

# **CAL-IPC 2010 Symposium**

## **Weed-Free Material Programs Discussion Group Handout**

### **What has Pacific Gas and Electric Company learned about the Certification, Availability and Use of Weed-Free Materials in our Service Territory?**

In 2010, PG&E hired an environmental consultant to identify sources of weed-free erosion control and aggregate materials. As part of this effort, we did outreach with county agricultural commissioners, Cal Trans, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts and other federal resource agencies.

#### What We Learned

##### *Active Weed-Free Certification Programs:*

PG&E surveyed 46 agricultural commissioners to determine whether their county offers weed-free certification programs for both straw/hay and gravel/fill materials. The survey results indicate there is an opportunity to further collaborate on the development of statewide certification programs and weed-free standards. PG&E also learned that until there is a market for such materials, availability may remain sparse.

**Straw or Hay:** The majority of counties are willing to offer weed-free certification of straw/hay fields. Many have a certification program in place, but have no applicants currently. A few programs have applicants requesting certification yearly and have offered contact information for those growers. Some counties do not produce straw/hay crops and others cite lack of demand as a reason why they do not have a program.

**Current Straw/Hay:** Alameda, Amador, Butte, Colusa, Contra Costa, Glenn, Kings, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Placer, Plumas, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, Yuba

**Willing to start Weed-Free Certification Program for Straw/Hay if Demand Present:**  
Madera, San Benito, Alpine, Mariposa, San Mateo, Kern, Mendocino, Lassen.

**Gravel or Fill:** Butte and El Dorado are the only counties that have a weed-free certification program for gravel or fill materials. Mendocino appears to be in the process of developing one. Other counties cited lack of demand for the product as a reason why they do not currently have a program. A few counties are willing to inspect a quarry or gravel pit if they are asked. Most counties are not willing to take on this extra task due to limited resources, program information, and staff availability.

**Current Gravel/Fill:** Butte, El Dorado

**Willing to start Weed-Free Certification Program for Gravel/Fill if Demand Present:**  
Alameda, Santa Barbara, Placer.

##### *Important Considerations and Recommendations:*

- Materials may be free of “noxious” State regulated weeds, but not completely free of all weeds. This may be undesirable in certain circumstances (i.e. weed free forage typically requires a higher standard).
- Commissioners indicated that PG&E should contract with growers in advance of planting (i.e. in January or February).



PG&E also contacted these stakeholders to learn more about their efforts and to seek additional ways to partner.

*Caltrans:*

- Caltrans is required by the Federal Highway Administration to take actions that are not likely to promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.
- Caltrans does not purchase erosion control materials directly. All materials are purchased by the Contractor. As a result, Caltrans does not maintain a list of weed seed free material sources.
- Landscape architects indicated that there are specifications in place for seed mixes (no more than 1% weeds). Samples are periodically tested for quality.
- If there are areas of known concern, then the District Biologist may recommend additional contract specifications relating to vehicle and equipment washing and use of rice straw.

*Resource Conservation Districts:*

Karen Buhr, Executive Director of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), will be contacting RCDs in 2010 to see if they have any information about weed-free vendors in their areas. She also suggests that we provide more information about our efforts and request assistance at the next annual CARCD conference which is scheduled for November 17-20, 2010.

*U.S. Forest Service and National Parks:*

Weed-free forage and mulch programs in California have not been consistently implemented. The development of a statewide certification program by the California Department of Food and Agriculture may help to foster these efforts. It appears there is new interest by these federal agencies, and potentially some funding, to try and develop weed-free forage standards and policies. For more information, contact Joanna Clines, Forest Botanist – Sierra National Forest (jclines@fs.fed.us) or Bobbi Simpson, Liaison - California EPMT, National Park Service (Bobbi\_Simpson@nps.gov).

Summary - Recommendations to Consider

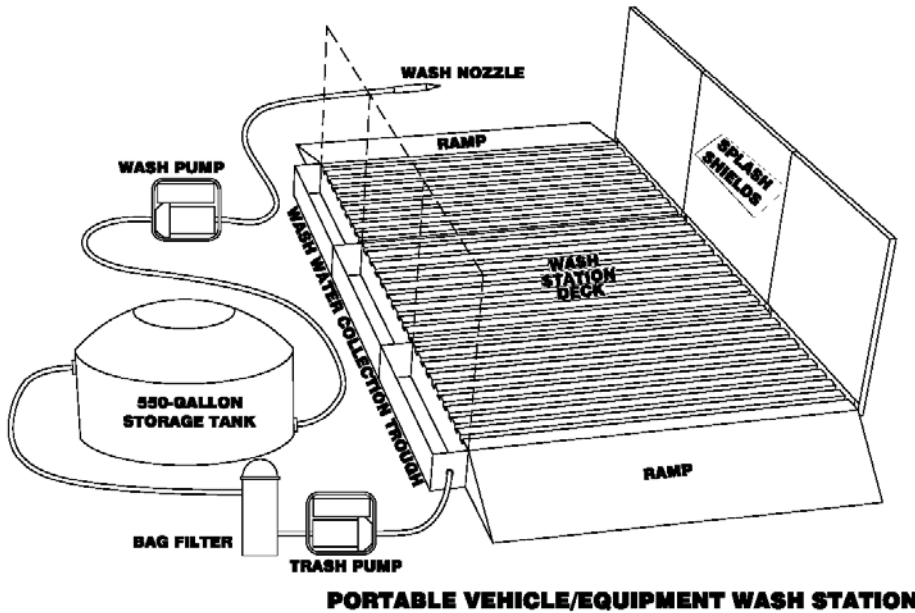
1. Create a demand for weed-free materials through one or more of the following ways:
  - a. Develop state and federal regulations that require use of certified weed-free products in certain situations.
  - b. Create local lists of weed-free product end-users. Coordinate needs with growers.
  - c. Partner with local businesses and growers to develop sustainable products and services.
2. Develop weed-free hygiene standards for materials and for inspection.
3. Develop standard contract specifications for construction and landscaping activities.
4. Identify existing successful programs and best practices. Mimic them (i.e. Yosemite National Park Road Maintenance Program)



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## Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Use of Portable Washing Stations to Prevent the Spread of Noxious Weeds and Sudden Oak Death

Working with multiple departments and a manufacturer, PG&E developed a portable wash station to be used in an area on or near access roads to remove sediment, noxious weed seeds, and to disinfect for the Sudden Oak Death pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*) from tires and undercarriages, equipment, tools, and materials to prevent these from being transported onto other properties or public roadways.



PG&E's efforts have coupled storm-water best management practices with efforts to battle the spread of Sudden Oak Death and noxious weeds.

PG&E currently has five wash stations which are engineered to withstand the heavy weight of equipment and materials that are utilized on construction projects. They are easier to install and more efficient than previous methods.

Vehicles are cleaned before entering or leaving the job site.

Manufacturer: Hydro Engineering, Inc.

The portable wash stations are designed to be a closed loop system to minimize water usage by recycling the wash water as it is utilized. Disinfection is provided through an injection unit that maintains a chlorination residual in the water to effectively disinfect equipment. The portable wash stations have a lifespan of 25 years and can take the weight of any of the construction vehicles utilized within PG&E.

