of noxious weeds. Ultimately, we have improved our knowledge base making these projects cost efficient and more productive as well as benefiting all land owners by improving the resources and property values that are part of our National Forest system.



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Whitman Ranger District Youth Program

The youth program on the Whitman Ranger District is a combined effort and partnership between the Wallowa-Whitman NF, Training and Employment Consortium, Oregon Youth Conservation Corps and Baker County. These partners all combine funding and resources to help make the program a great success in Baker County, accomplish a variety of natural resource projects, provide jobs for the youth of Baker county, educate them in natural resource management and help prepare them for the future endeavors in their lives.

The Whitman Ranger District has had a successful youth program for over 20 years that has accomplished projects such as trail maintenance, recreation site maintenance, facilities repair, road maintenance, trail bridge construction, vegetation management, wildlife habitat enhancement, and aspen rehabilitation, just to name a few. The young people learn to work with hand tools of all kinds, with the focus always being on safety. They go through the same Job Hazard Analysis process and conduct the same tailgate safety sessions as our regular seasonal employees are required to do. For many of them it is their first job, which means it may be their first time being responsible for getting to work on time, being part of a crew and doing their share of the workload each day. The youth are also required to maintain all of the tools and vehicles they use each day and are held accountable for their actions.

One of the keys to the program's success is having good crew leaders in charge of the crews to organize projects, coordinate with project managers and to ensure that the youth are working productively and safely.

One particular project we focused on in 2012 was the construction of aspen exclosures, designed to protect young aspen sprouts from being browsed by cattle and wildlife, so the aspen stand can regain its structure and health. The project consisted of constructing a buck and pole fences using 6 foot high wooden bucks and 12 foot long wooden poles. The bucks are spiked together, then poles are drilled and spiked to the bucks to make a strong, low maintenance fence that is effective in keeping cattle and wildlife at bay.

In summary the program is a win/win project. It gives all the partners an opportunity to do something enrich the lives of the youth in Baker County, and it gives young people an opportunity to learn about natural resource management and job skills and work ethics that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Our program's motto is "a day's work for a day's pay".



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