

December 14, 1995

Introduced By: Louise Miller

noxweed:sdw

Proposed No.: 95-565

MOTION NO. **9746**

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A MOTION adopting a noxious weed control program for the purpose of controlling noxious weeds in King County as mandated by state law and outlined in RCW 17.10.

WHEREAS, the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 17.10) provides for the formation and duties of regional noxious weed control boards, and the identification of and control of noxious weeds in the county, and

WHEREAS, current infestations of several noxious weeds species exist in many areas of King County, and

WHEREAS, the presence of noxious weeds results in significant economic loss to gross agriculture produce and presents a serious health hazard to persons and animals, and

WHEREAS, the agriculture and resource lands section of the natural resources division of the department of natural resources has responsibility for implementing the noxious weed control program for King County, and

WHEREAS, the proposed noxious weed control program identifies existing staff resources within King County agencies to be assigned specific tasks related to monitoring and control of noxious weeds on county properties through the growing season, and

WHEREAS, through the adoption of the 1996 budget ordinance 12029, the council appropriated \$130,000 for noxious weed control in 1996, and

1 WHEREAS, the King County noxious weed control board has
2 reviewed and forwarded an alternative plan to the council for
3 the control of noxious weeds in King County which differs
4 only in requesting additional resources from what has been
5 included in the executive's proposal, and

6 WHEREAS, the council will seek supplemental funds for
7 additional seasonal workers and will monitor the progress of
8 the noxious weed program in 1996 to determine if other
9 additional resources are needed;

10 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT MOVED by the Council of King
11 County:

12 The Council hereby approves and adopts the Noxious Weed
13 Control Program as proposed in Attachment A dated November
14 11, 1995. The Weed Coordinator position shall have the
15 responsibility of developing and distributing educational
16 materials, implementing a monitoring plan, training seasonal
17 and county staff, and coordinating with participating county
18 agencies, and provided further that, the Weed Coordinator
19 shall work in conjunction with and at the direction of the
20 King County Noxious Weed Control Board. Provided further
21 that, the Council shall seek funding for five additional
22 seasonal workers in 1996 and shall monitor the progress of
23 the noxious weed control program and determine by mid-1996

1 whether any other additional resources are necessary and
2 whether funds are available.

3 PASSED by a vote of 11 to 2 this 19th day of
4 December, 1995.

5 KING COUNTY COUNCIL
6 KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

7 Kent Pullen
8 Chair

9 ATTEST:

10 Gerald A. Peterson
11 Clerk of the Council

12 Attachments: Attachment A: Alternate Noxious Weeds Control
13 Plan Dated November 11, 1995

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NOXIOUS WEEDS ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

Background

The King County Noxious Weed Control Board is charged with the duty of controlling noxious weeds within the County. The RCW states that the Board may inspect the land to determine the presence of noxious weeds, and if found to exist, to control them. State law requires landowners to control weeds on their property. If landowners fail to control noxious weeds on their lands, the County, through the Noxious Weed Control Board, must then take necessary steps to control and eradicate the weeds and then bills the landowner for costs incurred.

King County has proposed a strong program for noxious weed control on county owned parks, trails, facilities, and road rights-of-way. There is also a proposed program to monitor infestations, educate private landowners and ensure eradication of noxious weeds on their lands. This proposal brings coordination to the numerous existing yet separate initiatives and adds a private property education and control component. King County fully expects that this program will address the difficult problem of noxious weed control when effectively implemented.

Proposal

This proposal is a comprehensive plan that addresses noxious weeds on transportation corridors, public spaces, commercial and residential property. The plan relies heavily on the foundations presented in the King County Noxious Weed Control Board's plan and King County's current efforts. Board support, strong educational and enforcement programs and an incremental mapping program, and enforcement components are all integral to this proposal.

The proposal meets the four criteria for noxious weed control programs outlined by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. They are:

- 1) Education
- 2) Survey
- 3) Control Work
- 4) Follow-Up

This action plan does not require a property tax increase and employs creative as well as field-proven methods to control the noxious weed problem.

Two Phases

The program will focus on Class A and Class B weeds specified in the Washington State Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed List, contained in WAC 16-750. The program will focus on all lands in King County including transportation corridors, including, but not limited to federal and state arterials, County and city arterials, railroad grades and rights of way, public spaces and waterways, including all such public spaces within King County owned by other jurisdictions, such as campgrounds, county, city, federal and state parks, water quality facilities, public utility areas and rights of way, etc. In addition to seasonal field staff, County staff from the King County Departments listed below will receive additional training by the Weed Coordinator to aid him or her with the weed program.

