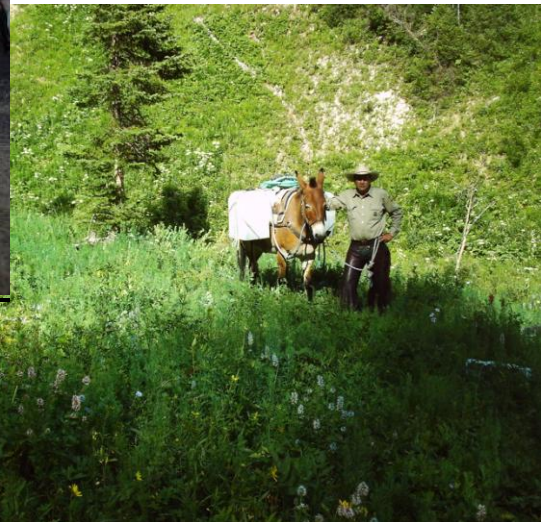


# 2004 ANNUAL REPORT – UPPER SNAKE RIVER COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT AREA



## I. INTRODUCTION

The Upper Snake River Cooperative Weed Management Area (USRCWMA) was established by the Bonneville, Teton, Madison, Jefferson and Bingham County Commissioners in partnership with the state and federal agencies that manage lands within those counties. The USRCWMA provides a forum to coordinate area wide activities to prevent, contain, and control non-native invasive plants and noxious weeds on public and private lands. In the USRCWMA, we believe that sharing funds, equipment, staff, and ideas across jurisdictional boundaries in a coordinated and cooperative weed fighting strategy will result in more effective "on-the-ground" weed control. The USRCWMA focus is to support an area wide integrated noxious weed control program that uses all available tools and techniques to combat noxious weeds. A Cooperative Agreement describes the operations of the partnership and a steering committee provides the local leadership. The steering committee membership is detailed in Appendix 1. The committee met **five** times during **2004**.

The USRCWMA strategic plan places a high priority on:

- 1) Developing a coordinated area-wide information and education program.
- 2) Initiating a noxious weed-mapping program using GPS and GIS technology.
- 3) Targeting and funding large scale weed treatment initiatives and smaller projects.
- 4) Implementing a research and monitoring program to locally evaluate the effectiveness of weed fighting techniques.

The USRCWMA Steering Committee has identified and prioritized several noxious weed infestations that pose the highest threat to the entire USRCWMA. Eight major multi-year weed-fighting initiatives are underway in the USRCWMA. They include the Snake River Purple Loosestrife Initiative, Highway 33 Corridor Spotted Knapweed Initiative, Rexburg Bench Leafy Spurge Initiative, Menan Area Spurge/Knapweed Initiative, Palisades/Swan Valley Noxious Weed Initiative, Teton Area Leafy Spurge/Knapweed Initiative and the Palisades Mitigation Project. Additionally, there are several special projects underway which target specific local noxious weed concerns.

Partners in the USRCWMA include the Bonneville, Teton, Madison, Jefferson and Bingham County Commissions, private land owners, County Weed Departments, High Country RC&D Council, five Soil and Water Conservation Districts, private landowners, USDA-Forest Service, USDI-Bureau of Land Management, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA-Cooperative Extension Service, USDI-Bureau of Reclamation, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Idaho Department of Highways, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Bonneville Power Administration, and Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory.

### **Area involved**

The USRCWMA covers Teton County, Madison County, Bonneville County, a portion of Jefferson County, and a portion of Bingham County.

Table 1: Acres - USRCWMA

<b>COUNTY</b>	Bonneville	Bingham	Jefferson	Madison	Teton	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>ACRES</b>	1,211,405	113,000	363,761	306,000	294,012	<b>2,288,178</b>

**NOTE: The remainder of Bingham County was added to the USRCWMA in December 2004.**

### **Major concerns**

Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed, Diffuse Knapweed, Russian Knapweed, Canada Thistle, Musk Thistle, Hoary Cress, Dalmation and Yellow Toadflax, Houndstounge, and Purple Loosestrife are the major concerns in the USRCWMA. The rapid spread of these noxious weeds is a serious threat to the ecology and economy of eastern Idaho.

