

MINUTES
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 11, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ross Penhallegon, Peter Graham, Mike Koivula, Chris Melotti, Jan Nelson, John Sundquist, Kai Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim LaRue

STAFF PRESENT: Arno Nelson, Orin Schumacher, Debby Woodruff

B/CC PRESENT:

GUESTS PRESENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Jan Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Melotti moved to approve the Minutes of June 13, 2007, as revised/corrected/written. Williams seconded. All present voted in favor. Motion passed.

III. GENERAL COMMENT

Graham asked A. Nelson if there is a solution to the Adopt-a-road pickup since we have lost the inmate work crews. A. Nelson stated that the road crews will now pickup the litter bags. It may take a few days to do so. Woodruff confirmed that Graham should call Woodruff to let her know of litter bags to be picked up and she will notify appropriate staff.

Sundquist asked if the inmate crews were still gone even with the 1 year extension. The answer is yes.

J. Nelson asked if there was any news on Ollie Snowden. No news to share.

Melotti stated that Knapweed is in bloom. Melotti stated that the Institute for Applied Ecology is taking the lead on the Knapweed project. Schumacher stated that they are doing their part in the research of Knapweed control. Schumacher stated that the Siuslaw Watershed Council and other agencies will be holding a public forum at 6pm, July 25 at the Horton Grange to discuss control options. Schumacher stated that he will be attending.

J. Nelson stated that she received a complaint from Jan Wroncy stating that mowing was done on her road after the Knapweed had gone to seed and she thought that was a problem.

Schumacher stated that it hasn't gone to seed yet and if in bloom, it is actually the best time to mow it.

Melotti stated that Clear Lake Road and Greenhill Road have a Knotweed problem.

Schumacher stated that the farmer who lives there has gone after it.

Question asked about the copy cost situation. Melotti stated that he read some documentation in the policy statements that confirms what Woodruff and Schumacher stated in the previous meeting about the cost of copying. Woodruff stated that she is waiting to hear back from

downtown after someone checks into it with Bill VanVactor and/or BCC. Woodruff will report back to VMAC. Woodruff stated that it has been a problem in the past and the point is to have a guideline to follow so no one is bringing in a book or an unreasonable amount to be copied.

IV. BUDGET CUTS – HERBICIDE PROGRAM DISCUSSION – SCHUMACHER

Schumacher gave a presentation. The 4 issues he went over are: 1. Noxious weed control, 2. Road surface preservation, 3. Project development, 4. Weed Control Partnerships. He explained that there are 42 species on the noxious weed list. They don't all need to be controlled. He stated that not every site needs to be controlled. Schumacher stated that he would like to select some weeds off that list for chemical control. He stated that no herbicides can be used within 100ft of a waterway. This raises the issue of how to control those weeds. Schumacher stated that this would require modification of the policy to be able to address these issues. J. Nelson asked how many groups out there want to use the Herbicides. Schumacher stated that groups such as BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, Forest Service, and Watershed Councils are doing this and wanting Lane County to partner with them. Melotti stated that the Siuslaw Watershed Council has a lot of areas with Knotweed infestation and it crosses a lot of private and public boundaries and they wanted to do a combined effort to control this. Melotti stated that since the Last Resort Ordinance came into effect, the County pulled back. He stated that he can't see how else to control this weed. Schumacher stated that he is limited to what he has left to use. Melotti stated that if they know that methods don't work, then they shouldn't have to repeat the method on other areas for the same weed. If A, B, C, methods don't work, then they may have to go to herbicide treatment. Koivula asked if herbicides would be used in water. Schumacher stated that they could not use herbicides within 100ft of water. J. Nelson stated that she thinks they have gotten too far into the noxious weed control business and that Public Works is mandated to keep the roadsides clear and preserve sight. Schumacher stated that a lot of time they overlap tremendously because they are the most aggressive growing plants. J. Nelson stated that mowing does take care of that. Melotti stated that in certain instances mowing makes it worse and timing is also an issue and mowing is not always the answer. Melotti stated that this does align with Public Works direction to maintain the roads as well as the State direction to the County to control noxious weeds and not to spread them. Schumacher stated that there is a state mandate noxious weed list that the County is mandated to control. Melotti stated that Hogweed for example is a health concern and it may need to be controlled with a small amount of herbicide to prevent a bigger problem later. Melotti stated that the herbicides have only been around since post WWI. J. Nelson stated that the synthetic herbicides are molecules that are toxic and pervasive. Penhallegon stated that with little or no manpower, how does Lane County deal with these huge obnoxious weeds. He stated that this is the job of the county to protect the roadsides. Penhallegon stated that a little bit can be taken care of easier and they are not saying they are going to use chemicals for everything. J. Nelson stated that chemicals are everywhere and in our bodies. Melotti stated that it is a long process and this is the beginning discussion of it, and the herbicide use proposed would be very little. Melotti stated that his exposure to it walking through the garden center at Bi-Mart is higher than this would be. Melotti stated that this discussion is regarding the proposed use of already approved herbicides. J. Nelson thinks this OCD is the wrong direction. Koivula asked if Schumacher wants VMAC recommendations after his presentation and he would like to listen to the entire presentation. Schumacher stated that Buford Park has a new infestation of Meadow Knapweed which could be eliminated easily. He stated that the Fernridge natural area has numerous species that are causing problems. He stated that there is a new infestation of Knotweed and Knapweed on Goodpasture Island Road. Schumacher stated that guardrail vegetation maintenance is a huge safety concern and the County is mandated with maintaining the guardrails and now the County has lost the inmate work crews as of July 1. He stated that the County has a hold on filling vacancies on the road crews right now. Schumacher showed some pictures of guardrails that

