

Hole in the Wall Ranch Noxious Weed Control Policy

The Hole in the Wall Ranch Property Owners Association Board of Directors has determined, after review of the assessment done by Jim Conley, County Extension Agent in the spring of 2004 and review of the Weed Control Committee's Report and after Considerable discussion during a BOD meeting on November 27, 2005 that a serious uncontrolled thistle problem exists n most of the ranch. And, furthermore that a Ranch Wide Noxious Weed Control Policy is in the best interest of all property owners. The specifics of the program will be determined by the BOD, after a weed control and cost assessment is completed in the Spring of 2006.

The basic outline of the program is as follows:

All lot owners are responsible for noxious weed control on their lot(s) including the right-of-way up to and along Big Wall Lane and School Creek Road, whichever or both if they adjoin their property. All lot owners will be required to participate in some form of a weed control program for at least three years or until identified noxious weed infestations are eradicated or controlled.

In the spring of 2006 and 2007 Jim Conley, County Extension Agent, will do an assessment of each lot as well as the common areas to determine the extent of thistle as well as other noxious weed contamination on a per lot basis. Based on Jim Conley's assessment, a private certified professional sprayer or professional weed control company will be contracted with the Hole in the Wall Ranch BOD to control the noxious weeds on the ranch for up to three years. They will be required to do a cost analysis of controlling the noxious weeds on each lot. The ranch wide Noxious Weed Control Program will be decided by the BOD based on that information. The program will included the number of areas of contamination, type of herbicides to be used, number of applications, etc., and the cost to spray for noxious weeds to sufficiently control the identified noxious weeds on each lot.

Once the per lot cost has been determined for the Ranch Wide Noxious Weed Control Program, all lot owners will be given the cost for the weed control company to control the weeds on their lots(s). Unless a lot owner opts out to do their own weed control program, it will be assumed that all lot owners will participate in the Ranch Wide Noxious Weed Control Program at the assessed cost for their particular lot. Any lot owners wishing to opt out of the professional control program and be responsible for their own weed control program may do so by signing an opt out waiver in which they describe their weed control plan for the next three years. Opt out waivers may be obtained by contacting Judy Hammernick, CPA 622 S. Albert Street, Walsenburg, CO 81089, 719-738-2224 and requesting that she send the lot owner a waiver which needs to be return to her no later than April 1, 2006.

In the Spring of 2007, the effectiveness of the noxious weed control programs, both by the professionals as well as lot owners, will be evaluated by Jim Conley and then the noxious weed control program for 2007 will be determined by the BOD based upon his recommendations. Any lot owners doing their own weed control who have not made substantial progress in eradicating noxious weeds in the first year will be required to participate in the ranch wide professional program during year two and year three. Additionally, the effectiveness of the professional weed control company will be assessed to determine their on-going participation. This will be the same procedure for future years with modifications as determined by the BOD.

It is suggested that lot owners be sure to verify that they are purchasing hay that is free of noxious weeds in order to prevent the further spread of noxious weeds.

Report to Hole in the Wall Board of Directors
Canada Thistle Control Proposal
September 9, 2005

Thistle Control Committee:

Olivia Millard, Chair
Vince Koutnik
Loretta Davis
Bill Waldman.

This proposal arrives somewhat later than it was intended to, following some communications mishaps such as incorrect e-mail addresses.

Summary of findings:

As everyone at HITWR knows, our perennial thistle, The Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is pervasive, persistent and resistant to eradication. The research that we've done suggests the following:

- Biological controls are not yet effective, take several years to become established and are difficult to come by.
- Repeated mowing during the growing season followed by an application of Curtail may be the most effective management program.
- Repeated application of Curtail during the growing season is also effective, but entails significantly more herbicide exposure and in fact may be slightly less effective than #2.
- Goats may well be an excellent complement to a management program, but finding a source of goats is proving difficult and they evidently only eat young thistle.

We attach two documents created by the Nature Conservancy's science staff. These documents differ somewhat from other literature found on the web because the Conservancy focuses on weed control for natural areas rather than for agricultural lands. While some of us have horses or hay on our land, we do think that natural area goals are more in keeping with the HITWR landscape than are agricultural goals.

There are at least two additional weed species that HITWR should try to control: musk thistle, the biannual that is scattered across most lots, and cheatgrass. However, control for each of these weeds will need to be done in a different manner. The Weed Committee is willing to compile resources and suggestions for these two weeds as well, if requested.