Leafy spurge has gained a strong foothold in a wide range of habitats across the USRCWMA including arid rangelands, dry canyons, riparian zones, and wetland habitats along the Teton and Snake River. Leafy Spurge has displaced native vegetation and severely degraded the wildlife and grazing values of these lands. Purple Loosestrife threatens the diverse habitats along the Henry's Fork of the Snake River in Madison and Jefferson County. In recent years, Spotted Knapweed, Diffuse Knapweed, and Russian Knapweed have been spreading, especially along the regions road systems, and pose a threat to the regions rangelands.

## II. WHAT'S BEING DONE

Twenty-two cost-share projects were assisted with ISDA funding during 2004. Agencies, counties, and landowners participated. Projects included information and education projects, land treatment projects, landowner cost share projects, mapping and inventory projects, and biological control projects. Some of the projects underway in 2004 have been on-going for several years and are resulting in some very successful noxious weed treatments. Here's a sample of what's being done:

**Early Detection / Rapid Response** - During 2004 two new weeds on Forest Service land were detected and treated at three locations. One weed was perennial sow thistle which is designated noxious on the state list. The other was St. Johnswort. While St. Johnswort is not designated noxious by the state of Idaho, it is an invasive non-native species which is rare in this part of Idaho.

**Inventory / Mapping**- The **Teton County Noxious Weed Mapping Project** enabled Teton County to hire three high school students and a high school biology teacher to supervise noxious weed mapping throughout Teton County. The mapping team received training and supervision from GIS Alliance—a group of high school and college students and their supervisor from Blackfoot. The team mapped and inventoried major road-ways, water-ways, subdivisions, gravel pits, landfills and CRP fields throughout Teton County. The data and maps will help the county track the spread of noxious weeds and serve as a planning tool when creating control strategies and monitoring progress. The mapping team also completed several community educational projects including a weekly comic strip titled *O.B. Noxious* in the local newspaper and an animated presentation which will be presented to county leaders in the spring.

**Information/Education**- During 2004, the USRCWMA provided several public educational opportunities by participating in workshops, and developing printed materials. During March local residents attended the Jefferson County Weed Awareness Workshop in Rigby. 4,200 copies of our very popular **pocket calendar** were produced. The Bonneville County Weed Supervisor participated monthly in a popular radio talk show discussing noxious weed issues. In July we held an **informational tour** and invited all the Legislators and County Commissioners. Over 40 people attended the tour to learn more about weed identification, weed mapping, biological control, and noxious weed issues related to land development. 60 people attended a technical workshop and tour coordinated by the Bonneville County Weed Department. Training included weed identification, equipment calibration, and new products being introduced in the market.



**Containment**- During 2004, the Palisades Mitigation Project (PMP) assisted our partners to implement the biological component of their integrated noxious weed control programs. A long-term goal of the PMP is to establish insectaries throughout the watershed on several species of noxious weeds. The PMP has established and administers a cost share program, developed its own project evaluation process, and continues to monitor release sites. During 2004, sixteen species of biological agents, (518 colonies) were released. Since 1994, the PMP has assisted partners within the USRCWMA to place thousands of colonies of plant specific biological control agents on Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed, Canada Thistle, Musk Thistle, Purple Loosestrife, and Yellow Toadflax. 970 acres were treated this year. This project cost-shares directly with landowners and agencies.

## **NEW EQUIPMENT PURCHASED**



**Victor, Driggs, and Tetonia Noxious Weed Program** Cooperative efforts to fight noxious weeds in developed areas adjacent to the Forest (city and county) are especially important to reduce potential noxious weed infestations in the Forest. The USDA Forest Service recently purchased a 200 gallon slide-in sprayer for the cities of Victor, Driggs, and Tetonia. This program helped the three cities purchase a flat-bed trailer which the sprayer was mounted on for easier access and mobility. The three cities also purchase materials and supplies to control noxious weeds. The Teton County Weed Department also acquired three 3-gallon backpack sprayers and three 2-gallon backpack sprayers. The sprayers were rented out to Teton County residents throughout the summer.