are infested with vegetation. He showed pictures of the brush mowers and how they cannot get close to the guardrails to get all the vegetation and it is a costly and timely process. The drivers have to go slow along these areas. Schumacher stated that 3500 yards is the average weekly control. This equals out to 2 miles of guardrail maintained weekly. That would be 104 miles annually which is at least 2 efforts at guardrails annually. J. Nelson stated that not all guardrails are in the same condition and some don't ever need maintenance work. Schumacher agreed that some guardrails are worse than others. He stated that there are 10 permanent employees on the vegetation crew, 2 six month hires and 3 summer help employees dedicated to the vegetation control. This just counts bodies and not full time people. J. Nelson stated that people are going to see a lot of services cut that she thinks are much more crucial. Schumacher stated that other road maintenance work that they do are tree trimming, brush control, grass mowing, urban vegetation work, site prep, planting and seeding projects. Schumacher stated that he went out and did a mock up of herbicide application on a 1 mile area vs. mechanical application for cost comparison. It would take 1 person 22.5 hrs to weed whack that mile taking 2.25 days to do it. Labor cost is an average of \$15.23 per hour. That would be \$342.67 in labor cost. This is based on a seasonal help person not including benefits. The mock up with water in the tank took 4.5 hours of 1 mile of guardrail including sign posting and a 50 gallon tank. Labor costs would be \$81 per mile. This would only be a road maintenance II or III employee doing the work. They have to be certified to do this application. The chemical cost depends on which chemical is used. The cost is between \$14 & \$42 per mile of guardrail. Schumacher stated it would be 2.7 times greater expense to do this work mechanically vs. chemically. He stated that applying the right herbicides at the right times is critical. Schumacher stated that on Fox Hollow the weak areas seem to be on the road edges and may be because of the slope. He stated that they are doing a slurry project in Springfield off of Centennial. One problem is that they have to get all the vegetation out of the cracks and on the road. In the past they would use herbicide application to kill it and then use high pressure blowers to blow it out. They have tried flame torches to burn it out but it doesn't get the roots. The crews cannot slurry seal this without getting all the vegetation out. This would be a situation to use low volume application in the cracks. Schumacher stated that road surface preparation is usually a process that requires the herbicide application. Since herbicides are not being used for these projects in Lane County now, weeds are popping up all over.

