

I. Introduction

Invasive non-native plants are a serious threat to native species, communities, and ecosystems in many areas around the world. They can compete with and displace native plants, animals, and other organisms that depend on them, alter ecosystem functions and cycles significantly, hybridize with native species, and promote other invaders. The good news is that many plant invasions can be reversed, halted or slowed, and in certain situations, even badly infested areas can be restored to healthy systems dominated by native species. In most instances this requires taking action to control and manage the invasive plants.

A. Purpose and objectives of the Weed Management Plan

1. This management plan is considered for all intent and purposes, a working document and is subject to future changes and revisions. The intent of the plan is to provide a statement of public policy regarding the management of invasive species. The purpose of this plan is to provide standards and guidelines for the implementation of a successful noxious weed management program and to comply with the County Noxious Weed Control Act. This plan shall govern activities as they pertain to the County Noxious Weed Control Act and shall prevail over any conflicts arising there from. These standards and guidelines are established in order to help maintain, preserve and enhance the environmental, ecological, aesthetic, and historical qualities of Sweet Grass County.

B. County Mission and Direction - Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program is dedicated to serve and protect the resource and land base as noxious weeds in most instances pose the single greatest threat to the environment and healthy ecosystems.

The direction of the noxious weed program is to be as proactive as possible through public education and awareness, progressive weed management and cooperation with all entities-private, local, state, and federal.

C. Definition of weed management areas

1. Sweet Grass County Weed District recognizes that the county is comprised of several different watersheds, habitats, soil types, and ecosystems. For this reason, all of Sweet Grass County is considered a weed management area and therefore noxious weed management will be addressed on a site/area specific, individual basis taking into serious consideration all environmental factors.
2. A specific or cooperative weed management area may be formed for the purpose of concentrated weed management efforts by affected individuals. The formation of such localized weed management areas is necessary for any grants through the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund and/or other funding sources.

D. Goals and Priorities

1. Short Term Goals (1-5 years)
 - a. Spotted and Diffuse knapweed eradication and containment program
 - b. Memorandums Of Understanding (MOU's)/Cooperative agreements with local, state and federal land management agencies.

- c. Aggressively expand integrated weed management program on leafy spurge in county on all affected acres.
 - d. Move county ROW spray program into a maintenance spray program.
 - e. Expand current Biological Control Program
2. Long Term Goals (5-10years)
- a. Increase the technical and financial assistance to private landowners through grants and cooperative cost share programs.
 - b. Reverse trend of the spread of noxious weeds to containment and eradication
 - c. Involve local High School in research and demonstration projects
 - d. Capital Building improvements for facilities.

II. Statement of the Weed Problem - Weeds are plants that interfere with the management objectives of a given area of land. Noxious weeds are those weeds that the State of Montana has declared as a legal responsibility to manage because of their negative impacts on the environment and the economy. Sweet Grass County Weed District recognizes that weeds are an economic and environmental threat and that education, prevention and proper management are the keys to slowing the threat of noxious weeds.

- A. See Appendix for current state list.
- B. Land Administration - Sweet Grass County contains approximately 1850 square miles or 1,185,781 acres of land with multiple landownership. The following is an approximate breakdown of the land ownership in Sweet Grass County:

a. Bureau Of Land Management	16,022 acres
b. Forest Service	282,941 acres
c. State Lands	48,910 acres
d. Private Land	815,693 acres

- C. Impacts of Weeds Noxious weeds displace native plant communities, reduce biodiversity, eliminate threatened and endangered plant species, alter normal ecological processes, decrease wildlife habitat, reduce recreational value, and increase soil erosion and stream sediment. These negative ecological impacts result in major economic losses.
 - 1. Agriculture is the largest industry in Montana. Livestock production is a major contributor to the local economy. Leafy spurge and spotted knapweed have the ability to render range useless for cattle production by displacing desirable key forages. Grazing capacities for livestock can be reduced 65-90% from original capacity. Noxious weeds also cost Montana million of dollars every year in herbicide allocation costs and decreased production.
 - 2. Recreation – Hikers, fisherman, and outdoor enthusiasts often unknowingly contribute to noxious weeds by transportation of new weeds into uninfected areas. This can permanently damage the ecosystem. This can cost millions of dollars in lost habitat and close areas to recreation and hunting.