Prevention is the key to keeping weeds from becoming invasive. A **high pressure washer** purchased during 2004 to clean equipment and reduce the spread of weed seeds. Bonneville County custom designed a 1000 gallon water trailer to hold the washer. They also purchased a 8000 watt generator that allows use of the

washer anywhere. Additionally the washer can strip the cuticle wax off plants by using steam and pressure adding another tool to our arsenal in weed control.

## COOPERATIVE PROJECTS

Cost share programs have been extremely effective in getting great cooperation with the landowners, especially with the fact that many of the landowners are 'absentee land owner'. Cost share programs were completed in Teton, Madison, Jefferson, and Bonneville County.

The **Swan Valley Project** is in its fourth year has been highly successful. Many of the landowners of this area are absentee landowners and rely on local experts to help maintain the property. Close to 800 acres were treated during 2004. Another 200 acres was scheduled to spray, but winter set in and we were unable to complete the project. Targeted weeds include Spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, Musk thistle, Leafy spurge, and Dalmation toadflax.

The **Teton Area Spurge/Knapweed/Toadflax Control** project targets Leafy Spurge infestations primarily in northern Teton County and Yellow Toadflax infestations from Driggs north to the county line. Eight landowners participated in a chemical cost-share program with the county to fight Yellow Toadflax. Additionally, landowners participated in a cost-share program to treat Leafy Spurge. Ten colonies of Leafy Spurge beetles were released in the hills above the Robinson Ranch which borders the Forest. The county and several landowners also purchased and released 17 colonies of Yellow Toadflax bio-control. The county chemically treated about 68 miles of roadside for Leafy Spurge and Yellow Toadflax.

The **Spotted Knapweed Control South of Driggs** project continues to be very successful in Teton County. Thirty-one private landowners, mostly ¼ and 2 ½ acres in size, participated in the cost-share program during 2004. The county covered half of the chemical cost and the landowners covered the other half. The cities of Driggs, Victor, and Teton and several large farmers were also involved. The county treated over 55 miles of critical roadside and bike-pathways to help prevent the spread of Spotted Knapweed by vehicles. An estimated 261 acres were treated and about 85 acres were mapped with GPS.

The **I-15 Russian Knapweed Project** was initiated by Bonneville County during 2004 to help contain Russian knapweed from further spreading down the waterways off the Great Western Canal and Interstate 15. We had a lot of landowner cooperation in addition to cooperation from the New Sweden Irrigation Co. A survey crew first mapped the Russian knapweed followed by spray crews. The project is planned again in 2005. Almost 44 acres were treated this year.

The **Hudman Cost Share** project is in its third year. This project partners with the landowners around the Idaho Fish and Games Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area. The project is doing an excellent job of reducing the impact of Musk thistle, Canada thistle, and even Hounds tongue. This is prime habitat for deer, elk, and moose that inhabit the areas. Acres treated for this project was 43.5.



The **Highway 33 Cooperative Spray Project** started in 2000. The objective of this project is to provide a weed-free travel corridor across the Snake River Plain from the INEEL boundary to Wyoming. The project has enjoyed good participation by the counties in dealing with the many private landowners, especially in Madison and Teton counties. 2004 spray partners included IDOT, Forest Service from the Palisades and Teton Basin Ranger Districts, IDF&G, and crews from each of the surrounding counties: Bonneville, Jefferson, Fremont, Clark, Madison and Teton. We treated about 351 acres, inventoried 6817 and mapped 10 acres on this project.

The **Dan Creek project** continues to be successful because of the great cooperation that we receive from the landowners. A total of 185 acres were treated. We are protecting valuable rangeland and pastures from Musk and Canada thistle, but we are also spending more and more time controlling Hounds tongue. Most of the control is done with backpack sprayers and ATV sprayers.