Phase I in 1996 will primarily focus on the seven noxious weed species outlined in complaints by neighboring counties. Secondary will be the monitoring, control and surveying of all other noxious weeds. These species will be targeted for survey, control and eradication. King County acknowledges their obligation to surrounding counties regarding the effective control of noxious weeds. Specifically, the following noxious weed types have been identified for immediate control in 1996: Giant Hogweed, Blueweed, Dalmation Toadflax, Diffuse Knapweed, Spotted Knapweed, Hedge Parsley, and Yellow Nutsedge.

Phase II is expected to begin in 1997 and will cover all other weeds on the State's noxious weed list.

Current King County Efforts

Currently, a number of King County departments have noxious weed control programs in place. These departments include Parks, Surface Water Management, Roads, Metro Transit and Water Quality and Cooperative Extension. These programs range from educational brochures to control and eradication on King County property. Below is a brief description of what King County departments are currently doing to control noxious weeds:

Parks: The Parks Division maintenance staff currently work with volunteers to control weeds in King County parks and along King County trails. For environmental reasons, the Parks Division does not spray. Parks staff also respond to complaints about weeds on park properties. Parks employs about 50 full time park maintenance staff and approximately 200 seasonal employees to maintain parks in the summer.

SWM: The Surface Water Management Division (SWM) works to control aquatic noxious weeds with a staff of 3.5 FTEs and volunteers in SWM's service areas. SWM also produces educational information for the general public. The emergent aquatic noxious weed problem is Hydrilla, which has recently been found in Pipe Lake. SWM is working closely with the Department of Ecology to controlling and eradicate this noxious weed.

Roads: The Roads Division currently oversees right of way vegetation, which includes the control or eradication of noxious weeds. Roads has two full time licensed spraying technicians that work to eradicate weeds or replace them with other plants. In addition to spraying, Roads makes use of insects to control weeds, which have an additional benefit of moving from the right of way to adjacent property to control weeds there.

King County Airport: The Airport currently contracts with a private firm to spray herbicide and pesticide on approximately 400 acres. FAA requires control of grasses and weeds so that birds do not take up residence and ultimately fly into aircraft engines. Noxious weed control is accomplished in this \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year effort.

Metro Transit: Metro Transit maintains landscaped Park and Ride Lots, and controls weeds on these lots. Ten full time gardeners are trained to identify and control noxious weeds. The division also employs some 20 seasonal workers. Some Park and Rides have water treatment ponds where weeds are also monitored and controlled.

Metro Water Pollution Control: Metro Water Pollution Control areas are largely fenced, private industrial areas. Because of heavy construction, vegetation has not been problematic, weeds or otherwise. There are pump stations that are maintained by two full time gardeners, and they control noxious weeds when necessary. The division employs two full time gardeners and six seasonal workers.

Under this proposal select County field staff from these departments will be cross trained to identify noxious weeds. They will serve as field inspectors to identify weed infested areas on County properties and report sightings on private property.

King County Noxious Weed Control Board

The King County Noxious Weed Board shall utilize the authority authorized in Chapter 17.10 to control noxious weeds in King County. In carrying out the requirements of 17.10 and in developing a successful program in King County, the Noxious Weed Control Board will perform the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Establish, and amend rules and regulations as empowered by chapter 17.10 and in accordance with K.C.C., to establish an effective control and eradication program.
- Evaluating the activities of the Noxious Weed Coordinator to ensure directives of the program are being carried out. Participate in the development of Weed Coordinator's job description.

November 11, 1995

Alternate Noxious Weed Plan

- On an annual basis, review the adequacy of the Noxious Weed budget to ensure that sufficient funding is in place. Should the Weed Board feel that the budget is inadequate, they may choose to request additional funds or pursue a assessment.
- Enforce control of noxious weeds as required on lands whose owners fail to comply with the request to do so.
- Develop program policy and direction for the Weed Coordinator to carry out.

The King County Noxious Weed Control Board anticipates a review of successful programs within the State in an effort to adopt key elements that will work effectively in King County. These policies will be implemented prior to the 1996 field season.

Weed Coordinator

This proposal calls for the re-assigning a current County employee or hiring a new person to perform the duties of a Weed Coordinator to implement the Noxious Weed Control Program. The Weed Coordinator position will be funded by selected County agency funding partners. Funding for the equivalent of five seasonal (4 months) staff will provide survey, monitoring and control in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas. King County will request consultation from the Noxious Weed Control Board in the hiring of this position.