D. Estimation of current acreage infested -The last known estimates of infestations was in the early 1990's. The following is a gross reflection of the estimated acreages infested by species. Most significant weed populations occur on private lands. The following is a description of state listed noxious weeds by categories. The categories and their management criteria are defined in the Montana County Noxious Weed Control Act.

1. **Category 1** - Category 1 noxious weeds are weeds that are currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state. Management criteria include awareness and education, containment, and suppression of existing infestations and prevention of new infestations. These weeds are capable of rapid spread and render land unfit or greatly limit beneficial uses.
 - a. Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) - Canada thistle occurs in small infestations mostly in irrigated hay lands, disturbed sites and right-of-ways. Estimated acres infested are to be approximately 1000 acres.
 - b. Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) - Spotted knapweed is established in the county. Significant sized infestations of this plant are located at various sites throughout the county. It has been estimated there are approximately 3500 acres of spotted knapweed with the highest populations occurring within a 10-mile radius of the City of Big Timber and along transportation corridors, gravel pits and other waste sites. Significant infestations also occur in Grey Cliff Creek area.
 - c. Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) - Diffuse knapweed is most heavily concentrated south of the Yellowstone River and East of the Boulder River with satellite infestations also occurring North of the Yellowstone River in the Cow Creek road area. This weed has also shown up in isolated patches throughout the county. This plant also has the potential to invade areas similar to spotted knapweed and poses a threat to rangelands dominated by short grass prairie. Estimated infested acres to be 3000.
 - d. Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) - Leafy spurge infests the largest number of acres in Sweet Grass County. The most prominent infestations are known to occur along the Yellowstone River, Boulder River, and Sweet Grass Creek and in the Melville area. It is also very prevalent in the Dry Creek and Upper & lower Deer Creek drainages. 1990 estimates Leafy spurge infests approximately 60,000 acres. Current estimates are closer to 100,000 acres.
 - e. Russian Knapweed (*Centaurea repens*) - Russian knapweed is sparsely dispersed throughout the county. The largest known infestations are located in the Otter Creek-Glasston areas. Smaller infestations occur at the east end of Big Timber-Rapelje road and along the Railroad right of way west of Big Timber near where the Prather ditch runs under the rails. Estimated acres infested are less than 100.
 - f. Whitetop (*Cardia draba*) - Whitetop can be found in several areas in Sweet Grass County. Significant infestations occur in the Sweet Grass Creek and Otter Creek drainages. Small patches are located along I-90, main boulder above McLeod and along the frontages roads. The East end of the county in the Deadmans Canyon area and near Reed Point also holds several acres. Estimated acres infested to be 100.

- g. Dalmatian Toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*) - The railroad Right-of-way contains the largest amount of Dalmatian Toadflax, which is encroaching onto neighboring properties. It can be found along the rail lines in scattered patches from Big Timber East to and including the Pelican Fishing Access Site. There is also a small infestation west of Big Timber along the railroad between Grey Bear Bridge and Springdale. Estimated acres infested 20.
 - h. Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) - This weed is widespread throughout the county. It is most common in croplands, irrigation ditches and roadsides and is considered a low priority.
 - i. St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*) - This plant has been identified along the Main Boulder road - scattered infestations from 18-mile marker to as far as above Camp on the Boulder. Estimated acres to be 25.
 - j. Sulfur Cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*) - Sulfur Cinquefoil infestations are located in the Lower Deer Creek drainage, Big Timber Canyon, Main Boulder above Clydehurst, East Boulder West Bridger and Bridger Creek. Estimated acres infested are to be 500.
 - k. Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) - Houndstongue infestations are found at various sites throughout the county. It occurs most often in areas where cattle bed down and in overgrazed pastures. The largest and most severe known infestations occur in Big Timber Canyon, Sweet Grass Canyon and West Boulder. Estimated acres infested are 500.
 - l. Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) - Common Tansy can be found scattered throughout the City of Big Timber as an ornamental. It also occurs along the Main Boulder River and occasionally along the Yellowstone River. The Main Boulder contains the largest concentration of common tansy most of which occurs from Natural Bridge south to the Clydehurst Christian Ranch. Estimated acres infested is 200.
 - m. Oxeye Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.) - Oxeye Daisy occurs scattered along the East Boulder and Main Boulder river drainages. There is not enough information to conclude estimated acres infested.
 - n. Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) - The only known infestations of Yellow Toadflax occur in the Big Timber Canyon area and occasionally along the railroad east of Big Timber and transportation corridors. Estimated acres to be infested less than 20.
2. **Category 2** - Category 2 noxious weeds have recently been introduced into the state or are rapidly spreading from their current infestation sites. These weeds are capable of rapid spread and invasion of lands, rendering lands unfit for beneficial uses. Management criteria include awareness and education, monitoring and containment of known infestations and eradication where possible.
- a. Dyers Woad (*Isatis tinctora*) - Dyers Woad has been located in the eastern part of Park County and is a potential threat to western Sweet Grass County.
 - b. Tamarisk or Salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*) - Salt cedar has been found in isolated occurrences along the Yellowstone River. In 2004 the Yellowstone River, Otter Creek and Lower Sweet Grass were flown