2004 was the second year for the **Fisher Bottoms** project. This project concentrates on the riparian areas along the South Fork of the Snake River. Project partner, The Nature Conservancy, has been instrumental in getting the landowners together to work on the weeds. Targeted weeds include Canada thistle, Musk thistle, Leafy spurge, and Hounds tongue. Sixty-seven acres were treated this year.



The **Leafy Spurge Control at Cartier Slough WMA** treated 900 acres using Goat Grazing. The overall result of this year's goat grazing treatment was a notable increase in grass cover, and a notable decrease in spurge density. The goats arrived in early July, and had pretty well grazed off all the leafy spurge they could access by early September. Despite abundant rain and very lush vegetative growth, the small amounts of regrowth were quickly grazed back off. This is an indication the spurge is definitely in a stressed condition from overgrazing. This year, the combined effects of goat grazing and biological control, (insects) were very apparent. Insect activity was observed everywhere the goats have grazed, while biocontrol activity in an area without goat grazing appears to be a failure. This, in a year of excellent leafy spurge growing conditions, appears to indicate the project has passed a threshold of control. The local TV station did a story on the project this year.

The **Forest Weed Control Project** treated 3,066 acres during 2004. Eight seasonal USDA-Forest Service employees were assigned to this project participating in CWMA spray days and for other projects. The Bureau of Reclamation contributed \$6000 for labor costs on this project. One additional employee was hired for a month with funds provided by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to survey the power line right of ways. BPA also funded two of the summer employees for a week to treat the right of ways. A concerned citizen donated the use of one pack animal to be used with the CWMA's horse pack sprayer for the summer. The Forest Service was also aided by the Bonneville County Correctional Department with 12 days worth of weed treatment on Forest Service and adjacent private lands within the CWMA. This help was provided by youth in the program who chopped musk thistle in the Kelly Canyon area. Twelve young people and their supervisor worked on the project for two half days along side the Forest weed crew. The assistance from the Upper Snake River CWMA allowed the Forest Service to gain additional funding through an internal granting process for their weed program in the amount of \$6000. This was used to pay the salary of the supervisory backcountry weed treatment employee. Biological control agents were released for toadflax, Canada thistle and leafy spurge. The thistle and toadflax insects were obtained through the Palisades mitigation project. Sixty thousand leafy spurge insects were collected from BLM insectaries and distributed on the Forest Service lands within the CWMA.

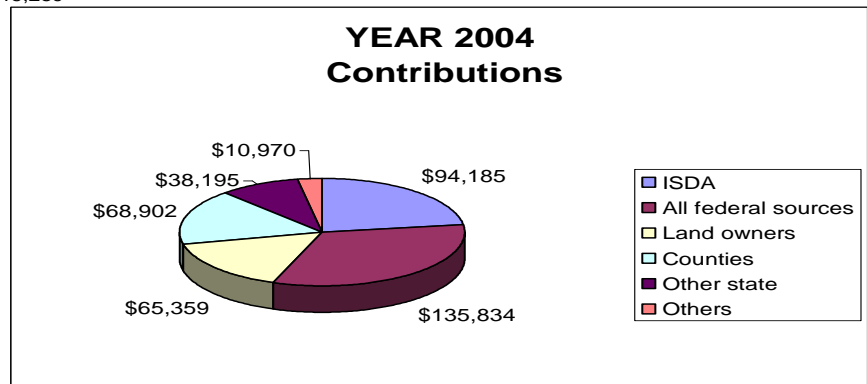
The **2004 Moody Creek/Willow Creek Project** targeted noxious weeds in the Moody Creek and Willow Creek drainages. Control work was primarily done on Idaho Endowment Lands, but some also occurred on adjacent deeded lands where needed. An actual total of 70 acres were treated, in a geographic area covering many thousands of acres. Most of this work is off main roads along ATV trails and hard to access riparian areas, making the project very labor intensive. Canada thistle, musk thistle and houndstongue were the primary species sprayed. Black henbane and spotted knapweed were also treated, but involved only small patches. Approximately three weeks total were spent this year treating weeds in these two areas. The Moody Creek area in particular continues to require intensive annual treatment every year given the road density and recreational pressure it receives. Chemical purchased with grant monies was also made available to State Lessees. Three lessees within the project boundaries made use of the chemical and spent a total of 74 hours spraying weeds. Difficult to access areas that would not have been treated by IDL were sprayed by these people, making this portion of the project an important part of the process.

