

SLO County Quarterly WMA Meeting

UCCE Auditorium

October 20, 2022 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Attendees:

- John Hall, Land Conservancy SLO (LCSLO), co-chair
- James Moore, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept), co-chair
- Mark Skinner, Coastal Resource Conservation District (Coastal RCD)
- Kate Montgomery, Beaver Brigade (BB)
- Amy Smart, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District (USLTRCD), co-chair
- John Sayers, State Parks Department
- Carolyn Geraghty, Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP)
- Kathryn Holt, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures
- Pat Abel, concerned landowner
- Fred Frank, Beaver Brigade
- Jonathan Briggs, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures
- Karen Lowerison, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures
- Zella Redus, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures
- Jocelyn Prieto, SLO Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures

Program updates:

- **LCSLO:** *Arundo* season is starting now, although one population has had treatment postponed due to funding issues. LCSLO is also training new hires and starting work at a wildlife refuge.
 - Phillips 66 is about to sell a property in Guadalupe with endangered Nipomo lupine. This property has undergone nonstop weed work since 1999. Its future is uncertain.
- **Ag Dept:**
 - The Weeds program is collaborating with SLO County Parks as part of a CDFA grant. This includes planning yellowstar thistle treatments in parks, as well as possible artichoke thistle, jubatagrass, and broom treatments, with the goal of reducing spread of disseminules such as seed. We are also working on developing a public outreach plan through the parks.
 - In addition, we are working on public land and roadside weed abatement.
 - James and Karen are also working on a plan for applying for a new CDFA grant. The grant will be broadly focused and include work along the North Coast and El Chorro Valley, targeting jubatagrass, artichoke thistle, and others. It may include options for aerial mapping and possibly even drone-based treatment, as well as options to include the CA Conservation Corps.
 - Jubatagrass in LO Creek: Pete Sarafian, who was unable to attend the meeting, sent this note: "Jubatagrass infests upstream along Los Osos Creek above (south of) LOVR. Some can be reached, stream bed and some are up well above the stream bed on State Parks land and private lands further upstream."
 - Re: old jubatagrass target population on Black Hill. James mentions that Patrick treated the accessible ones earlier this year, while the one up the hill is on our radar for the grant proposal. There has to be a site-by-site assessment whether to cut through to them or go overhead.
 - Amy asks if the Ag Dept has done drone applications before. The response: No, but we want to. James wonders if Amy knows who does the PG&E applications? She isn't sure but will let us know if she finds out.
 - Aaron Lazanoff with Cal Poly has contacted our department to identify *Arundo* clumps in close proximity to Cal Poly properties in Chorro Creek. It is in the water so we haven't been able to treat it.

- JM: Canada thistle historic site is not eliminated like we thought it was. We just need to stay on top of it. Will visit once more this year.
- **Coastal RCD:** Coastal RCD is a subcontractor for state parks. Focus on veldtgrass, *Carpobrotus* and more in the Nipomo Dunes area. Also Cape ivy in Morro Bay (at Chorro Flats).
- **Beaver Brigade:** Interested in *Phragmites australis* ssp. *altissimus* in the Salinas River. See agenda item below.
- **USLT RCD:** The Las Tablas RCD has moved from Templeton (where they were sharing an office with the NRCS). They are now the USLT RCD. They are not currently active in any programs targeting invasives. Current work is in mitigation, restoration, working for PG&E and CalTrans.
- **State Parks:** Hitting eucalyptus hard right now. Also targeting iceplant with a new round of grant funding. **MBNEP:** Continuing state parks' ice plant management with incoming grant money. Also focusing on invasive sea lavender in MB. Thinking about *Arundo* in the creek and whether it makes sense to map it first (Jon Hall points out that *Arundo* there is eradicable because it was very nearly totally removed 14 years ago).
 - MBNEP purchased a mapping flight over the estuary. It was a project with Cal Poly so it may not repeat, but was affordable and the images were very high-quality.
 - James mentions that Ag Dept might be able to help MBNEP with mapping through the CDFA grant we are in the process of applying for.

Phragmites in the Salinas River:

- The Beaver Brigade is looking for a funding source to eradicate the phragmites in the Salinas River. Kate Montgomery brought a well-compiled collection of photos, maps, and written history to share.
- Discussion of the Salinas River's phragmites infestation
 - During trash cleanup, the BB noticed it and its fast spread, and a landowner allowed them to cut it down. They dug out a lot of rhizomes, and discovered that the tiniest rhizome will resprout. They came back a couple dozen times and since June, they haven't had a resprout. Digging doesn't work, but cutting might. There are herbicides for water, but they require permits.
 - Some of the land is owned by a water company.
 - There is no phragmites or *Arundo* south of the Hwy 58 bridge (per aerial and ground visual surveys).
 - Records (on CalFlora) of phragmites occurrences in the county may include the native phragmites, *Phragmites australis*. It's tough to tell them apart without genetic confirmation; however, once a stand is growing it can sometimes be identified based on spreading behavior.
- Discussion of the biology and treatment of phragmites
 - Phragmites disperses by rhizomes, cuttings, and seed.
 - Cuts will not resprout. It only grows in water, so the drought is helping. Control is harder when there's as much standing water as there is in the photos Kate has brought, although evidently the area has dried out quite a bit since the photos were taken.
 - JH: Physiology-wise it's similar to *Arundo*, and could possibly be treated similarly. Usually *Arundo* is treated with repeated mowing to starve rhizomes. Cut and spray is also an effective method.
 - California Department of Water Resources performed phragmites treatment trials through a grant comparing herbicide versus mechanical removal (see link to article under Resources below). The Cal-IPC Symposium in the beginning of November will have a presentation on these trials by Madison Thomas of that department.
 - A combination of roundup and imazapyr is often used. Both work similarly, on amino acids, but on different kinds. Both will kill anything they touch, the latter even through roots.
 - It is important to start treatment at top of stream to prevent downstream reinfestation.
- Discussion of funding, permitting, and other logistical issues
 - On whether you need a permit to treat or remove phragmites: it depends on who owns the land and whether it is in the water column.
 - Chris Martinelli owns some of the infested land, and although he can't help, he supports its removal.

- Because it's in water, permitting is can be more difficult. It's a step-by-step process which includes sending water samples before and after treatment.
- Fish and Wildlife requires permits too.
- It's advisable to break the project into small chunks. Different groups work in different watersheds, and the USLT RCD is the one that works in that area. However, they don't currently have the funding to go after the phragmites.
- Carolyn recommends the USFWS Partners Program- they may be about to have a new partner stationed in TE (see link under Resources below).
- Funding opportunities may come up in the next two or so years. CA Invasive Species Action Committee (CAISAC) grants are 1-2 years out. Beaver Restoration Program may bring some funding in.
- Compile information on the scope of your project, the resources you need, etc. Watch the Cal-IPC presentation on phragmites.
- Because BB is a 501(c)(3), they could be the lead agency that applies for a given grant.
- Wildfire and Forest Resilience (WFR) funding may apply if the phragmites presents a fire hazard.

General Weed Abatement Discussion:

- Pat Abel has been attending Range Improvement Association meetings. There she met and spoke with the Fire Safe Council, who were able to help her and her mother with weed removal. She is concerned with YST, broom, distaff, anise, among others.
 - Pat brings several concerns to be discussed at this meeting:
 - The importance of building a relationship between landowners and the agencies represented here
 - The importance of keeping the seed bank in mind and if possible, ensuring a continued commitment to control of a given weed.
 - The importance of education regarding weed disseminules. It's frustrating that people trespass and don't worry about bringing weeds, not knowing or realizing that her land is her place of business. Also frustrating that CalTrans can spread weeds with their activities.
 - Why can't we stop the nurseries from selling invasives?
 - Some responses from others at the meeting:
 - Landowner-agency participation is the reason we hold these meetings. The recession in 2008 lost us our WMA funding, and the meetings all but completely disappeared. Therefore we lost the robust participation of landowners that we had had previously enjoyed. We encourage any interested parties to attend these meetings, whether they are landowners or members of organizations.
 - Grants are unfortunately on set cycles, usually of one to three years. Thus it's difficult to secure continuous funding in order to keep seed banks in mind. However, we are aware of and care about seed banks, and try to mitigate the damage as much as we can.
 - Outreach and education is very important. Funding for that may come up soon from CAISAC. A new CDFA grant opportunity is coming for '23-'25, and we will try to keep space in our application for possible outreach and education, as we have done with our current CDFA grant.
 - In reference to CalTrans: quarries are a major problem, in addition to roadside driving. Monterey county made a weed-free quarry program that we admire.
 - To legally prevent sale in the nursery, the plant must be rated by CDFA. The process of getting a plant a rating is slow, and, in addition, new species are always being brought in from out of the area. "PlantRight" program does nursery surveying and outreach (see link under Resources below).

Odds and ends:

- The next WMA meeting will be in late January.

- The Cal-IPC symposium will be November 1-3 this year. There is a talk on the agenda about a Northern California phragmites project.
- Mike Anderson from the California Conservation Corps (CCC), who was unable to attend the meeting, wanted to make sure we mentioned they “will be hosting a ‘Forestry Corps’ Crew starting January for the next few years. The focus is on Forest Health for ALL agencies and Non-Profits. If anyone would like more information, please contact us.” Their web site is <https://ccc.ca.gov>

Resources:

- Link to a slideshow, 2020 Cal-IPC Symposium, by Cynthia Powell, on what CalFlora is and how to use it: https://www.cal-ipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Cal_IPC_Symposium_2019_Cynthia_Powell_Calflora_intro.pdf
- Link to WeedCUT, the UCANR “Weed Control User Tool.” <https://weedcut.ipm.ucanr.edu>
- Link to PlantRight’s web site <https://plantright.org>
- Link to an article about the Department of Water Resources’ work on phragmites up north: <https://water.ca.gov/News/Blog/2019/Sept-19/Phragmites-Suisun-Marsh>
- USFWS Partners Program: <https://www.fws.gov/program/partners-fish-and-wildlife>