using a helicopter to look for salt cedar. In 2004 one plant was mapped and treated just west of Big Timber on the Yellowstone. A river survey in 2006 revealed more salt cedar occurring mostly from Reed Point to Grey Cliff.

- c. Orange Hawkweed (*Heiracium aurantiacum* L.) - Orange Hawkweed was found in Big Timber Canyon at the falls in 2003 on Forest Service. Estimated infested acres to be 10.
 - d. Tall Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) - Tall Buttercup was discovered in the fall of 2002 along the Main Boulder just below Whispering Pines Subdivision. Estimated acres infested are 40.
 - e. Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Tansy Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea* L.), Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) and Meadow hawkweed complex (*Hieracium pratense*, *H. floribundum*, and *H. piloselloides*) have not been detected in Sweet Grass County as of March 2007.
3. **Category 3** - Category 3 noxious weeds have not been detected in the state or may be found only in small, scattered, localized infestations. Management criteria include awareness and education, early detection and immediate action to eradicate infestations. These weeds are known pests in nearby states and are capable of rapid spread and render land unfit for beneficial uses.
- a. Rush skeleton (*Chondrilla juncea*) -One plant was documented in the late 90's in the Northeastern part of the county. No new plants have been reported from this site.
 - b. Yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), Common crupina (*Crupina vulgaris*), Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) have not been detected in Sweet Grass County as of March 2007.
4. **Sweet Grass County Designated Noxious Weeds:** Montana Code Annotated 7-22-2101 (8)(ii) gives a county the authority to list local invasive species of concern. These weeds are capable of rapid spread and invasion of lands, rendering lands unfit for beneficial uses. Management criteria include awareness and education, monitoring and containment of known infestations and eradication where possible. A native plant may not be listed on the State Noxious Weed List or be listed as a county designated noxious weed.
- a. Woodland sage (*Salvia nemorosa*) - This plant was introduced as an ornamental plant that has escaped and infested large areas. The most significant infestation is located on the Beaver Meadows ranch just below the Natural Bridge. This plant has also been found in isolated patches along Upper Deer Creek, Swamp Creek road and in the Wormser Loop road area. Estimated acres to be 100.
 - b. Musk Thistle (*Cardus nutans* L.) - The two most significant infestations of this plant occur along the county line in the West Boulder area and above the Sweet Grass Ranch on Forest Service. Estimated acres to be infested 600.
 - c. Black Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.) - This plant was actually introduced as a cultivar during World War II. It was raised for its pain-relieving properties and shipped out on the railroad, thus every time

- there is a disturbance along a road or the railway Black Henbane is usually the first plant to return. Estimated acres infested to be about 100.
- d. Blue Weed (*Echium vulgare*) – This plant was first discovered in 2003. It is unclear exactly how this plant arrived in Sweet Grass County in a gravel pit or how long it had been there. This plant may soon be listed on a state noxious weed watch list. It is currently listed as a county noxious weed in Ravalli and Sanders counties. This is also a listed noxious weed in Canada and has been reported in the Casper Wyoming area. Estimated acres infested to be 20.
 - e. Urban spurge (*Euphorbia agraria*) – This plant is related to the more common Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*), but has some distinctly different growth characteristics. This plant was originally discovered in the Northeastern part of the County in 2002. It is not known when or how this species was introduced to the area. For many years this plant was thought to be leafy spurge. A survey of where and the extent of the infestations were conducted in 2005 and there are estimated to about 600 acres infested.