The **Rail Dogs** project works with the Eastern Idaho Railroad by assisting them with managing the weeds along their right-of-ways across the three counties of the USRCWMA. Eastern Idaho Railroad supplies their high-rail spray truck. Counties supply an applicator with them to help spray the weeds. Three years ago the project would take up to two weeks. This year it took only three days. The project usually starts in Bonneville County, continues into Jefferson County, and ends in Madison County. As the truck enters into an adjacent county, we switch applicators. The grant money assists the railroad in purchasing herbicide and we all in-kind match the labor and equipment. As can be seen in the map, there are many sections of track that cut across county borders.

### **III. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CWMA**

Each county as well as state and federal land managing agency within the USRCWMA annually set budgets for integrated noxious weed control programs. Other USRCWMA partners provide technical assistance, equipment, services, and dollars in support of integrated noxious weed programs. Grant dollars received from the Idaho Department of Agriculture (ISDA) have been matched with local cash and services. Collectively, they provide the resources needed to implement the programs of the USRCWMA. During 2004, a total of \$319,259 in cash and in-kind services were contributed in direct support of USRCWMA project implementation.

ISDA	\$94,185
All federal sources	\$135,834
Land owners	\$65,359
Counties	\$68,902
Other state	\$38,195
Others	\$10,970
	\$319,260



#### **IV. PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR**

The USRCWMA will continue to implement the strategic plan it developed in 2000 and reconfirmed in 2003. A high priority is placed on continuing those programs started in 2001, 2002, and 2003 while taking on several new challenges during 2005. Goals include:

- We will focus on RAPID RESPONSE as needed during 2005. We will participate in a Tamarisk Initiative in 2005 starting with an inventory of the infestations boundaries, evaluating treatment options, and starting a public information campaign.
- The Palisades Mitigation Project will continue to plan, fund, and implement biological weed control projects in the USRCWMA. Several *Aphthona spp.* insectaries will be harvested during 2004 and these insects will be moved to new sites.
- Cooperative "spray days" will be continued coordinated noxious weed inventory and mapping will be a major activity during 2004. We are arranging for student mapping teams to assist county weed supervisor's to inventory and map noxious weeds and provide GIS maps.
- GIS mapping of our Palisades Mitigation Project biological agent release sites will continue.
- Continue to implement targeted noxious weed treatment projects with private landowners.
- The Leafy Spurge Control with Goat Grazing project on Henry's Fork of the Snake River will be continued.

- Educational outreach will continue to be a high priority in the USRCWMA during 2005. We will utilize workshops, tours, displays at county fairs, radio talk shows, newspapers, and newsletters to continue to provide quality information and educational opportunities to the public. We will produce a 2005 Noxious Weed Pocket Calendar.