This program anticipates that the Noxious Weed Coordinator be based within the new Natural Resources Department of King County in an effort to minimize the administrative and overhead costs associated with establishing a start-up program and also take advantage of the access to resources existing within this new department. Administrative starting costs include employee benefits, rent, motor pool, phones, computers, G.I.S, and miscellaneous office supplies. By folding these costs into existing programs within King County, the Noxious Weed Control Program is able to reallocate important dollars to education, monitoring, control and enforcement.

The Weed Coordinator will perform the following duties:

- Coordinate and maximize the current efforts of King County departments. Departmental field staff will serve as the initial identifiers of weeds on all County property they observe while performing regular duties. Educational brochures currently produced by departments and other governmental agencies may be combined or modified by the Coordinator to serve all citizens. Affected Department Directors will assign an individual within their department to work with the Noxious Weed Coordinator.

- The Weed Coordinator will work with the departments listed to develop a cohesive King County Noxious Weed Control Program that will coordinate and maximize current efforts and work to expand control efforts in needed areas. The Weed Coordinator will communicate and coordinate with other jurisdictions and entities to ensure that they control noxious weeds on their property.
- Develop a comprehensive education program for citizens and offer access to information and advice on resources for control of weeds.
- The Weed Coordinator will work in conjunction with the King County Noxious Weed Control Board.
- Coordinate and work cooperatively with other jurisdictions to ensure weeds are controlled on city, state and federal property within King County.
- In compliance with RCW 17.10, and at the direction of the King County Noxious Weed Control Board, direct enforcement against property owners, who, after adequate notice and education, fail to control weeds located on their property. Weed board approval and authority will be sought and used for any enforcement action.
- Develop survey and monitoring methodology for field staff which outlines specific techniques to be used. The Weed Coordinator will propose to the Weed Board guidelines for field operations and reporting procedures to include roadside survey, data recording and processing, notification of landowner, and follow-up inspections. Following board approval, the Coordinator will implement these guidelines.
- Perform the everyday activities relative to administration, education, monitoring and control, the elements of which will be outlined by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board. When enforcement measures need to be taken, the Weed Board will authorize such measures. The goal of this plan is to develop a program outlined and approved by the Board, but one that will minimize the everyday involvement of boardmembers, respecting their role as volunteers.

Develop an ongoing program for control of noxious weeds, including policy development, funding options, and coordination with the State Department of Agriculture and the State Noxious Weed Board. Support staff will be provided by existing staff in the Agriculture and Resource Lands Section of the Natural Resources Department.

Program Components & Operations

Education

The primary focus of this program shall be education. The Weed Coordinator shall prepare and oversee a comprehensive education program that includes the collection and distribution of printed materials, conducting classes and seminars, preparing exhibits, and other measures as appropriate. The coordinator will also provide literature and training to other agencies in the County that provide natural resource education to residents. Existing channels for education include local 4-H, gardening clubs, the Agriculture Committee, the Center for Urban Horticulture and nurseries within the county.

Education about noxious weeds will continue to occur through current programs, with possible expansion to others such as DDES's environmental education, the Livestock Oversight Committee, Cooperative Extension, SWM and Metro programs like the Lake and Basin Stewards Program, Waterways 2000, etc.

Public awareness and education on existing noxious weeds within King County will be emphasized prior to and during the growing season in an effort to guide landowners in recognizing those noxious weeds most prevalent and damaging.

Survey & Mapping:

King County presently employs numerous personnel who travel county-wide on a daily basis while performing their duties. Specifically, the following departments have personnel in the field who have or will receive cross training for noxious weed identification:

Parks:	50 FTE Workers, 200+ Seasonal Workers
Metro WPC:	2 Full Time Gardeners, 6 Seasonal Workers
Metro Transit:	10 Full Time Gardeners, 20 Seasonal Workers
DPW Roads:	2 Full Time Licensed Spraying Technicians, Other Crews
DPW, SWM	3.5 FTEs for Aquatic Weed Control

As County field staff travel to various parts of the County to perform their duties, they will allocate a portion of their time to perform inspection for noxious weeds within a specified area. Staff will report any sightings to the Coordinator who will coordinate a clean-up effort if the infestation is on public property or educate private landowners that they must take corrective action. Staff will be provided with reporting sheets listing information including type, location, and extent of infestation. These reports shall be input into a computer for G.I.S. mapping. Such mapping shall indicate areas of infestations which will be helpful in year to year monitoring. The Coordinator shall ensure that all control measures taken be reflected in this mapping procedure

November 11, 1995

Alternate Noxious Weed Plan

Additionally, seasonal staff will survey and monitor assigned areas of the county on a daily basis during the growing seasons to note, and initiate control of the weeds..