III. Cooperative Weed Management Areas

- A. Building coalitions and cooperative weed management areas - Sweet Grass County recognizes that successful weed management programs must involve every stakeholder. That is why Sweet Grass County Weed Program will attempt to facilitate the establishment of Cooperative Weed Management Areas where there is an interest and a need. The establishment of working CWMA's is a priority of Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program.
 1. A Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a distinguishable zone based on similar geography, invasive species, climate or human use patterns. The purpose of a CWMA is to facilitate cooperation among all land managers and owners to address a noxious weed problem in a common area. The goals of the CWMA's are to collectively work towards solving a weed problem long term.
 - a. Criteria for CWMA's
 - i. Common weed problem
 - ii. General consensus among stakeholders
 - iii. Significant participation by stakeholders
 - b. Sweet Grass County will attempt to attain cost share funding to assist those involved in a CWMA for noxious weed management. These sources could include but are not limited to the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund and other funding sources that give support towards this effort. Sweet Grass County will administer the program and the funding. Please refer to Appendix for applications and forms.
 - c. Compliance in CWMA's – If there is a land owner in a CWMA;
 - i. That has a noxious weed problem,
 - ii. Is considered non-compliant due to lack of effort,
 - iii. Has been given ample opportunity to enter into compliance,
 - iv. And does not control/manage their weeds, then;

- v. They are considered in non-compliance and Sweet Grass County or a contractor working under Sweet Grass County will enter the property and perform the management/control measures and the landowner will pay for the cost plus, up to 50%. Sweet Grass County will have access to any CWMA grant funds to help pay for the cost of management/control.
 - d. Long-term practices – The end goal for any CWMA is to establish long-term weed management practices. As a participant of a CWMA each landowner is expected to carry on the management practices long term and not to abandon the practices in the absence of funding assistance.
2. Cost Share
- a. Labor Match Assistance Policy
 - i. Sweet Grass County may, if resources are available provide a labor match of up to 3 people along with necessary equipment to assist landowners with noxious weed control. The landowner must sign a waiver of liability holding Sweet Grass County free from any and all liability.
 - ii. The landowner must provide;
 - 1. Herbicide
 - 2. Water
 - 3. Persons and equipment for match
 - iii. There is a time limit of maximum of 20 hours per person. The landowner must request assistance at least 10 days prior to needing the match. Only Sweet Grass County personnel may operate County equipment.

IV. Integrated Weed Management Strategies and Methods

Integrated Weed Management (IWM) approach is based on combined strategies for weed management based on site-specific information, which determines the best combination of treatment choices to achieve management goals. IWM is a multidisciplinary, ecological approach for managing noxious weeds. The tools for IWM include prevention, education, herbicide Sweet Grass County's primary goal of IWM is to develop and/or maintain ecologically healthy plant communities that are relatively weed resistant, while meeting other land use objectives such as forage production, wildlife habitat and recreation. The tools for IWM include prevention, early detection/eradication, education, cultural/mechanical, chemical and biological.

- A. Prevention - The most cost effective method for managing noxious weeds is to prevent their invasion. Developing a noxious weed prevention program requires using a combination of methods to limit invasion and spread of non-native species. Preventive methods include education as to the impacts of noxious weeds and how to recognize a weed, limiting weed dispersal, containing adjacent infestations, minimizing soil disturbance, detecting and eradicating species early, establishing competitive grasses and properly managing existing lands.
- B. Early Detection & Eradication - Sweet Grass County will implement early detection & eradication practices where applicable. Such practices will occur anywhere Category II or III species are found and any new occurrences of Category I.
1. Eradication methods will be determined at the time of discovery (within 72 hours) and will depend on influencing environmental and resource constraints. Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program will assist with technical support and funding if possible during the eradication of Category II & III species. Early detection relies heavily on the private landowner. A continuous aggressive noxious weed education program will enhance early detection. Sweet Grass County will survey and monitor designated county roads for new invaders as a part of an on going noxious weed program.
- C. Education – Sweet Grass County will provide noxious weed educational opportunities for all groups, organizations, landowners and the public in general. Sweet Grass County acknowledges that noxious weeds are a social and economic issue as much as they are an environmental problem. This includes annual trainings for credit towards private and commercial applicators licenses’.
- D. Cultural
1. The board or its representative on a case-by-case basis will determine acceptable cultural/mechanical practices. The methods for each plan submitted will be approved/disapproved based upon site-specific situations and outside influencing factors. If a person or agency is considering cultural methods as a sole method for noxious weed management it is in most cases unacceptable.
- E. Chemical – Sweet Grass County Weed District and Noxious Weed Program will determine which herbicide to use on a case-by-case and site-specific basis. Herbicides most commonly used for Right of Way and Range & Pasture work on the state listed noxious weeds are as follows:
1. 2,4D Amine (2,4 Dimethylamine salt phenoxyacetic acid)
 2. Tordon (picloram)
 3. Cimarron (Metsulfuron Methyl)
 4. Plateau (Imazapic ammonium salt)
 5. Curtail (clopyralid MEA salt, 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid)
 6. Transline (clopyralid)
 7. Redeem (triclopyr TEA, clopyralid TEA)
 8. Telar (chlorsulfuron)
 9. Milestone (aminopyralid)