Melotti asked what the timeline is in changing the ordinance. Schumacher stated that the change would be for the waterway restriction. There may be possible exception to the 100ft restriction. Melotti stated asking to use herbicides within 100ft of water would require an ordinance change, but using it for other applications would only require Schumacher to give notice in his annual report. Schumacher stated that he already did that. J. Nelson asked if Schumacher wanted input on his presentation. Schumacher stated that he wanted to be upfront with the information. Guardrails issues are a huge issue with the loss of the inmate crews. A. Nelson stated that he has no goal of using the spray truck and would like to see it sold. Koivula stated that City of Eugene does not have a slurry seal or overlay program use herbicides. He asked if A. Nelson sees any slurry seal or overlay projects that would not use of herbicides. A. Nelson stated that the majority of roads would not require herbicide application. Sundquist asked if Schumacher used a back pack tank on his mock up. Schumacher stated it was a truck mounted tank and would not require a safety vehicle depending on the area. Sundquist asked if Schumacher would provide a list to the Board. Schumacher stated it would be in the annual report. He stated that there would not be an exact list because things change. The species would be identified but the sites could change. Sundquist asked if using contractors has been considered. Schumacher stated that the union would have to get involved in that and his guess would be no. Sundquist asked if these sites are being incorporated into GIS. Schumacher stated that GIS staff have updated their Transmap program to include a vegetation layer which includes a noxious weed layer. He stated that anyone can access this information through Lane County's web site. Sundquist asked about the problems with the guardrails and the treated wood post and preferred

plantings. Schumacher stated that other counties use herbicides to get rid of the weeds first before planting preferred vegetation. Sundquist stated that support plantings are very important. Koivula asked about that steel post and paving underneath the guardrail. A. Nelson stated that the steel post are more expensive now vs. wood post. Sundquist asked what the partnerships are asking for. Schumacher stated that one of the partnerships is the false brome treatment around the reservoirs right now such as Fall Creek. Weyerhaeuser and private agencies are involved in that project and want Lane County to partner with them. Sundquist asked what they would offer the County. Schumacher stated that they would do their part and the County would do theirs. Question was asked what research was done on the herbicides. J. Nelson stated that the chemical companies were the ones who did the research. Penhallegon stated that all the agencies have looked at the herbicides to see if they are safe. J. Nelson stated that the counties would not be doing the same research as other researchers have done such as other countries. Schumacher stated that only 5 herbicides met the criteria to be approved and satisfied the last resort policy. J. Nelson stated that there were 2 sets of criteria and they were not both approved. Penhallegon stated that it was all approved by VMAC, the commissioners, etc. J. Nelson stated that this doesn't mean it is safe. Koivula stated that the County did not do it's own research. Sundquist asked where Schumacher wanted to start first. Schumacher stated that he would like to start with N. Fork Siuslaw Knotweed control project, work with Army Corps of Engineers on False Brome, work on W. Boundary Rd, Fern Ridge Natural Restoration Area along with the City of Eugene, preservations of T&Es, Buford Knapweed control efforts, and the Clear Lake Rd approach to the Army Corps of Engineers Natural Restoration Area. J. Nelson asked Schumacher if he could provide a list of these sites. Schumacher stated that this is just a list off the top of his head. Some other sites would be guardrails, road problems with the crack seal issues, and also the partnerships issues he discussed. He stated that these are high prioritized sites. J. Nelson wanted to know if he had a list and he stated he didn't because that list can change constantly. Schumacher stated he could provide a list of the species easier than he could list the sites. J. Nelson stated she wanted a list of the sites to get an idea of what all is involved. Sundquist stated he would like to add to the matrix if there is a reasonable expectation of success and what is not working. Koivula asked if the budget crisis goes away in the future, could there be a commitment from the County to go back to mechanical methods again. Schumacher stated that the annual report states that the Last Resort Policy has to include the successes and failures and that would be an easy opportunity to update these things as things change. He believes that the commitment is already there through this process. J. Nelson asked if they were going for eradication of blackberries and Schumacher said no. He is going for longer lasting control around guardrails. J. Nelson asked about considering the matting for a solution to the vegetation under guardrails. Schumacher stated that those mats are filled with herbicides and probably a lot of herbicides not on the approved list. J. Nelson stated that her neighbors use the mats and they work. Penhallegon stated that they work temporarily but do not solve the problem. Schumacher stated that all methods are temporary, but it is a financial issue. J. Nelson stated that she has seen the roadside crews improperly apply herbicides and it didn't work. She stated that a mistake in writing the ordinance was not listing the herbicides that are not successful. Sundquist stated that it is encouraging that there is a possibility of getting the inmates back in the future and wanted to know what the chances are of getting it back. Melotti asked if the crews were still available. A. Nelson stated that they are and they are trying to get other business elsewhere. Penhallegon stated that manpower is not available now, so Schumacher is looking at how to deal with this. Penhallegon stated that Schumacher has tried everything he could to solve the issue and is now at the last resort and Schumacher is asking for VMAC help to do this. Melotti asked how many positions there are open right now. A. Nelson stated they had about 50% of positions open right now. Melotti stated that after a visit back home to Pennsylvania and seeing what it was like back there, he would hate to see Oregon end up like that. J. Nelson referenced an article regarding a reporter who had been tested for 28 pesticides and he had 16 in his body. J. Nelson stated that she doesn't think removal of the