The county will work closely with the State Noxious Weed Control Board to obtain grant funding (which is expected to be approved this Fall) for the purposes of acquiring and implementing an automated weed mapping program. The program or a substitute mapping effort - automated or manual - will be operational for the 1996 weed season. Mapping technology currently employed by SWM for its aquatic weed control program should be reviewed for possible expansion or integration into a comprehensive automated weed mapping system.

If County field staff are unable to perform inspection for weeds, it may be possible for the participating agencies to fund additional seasonal field inspectors out of their current extra help budgets and assign those staff to weed inspection and follow-up.

A systematic surveying element will be implemented to establish procedures for surveying and monitoring noxious weeds in King County by the Weed Coordinator, field staff, and participating employees of other King County agencies. Field staff will be trained to follow the guidelines as developed by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board.

Elements of Effective Surveying to be Included in this Program

1. *Identification Skills*
2. *Intensity of Survey*
3. *Frequency of Survey*
4. *Data Collection and Management*

Control Work:

In addition to King County employees and field staff, the Weed Coordinator will utilize community volunteers and other organizations such as the Youth Conservation Corps to perform weed eradication duties at county owned sites and/or on private lands whose owners fail to comply.

Control of noxious weeds, as outlined in chapter 17.10 of the RCW, is the responsibility of the landowner. In carrying out the policies, rules, and regulations adopted by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board, the Weed Coordinator and field staff will work with landowners in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas in addressing weed control. Materials will be available to all landowners recommending the options available in controlling noxious weeds. In an effort to monitor the effectiveness of control work, each landowner performing control work shall be given a public response card to mail to the Weed Coordinator. This card will show results of control measures taken.

Follow-Up & Enforcement:

The Coordinator will direct and oversee follow-up inspections to be performed by field staff as a part of their regular survey duties. The Weed Coordinator may also directly verify compliance. Upon surveying noxious weeds on a property, the Weed Coordinator and staff will verify ownership and inform the landowner with a friendly but firm letter, and a phone call when possible, about the type and extent of infestation. Should it be discovered upon a follow-up inspection that compliance has not occurred, enforcement measures will be proposed to the Noxious Weed Control Board and appropriate action taken on their direction.

If prompt efforts have not been made by the landowner to control the noxious weeds stated in the notification, the Weed Coordinator will propose, under the rules and regulations promulgated by the King County Noxious Weed Board and outlined in RCW 17.10.170, and follow the necessary steps to ensure that these weeds are controlled before seed dispersal. Landowners who fail to comply shall be charged for expenses incurred by the Noxious Weed Control Board when eradicating weeds on their lands.

The King County Noxious Weed Control Board, in adopting rules and regulations, must decide on the enforcement measures which best suit King County as they are outlined in Chapter 17.10. The Board will encourage compliance in all cases prior to enforcement.

Funding

This plan is estimated to cost \$135,000 for one FTE, 5 seasonal field staff, benefits, training, educational materials and supplies. This funding will be derived from the County's general fund, Current Expense. In addition, the departments which currently provide noxious weed education and control will continue funding these aspects of their work program for controlling noxious weeds on County lands.

The Noxious Weed Control Board will, on an annual basis, submit a budget to the Council for the Noxious Weed Control Program. Funding for the program would then be submitted as part of the lead agency's budget request. Should the Noxious Weed Control Board find that Council funding is not adequate to effectively control noxious weeds, it may petition the Council for a special hearing as outlined in 17.10. Under the direction of the King County Noxious Weed Control Board the Weed Coordinator shall research additional long-term funding opportunities for the weed control program.

November 11, 1995
Alternate Noxious Weed Plan

Summary

The King County Executive is grateful for the excellent work done by the King County Noxious Weed Control Board and has constructed this alternative plan based upon the core principles contained in the Board Plan as well as the requirements of the state board. The Executive takes the problem of noxious weeds seriously and plans to move quickly to implement the plan. The support from the various Executive Branch departments in the preparation of this program is greatly appreciated. The Executive acknowledges the Department of Agriculture's difference of opinion on required field staff (5 seasonal staff vs. 10) for this plan, yet is confident that the program as outlined will be effective in controlling noxious weeds in King County.

Noxious Weed Control Program
Alternative Proposal - Annual Budget

Weed Coordinator Salary	\$40,000
Benefits	12,000
Field Staff (5)	35,000
Total Staff Costs	\$87,000
Office Supplies	8,500
Field Supplies	9,500
Mileage/Travel	7,000
Licenses/Training	8,500
Educational Materials	14,500
Subtotal Admin Costs	\$48,000
TOTAL COSTS	\$135,000