10. Forefront (aminopyralid, 24D)

These herbicides will be used along County right of way and other properties. When Sweet Grass County does contract herbicide application on other lands specific herbicides will be used based on the site, plant species and other environmental factors as to insure proper control with the least impact. Sweet Grass County also reserves the right and ability to use new chemistries for research and demonstration purposes.

Other herbicides that may be used for vegetation management and manipulation are as follows:

11. Glyphosate
12. Aquatic glyphosates
13. 24D Ester (2,4 Dimethylester salt phenoxyacetic acid)
14. Arsenal (Imazapyr)
15. Campaign (glyphosate & 24D amine)
16. Vanquish (diglycoamine)

Please refer to Appendix for herbicide labels.

- F. Biological - Biological control (Biocontrol) is the intentional use of a living organism to reduce the population of a pest. Noxious weeds are non-indigenous plant species brought to the United States from other parts of the world. Therefore biological control of weeds involves the importation and release of natural enemies that attack the plant in its indigenous environment. Rigorous and heavily regulated testing prior to introduction and release ensures that selected insects are not a threat to crops, native flora or fauna.
1. Sweet Grass County will collect and distribute biocontrol agents. Sweet Grass County will require any private landowner/manager who receives biocontrol agents to sign a biocontrol agreement. Please see appendix for a copy. This agreement allows Sweet Grass County to monitor and collect bio agents to help propagate the program.
 2. The target plant for biocontrol in Sweet Grass County is leafy spurge. The priority target areas are: Boulder River Drainage below the Natural Bridge, Upper Deer Creek, Lower Deer Creek, Yellowstone River and the Lower Sweet Grass.

V. Special Management Zones and Requirements

- A. Gravel Pits - Sweet Grass County recognizes that these areas have a very high potential to establish and perpetuate noxious weeds. These areas will receive special attention and requirements.
1. Existing Gravel mine sites -
 - a. Buffer Zone - All gravel/mine sites will have a buffer zone of at least 100 yards or to the property boundary surrounding the mine and/or operation site that is to be free of noxious weeds at all times. All haul

roads and stockpiles will also be kept free of noxious weeds at all times. Failure to do so will result in immediate non-compliance.

- b. Inspections - Inspections will occur at least 2 times per year for the state and county listed noxious weeds. The operator and/or landowner will receive advance notification and a report as to the findings. If noxious weeds are found to be present the owner/operator will be notified immediately and will have 5 working days to treat the infestation. If nothing is done in five working days, Sweet Grass County will treat the infestation and bill the owner/operator.
2. New Mine sites - All of the above requirements apply to new mine sites as well as the below listed requirements.
 - a. All persons applying for a Gravel pit permit through Montana Department of Environmental Quality must also contact Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program for a verification of Noxious Weed Control Plan. A representative of Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program will inspect the proposed area. A noxious weed control plan must be approved and signed by Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program Coordinator.
 - b. No new mining sites will be permitted on lands severely infested with noxious weeds and with no history of active weed management.
 3. All contractors bidding state or federal highway projects must contact Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program prior to submitting a bid and/ or selecting a site.
 4. Time limits - A time limit of one season will be placed on DEQ Verification of Noxious Weed Control Permits. If the site is not permitted within one year from date of signature, the permittee must have the site re-inspected.

B. Utility Companies

1. The construction and maintenance of utility lines in the county right of way causes a significant disturbance and opens up the landscape to the invasion of noxious weeds.
 - a. Utility companies and their subcontractors are all required to have all construction related equipment washed, including undercarriages.
 - b. Sweet Grass County may inspect equipment prior to commencement of construction activities or at designated wash areas.
2. Any person or agency performing work, which may result in disturbance in the county right of way, must sign a letter of agreement and submit a written plan for revegetation in accordance with MCA, 7-22-2152.
3. Easement will not be granted from Sweet Grass County until the above listed condition and terms are met to the satisfaction of the Sweet Grass County Weed Board.