vegetation with pesticides is going to work and she thinks we are doing something dangerous. Sundquist commented that he would like to see this all revisited in the future. Melotti stated that the past is not the same as today and there was never a coordinated effort to do anything about the noxious weeds before. J. Nelson stated that she doesn't think it is a roadside vegetation management mandate to deal with noxious weeds. Koivula made a motion for people to respond to Schumacher's presentation, if they choose by responding in writing to Schumacher and BCC. J. Nelson stated that those responses need to be in print. J. Nelson stated that it doesn't need to go to vote. Graham seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous with Melotti abstaining. Koivula suggested members do this during the break between meetings.

V. NSA - SUNDQUIST

Sundquist stated that if the No Spray Areas are expensive and unnecessary, they should be eliminated. J. Nelson stated that she would agree if there was an area to be sprayed with Herbicides, the neighbors be notified. Schumacher stated that they are not eliminating NSAs. Sundquist stated that he is proposing that they be eliminated.

VI. SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach Committee-J. Nelson stated that she has gone to several meetings that Bill Fleenor held in his community. She stated that people were interested in what she had to say. She stated that some residents had voiced their surprise about why they can't take care of their own roadside areas and some were confused and angry.

Shoulder Reclamation-Nothing to report

Adopt-a-Road – Melotti had looked through materials and believes it is VMAC's job to implement a program like this. He stated that VMAC would either have to go through Ollie Snowden or BCC to get a waiver of the facility fees. A. Nelson stated that these facility fees just started this year. Sundquist stated that there should be a standards guideline and training for people wanting to adopt-a-road. J. Nelson suggested that Bill Fleenor would be a good resource for this. Sundquist asked if John Petsch was the person who issues these permits. A. Nelson stated that Petsch approves the permits and the road supervisors do the actual field work side of it. Schumacher stated that an issue may be that the road crews need to know who has adopted areas so the crews don't mow that area.

Illegal Spray – Koivula stated that no one attended the meeting. He is waiting for more data of illegally sprayed sites. He has drafted a letter requesting action. He stated that it has been semi-approved. J. Nelson stated that she would like to issue a press release regarding PSAs stating that for reasons of safety, the public is not allowed to use herbicides.

Bio-Swales – Sundquist stated that it would be good to hear how the existing Bio-Swales engineering concepts are supposed to work. A. Nelson suggested inviting Bill Morgan (Design Engineer) to a meeting to talk about design issues. Penhallegon stated that he had contacted Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to ask about Bio-Swales funding. He stated that there used to be "Equip", an environmental quality program. Field Borders and Riparian Forest Buffers which are both terms for Bio-Swales are cost shared. He stated that there is some cost share that is available through either agency listed above. J. Nelson asked if they could possibly be a partner with Lane County. Penhallegon stated that they are a good resource. Dale Daris is from NRCS and spoke about native seed grasses last year.

VII. ROAD MAINTENANCE UPDATE – A.NELSON

A. Nelson states that they are in full swing. They are doing chip seals and overlays. Fish culvert replacement work has started. This is through unfunded mandate and cost share monies.

Sometimes the funding is through a grant from the Watershed Council if it is a fish issue. All the mowers are up and running and the first passes are almost all done.

J. Nelson stated that the Commissioners are holding meetings out in their districts. Fleenor has a meeting on the 28th at the event center and Sorenson has one on the 24th at 7pm at the Hilyard Center and Stewart at Cottage Grove on Aug. 15th. These are open forums type meetings. J. Nelson stated that the meetings are fun and informative.

IX. NEW ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – WED., SEPT 12, 2007:

- Minutes

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Debby Woodruff, Recording Secretary