First, a short history of thistle control at Hole in the Wall:

Five years ago or so, someone from Pueblo sprayed for some landowners at HITWR. Vince Koutnik discovered Curtail and started spraying his own land, also did some spraying for neighbors. On the right-of-way, Vince did a lot of manual removal which was extremely labor intensive. Since then, efforts have been patchy. Vince has sprayed his own land three times each year and has a good handle on his thistle. Ron Nielsen has been spraying, Martine Minnis has hired a sprayer in the past (unknown how consistently or to what effect).

Kitty Duncan, our neighbor to the south, paid someone three years ago to spray her 350 acres for approximately \$5,000 – we could double that amount for a good estimate of what it would cost HITWR.

Proposed programs for ongoing thistle control:

While Canada Thistle spread most effectively from established plants through rhizomes, the wind blowing as ferociously as it does from the west inevitably brings seed for new infestations, as does hay brought from neighbors that has thistleheads in it. Thus, some degree of thistle control will always be necessary at HITWR. However, once established infestations are eliminated, then any new infestations should be easier to control if hit hard and early.

At the moment, HITWR has serious Canada Thistle infestations on a number of lots. For effective control, we propose that the association vote on adopting a ranch-wide policy under one of two options:

Option 1: Every landowner can choose how he or she will participate but everyone must participate; those who are unable to control their own thistle will be required to participate in hiring a contractor. Under this option, more work is needed to determine how to ensure that every lot participates. In addition, each landowner would need to do their easement to the road.

For those who choose to do their own control under this scenario, approved approaches would be the following:

1. Mow two or three times per growing season, then spray. This is the gold standard for thistle control and we suggest it would HITWR's preferred alternative.
2. Spray three times per growing season.
3. Pay in to the pool to have a contractor do the work.

Option 2: The ranch as a whole hires one or more contractors to mow and spray. This option would give us the most assurance that thistle control will be effective, but it will be the most expensive.

Quotes for spraying all lots at HITWR from Colorado Vegetation Management, 719-545-6163. Per Diane: \$60/acres for the truck, \$95/acre for the ATV, includes the chemical. CWM is happy to spray with Curtail.

Quotes for spraying all lots HITWR from Jeremiah Hanson, Westcliffe. Jeremiah sprays in La Veta for the Forest Service, and also in the Wayhatoya Valley as well as for some ranchers near HITWR. He sprays using ATV with a 30-gallon tank, and uses three herbicides per tank. Herbicides he uses include Tordon (picloram), 2, 4-D, Escort, Banvel. He states that all of his herbicides are safe for water and animals (although initial research indicates that Tordon, at least, is not). He is able to cover 1 to 25 acres per tank. Depending on the infestation, he sprays once a year, and in the first year usually has a 70% die-back rate. Second year 100%, and in the third year he usually doesn't need to spray at all.

Rates: For one tank, \$250. For two tanks, \$225/tank. For three tanks and over \$200/tank.

This committee is concerned that Mr. Hanson's chemical mix may not be as benign as he claims. Thus we recommend using Colorado Vegetation Management if at all possible. We would want to do extensive additional investigating before hiring Mr. Hanson, especially given several lot owners' concerns about chemicals in the water supply.

Another resource, Chapparral Construction at 719-742-3222, does mow but is not taking new clients.

Weed control devices and currently available or unavailable personnel:

- HITWR owns on backpack sprayer and a stock of Curtail
- Vince Koutnik has a brush hog and could be available to mow some lots other than his own, depending on his other commitments. He would charge \$60 / hour.
- No one at HITWR is able to spray anyone else's land because of liability and toxin exposure concerns. For any spraying to be done by other than the landowner, a certified professional sprayer should be hired with all appropriate protective gear.

Weed resources unearthed to date:

Huerfano County Extension Agent, Walsenburg	Jim Conley	738-2170
NRCS, Walsenburg	Tony Arnhold	738-1171
Pueblo County Noxious Weed Control Coordinator (Beth was reported to be a good resource on property value loss through weed infestation, but she told me she doesn't have any good information about this).	Beth Campbell	583-4629
Colorado Vegetation Management: sprayer		545-6163
Sprayer that does Wahatoya side (Jeremiah spends winters in CA and can be reached there on his cell at 805-459-6691)	Jeremiah Hanson	783-0725
Chaparral Contruction: mower		742-3222
Big R, Pueblo for Curtail supply (Curtail comes in 2 ½ gallon jugs which you must re-order at \$140. Have to buy two at a time. One order would cover most of HITWR for one year)		543-8116
Goatapelli.com Goa herd for weed control (It is unclear whether this entity is still in business. Repeated e-mails and phone calls to them have gone unanswered).		307-421-3737