C. Subdivisions - Sweet Grass County Weed District recognizes that development and growth are inevitable. Subdivisions are also a concentrated breeding ground for noxious weed growth and spread. This potential is cause for strict prevention and management

requirements. As per the Sweet Grass County Subdivision Regulations a noxious weed plan is required as a part of subdivision approval.

1. Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program requires the following for Subdivision approval:

- a. Property inspection + Fee – Sweet Grass County will inspect proposed subdivided property to determine the presence/absence of noxious weeds and there is a fee associated with inspection (subject to change).
- b. Letter of Agreement – Terms by which the landowner must abide.
- c. Management Plan - a plan for the long-term treatment of any found noxious weeds, prevention of the spread of noxious weeds and revegetation of disturbed lands.
- d. Homeowners Association and Covenants – as stated in the Letter of Agreement, if a Homeowners Association or Covenants are required they must include specific language to address the control of noxious weeds on all lands within the subdivision as well as a way to pay for the cost of control. Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program must approve any language in the Covenants regarding noxious weeds and their management.
- e. Financial Guarantee – Sweet Grass County may require a bond for the subdivisions noxious weed problem. This will be determined by the number and size of lots, extent of noxious weed problem and other relevant environmental factors.

D. City Of Big Timber – The City of Big Timber holds about 50% of the population of Sweet Grass County. Due to the large concentration of people and activity, the City and its' properties are considered a special management zone. The City has its own weed code 6-6-1-6-6-5. Please see Appendix for a copy of the City code. Montana Code Annotated 7-22-2151 (2) states *“the board and the governing body of each municipality within the district shall enter into a written agreement and shall cooperatively plan for the management of noxious weeds within the boundaries of the municipality.”* The City of Big Timber and Sweet Grass County have agreed on a City Weed Management Plan. A copy of the plan can be viewed at the City offices.

E. Montana Department of Transportation

1. Roadways are a significant contributor to the spread of noxious weeds. Because of this high risk factor state and federally owned highways are considered to be a special management zone. In accordance with Montana Code Annotated, 7-22-2151, Cooperative Agreements. Sweet Grass County and the Montana Department of Transportation have a 6-year agreement/plan. Please refer the appendices for a copy of the agreement.
 - a. Revegetation – In accordance with MCA, 7-22-2152 *any disturbance that can result in the potential for noxious weed infestation shall;*
 - i. *Revegetation of Disturbed Areas - 7-22-2152.Revegetation of rights-of-way and areas that have potential for noxious weed infestation.*
 - ii. *Any person or state agency proposing a mine, a major facility under Title 75, chapter 20, an electric, communication, gas, or liquid*

transmission line, a solid waste facility, a highway or road, a subdivision, a commercial, industrial, or government development, or any other development that needs state or local approval and that results in the potential for noxious weed infestation within a district shall notify the board at least 15 days prior to the activity.

- iii. (2) Whenever any person or agency constructs a road, an irrigation or drainage ditch, a pipeline, an electric, communication, gas, or liquid transmission line, or any other development on an easement or right-of-way, the board shall require that the areas be seeded, planted, or otherwise managed to reestablish a cover of beneficial plants.*
- iv. (3) (a) The person or agency committing the action shall submit to the board a written plan specifying the methods to be used to accomplish revegetation at least 15 days prior to the activity. The plan must describe the time and method of seeding, fertilization practices, recommended plant species, use of weed-free seed, and the weed management procedures to be used. (b) The plan is subject to approval by the board, which may require revisions to bring the revegetation plan into compliance with the district weed management plan. The activity for which notice is given may not occur until the plan is approved by the board and signed by the presiding officer of the board and by the person or a representative of the agency responsible for the action. The signed plan constitutes a binding agreement between the board and the person or agency. The plan must be approved, with revisions if necessary, within 10 days of receipt by the board.*

2. Notice of construction –

- a. MDT must notify Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program Coordinator of any construction activities prior to the activity occurring through its' pre-construction noticing process.
- b. As described in MDT's manual 107.11.5, MDT is required to make all contractors bidding for jobs follow any applicable terms as set forth in the Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Management Plan.
- c. Non – compliance – In the event that noxious weed management is not being met as set for the agreement between MDT and Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program, then the terms of 7-22-2144 shall apply.