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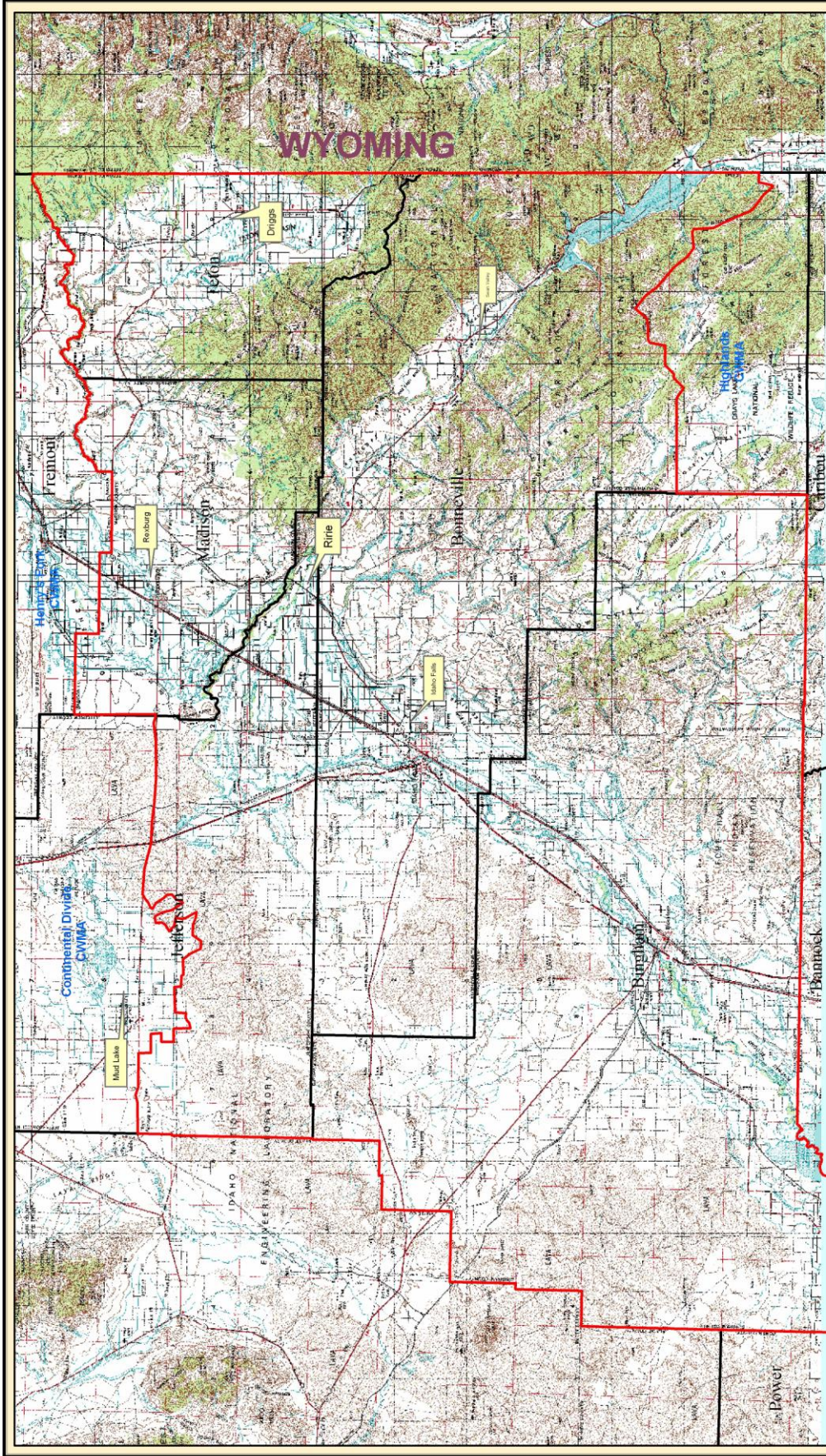
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## Appendix II

### Project Summaries: Upper Snake CWMA

Category	Weed species	Acres treated
<b>Revegetation</b>	Canada thistle	1
	Leafy spurge	1
<b>Biological Releases</b>	Canada thistle	975
	Musk thistle	25
	Leafy spurge	1715
	Purple Loosestrife	10
	Spotted Knapweed	65
	Dalmation toadflax	25
	Yellow toadflax	95
<b>Treated</b>		
	Leafy spurge	745
	Spotted knapweed	2006
	Yellow toadflax	180
	Canada thistle	919
	Musk thistle	567
	Hounds tongue	53
	Black henbane	2
Plumeless thistle	5	
<b>Public Contacts</b>	N/A	30,474 Public Contacts
<b>GPS/GIS Mapping</b>	Leafy spurge	483
	Spotted knapweed	541
	Yellow toadflax	1050
	Canada thistle	980
	Musk thistle	700
	Hoary cress	18



**Legend**

- County Boundary
- CWMA Boundary

**Upper Snake River Cooperative  
Weed Management Area**

1-498-449