F. County Roads – Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program is tasked with controlling the noxious weeds occurring in County right of ways.

- 1. Application techniques – Sweet Grass County will employ site-specific techniques taking into consideration relevant environmental conditions and concerns.
- 2. Target vegetation – Sweet Grass County is responsible for state and county listed noxious weeds only.

G. Natural Caused Disturbances – The ecosystems of the West are adapted to a long history of naturally caused disturbances such as flooding and wildfire. These can substantially alter ecosystems. The most environmentally and economically damaging impact from natural disasters is the post event invasion of noxious weeds. Minimizing the weed opportunity requires post event, intensive weed management. Sweet Grass County will work with affected landowners in aggressively addressing post natural disaster noxious weed issues.

1. Fire – Wildfires require immediate action. Therefore, it is important to plan weed management strategies, prepare equipment, and educate firefighters before emergency situations strike.
 - a. Fire Planning – Improve effectiveness of prevention practices noxious weed education and awareness.
 - b. Fire fighting – Avoid or remove sources of weed seed and propagules to prevent new weed infestations and the spread of existing noxious weeds.
 - i. Portable Wash Unit – Sweet Grass County has access to a self-contained portable wash station. Use of a portable wash unit is required on all fires where fire equipment and personnel are not local.
 - ii. Local fire fighting equipment will be cleaned after each incident so to provide prevention of weed spread.
 - c. Fire Rehabilitation – To prevent conditions favoring weed establishment, as soon as possible after a fire revegetate disturbed ground that is unlikely to recover to desired plants naturally using noxious weed seed free seed mixes.

H. Spotted knapweed - 2006 Sweet Grass County will implement a countywide knapweed control and eradication program. The goals of this program are to stop the spread and eradicate current populations over a period of ten years.

1. Zero Tolerance
 - a. 10 acres or less – aggressive eradication with a 90% reduction in population in two years.
 - b. 11 acres or more – must enter into a knapweed eradication plan that must address specifics such as long-term control and prevention measures, annual inspections and treatments at least two times per growing season.
2. Cost Share – Sweet Grass County may make available a locally funded cost share program to help off set the cost of eradication. The terms and limitations of the cost share program may be modified on an annual basis.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

- A. Board of County Commissioners- In accordance with Montana County Noxious Weed Control Act:
 1. 7-22-2102. (1) the commissioners shall appoint a district weed board subject to provisions of 7-1-201-7-1-203.
- B. County Weed Board- Refer to MCA 7-22-2109 Powers and Duties of board. In accordance with the Montana County Noxious Weed Control Act 7-22-2109 (2) The board shall:
 1. Administer the district’s noxious weed management program;
 2. Establish criteria for noxious weeds on all land within the district’ and
 3. Make all reasonable efforts to develop and implement a noxious weed management program covering all land within the district owned or administered by a federal agency.

- C. County Weed Personnel
 1. All Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program employees must adhere to the Sweet Grass County personnel policy handbook. A copy of this handbook is given to each new employee. Additional copies can be picked up at the Clerk & Recorders office.
 2. In addition to the Personnel Policy Handbook, Sweet Grass County Noxious Weed Program employees will also adhere to the policies and procedures as they apply in this plan.

- D. Landowners – Sweet Grass County contains approximately 816,000 acres of private land or 68%. This equates to most of the noxious weeds occur or have the potential to occur on private land. Therefore the focus of the Program is directed towards the private landowner.

VII. Appendix

- A. Sweet Grass County Invasive Species Guide
- B. Montana County Noxious Weed Control Act
- C. Federal Noxious Weed Act
- D. Subdivision
 1. Memo
 2. Letter of Agreement
 3. Example blank Management plan
- E. Gravel Pits
 1. Inspection Form
 2. Letter of Agreement
- F. Revegetation
 1. Plan
- G. Utility Easement Agreement
- H. Biological Noxious Weed Control Agreement
- I. Cooperative Agreements
 1. Montana Rail Link
 2. Park County
 3. City Of Big Timber
 4. Montana Department of Transportation
 5. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 6. Department of Natural Resources - State Lands
 7. Bureau of Land Management
- J. Sprayer Lending Program
- K. Portable Wash Unit Use Policy
- L. Supplement to County Personnel Manual
- M. Hazardous Spill Plan