

Pulling Together

The Fairbanks Cooperative Weed Management Area (Fairbanks CWMA) is intended to bring together those responsible for managing invasive plants across the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD) and others as designated:

- to develop common management objectives;
- to set realistic management priorities;
- to facilitate effective treatment;
- to coordinate efforts along logical geographic boundaries with similar land types, use patterns and problem species.

Invasive plants are typically identified as non-native undesirable species which are currently growing within the landscape and those that may be introduced; as defined by the Fairbanks Cooperative Weed Management Area. By effectively eliminating political and geographic management and ownership boundaries in addressing the problem of invasive plants, we can successfully combat the spread of the plants that invade regardless of those boundaries.

Purpose

The purpose of the Fairbanks CWMA is to facilitate collaboration and cooperation among all land managers and land owners so that invasive plant problems across the FSWCD boundaries and others as designated are handled in a consistent manner that addresses the seriousness of the threat; the life cycle of the specific plant(s) and the appropriate prevention, control and eradication practices.

By pooling the talents, specific knowledge, expertise and resources of the cooperating partners, also known as stakeholders, the CWMA serves to increase communication and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of management efforts. Also, it will increase public awareness regarding the devastating effects that invasive plants have on natural ecosystems, land productivity and private property values. This heightened awareness often leads to more preventive measures, minimizing the spread of invasive plants. Additionally, by organizing cooperatively, we improve our prospects for seeking broader and sustainable funding opportunities. On the whole, the group's achievements should satisfy both individual and collective needs.

The overall goal of the cooperative weed management area is to prevent the introduction, reproduction and spread of invasive plants into and within the Fairbanks CWMA.

The Area Included within the Fairbanks CWMA

The Fairbanks CWMA should include the boundaries of the FSWCD; which includes the majority of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and also outlying areas where invasive plant species may become problematic. These boundaries will encompass all areas of immediate concern, will allow for maximum impact of time invested in planning, and will help prioritize the region's invasive plant management resources. In the case of invasive plant infestations in the adjoining outlying areas of the Fairbanks CWMA; an agreement will be composed between the appropriate groups.

Background and Authority

A small group of interested local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) met with the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Health Protection - State and Private Forestry Division in the spring of 2004 to begin organizing a cooperative weed management area for the Mat-Su and Tanana Valley. Michael Shephard from State and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service, will be working with the Fairbanks District. The Fairbanks SWCD has taken the lead on establishing the CWMA, providing staff coordination to manage a small grant for purposes of developing the organization. Fairbanks CWMA is based on successful efforts in 2002 and 2003 of the Juneau and Kenai Peninsula CWMAs, and the 2004 efforts of the Mat-Su CWMA.

In Alaska, SWCDs are organized under state law AS 41.10 and are considered local entities of state government. They partner closely with their local office of the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service. They are each led by a local elected volunteer board representing community landowners. In addition, all SWCDs in Alaska are members of the non-profit statewide association (Alaska Association of Conservation Districts), providing the capability to receive broader project funding.

As a result, SWCDs have a local, state and national precedent for involvement in important local natural resource management issues and activities including area-wide watershed plans, soil and snow surveys, wildlife habitat improvement projects and invasive plants management. Given their charge and history, the local SWCD has the authority to work with local organizations, landowners and agency staff to establish a CWMA.

Structure of the Fairbanks Cooperative Weed Management Area

The Fairbanks CWMA will consist of pertinent and interested agencies, organizations, and private landowners throughout the FSWCD through a signed cooperative agreement, referred to as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which formally recognizes the organization and intent of the group.

The Fairbanks CWMA will be organized under a managing Steering Committee ("Weed Board") with a supporting Action Work Group. The Weed Board will be the lead for establishing the goals, objectives and cooperative agreement, and for reviewing the strategic and annual plans for the organization. The Weed Board will be directly involved in developing the strategic plan and subsequent annual plans, including collaborative activities for the organization. The Action Work Group will be comprised of the volunteer core by region, that are the frontline force undertaking specific activities and events for the organization. All Fairbanks CWMA volunteers will be signed up through the NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program, providing the organization with the necessary liability coverage. All Steering Committee meetings will be made available to the Action Work Group and any interested citizens; the time and place will be publicly posted and made available through the FSWCD website (<http://home.gci.net/%7efswcd/index.html>).

All Memorandum of Understanding Agreement (MOU) signers are advisory to the Steering Committee and are encouraged to attend the Fairbanks CWMA meetings. This information stated in the Fairbanks CWMA Charter may go beyond what is included in the MOU.

The Fairbanks CWMA Charter will be reviewed every two (2) years and updated if necessary.

Steering Committee ("Weed Board") – composed of up to two staff people with one vote per agency and/or area, and other key partners. There shall be no less than three and no more than nine Stakeholders:

- 1) Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District: Joni Scharfenburg, Cassidee Hall
- 2) NRCS: James Helm

- 3) UAF Cooperative Extension: Michelle Hebert, Diane Claassen
- 4) Tanana Valley Farmer's Market Association: Irene Wood
- 5) Master Gardener's: George Wilson
- 6) Private Citizen: Doug Stockdale

Action Work Group – This group will conduct on-the-ground control work and public outreach efforts. It is composed of all MOU stakeholders, interested agency or organizational staff, any interested concerned private landowners, and knowledgeable, concerned individuals such as:

Federal: USFS (State and Private Forestry)
NRCS (Fairbanks field office)
USFWS
BLM
NPS

State: DOT - permitting
Fish & Game - Invasive Species Program
DNR Habitat – Fairbanks Area office
DNR Agriculture
DNR Forestry
DNR State Parks
FSWCD
SDSWCD
University of Alaska Fairbanks - Cooperative Extension, Fairbanks field office
- College of Natural Resource and Agricultural Sciences
- CNIPM Noxious & Invasive Plants Committee, UAF CES

Fairbanks North Star Borough: Planning Department, Parks and Recreation, Road Service Areas

Cities and communities: Fairbanks
North Pole
Nenana
Fox
Healy
Ester
Anderson
Chena Hot Springs
Two Rivers
Eielson Ag.

Tribal entities: Tanana Chiefs Conference, NANA, DOYAN, Yukon River Tribal Watershed Council

Utilities: Golden Valley Electric

NGOs: Alaska Association of Conservation Districts
Alaska Farm Bureau – Fairbanks Chapter
Alaska Wilderness Recreation Trails Association
Tanana Valley Fair Association

Other groups:

Youth groups (4-H, Boys & Girls Club,)
Scouting groups (Boys Scouts, Girls Scouts)
Service groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Outward Bound, SCA, Youth Corps, etc.)
Garden groups (Master Gardeners, Farmer's Market, and Garden clubs)
Farmers, farm coops.
Greenhouse businesses
Landscape operations
Equestrian groups (Alaska Horse Journal)
Trail users (ATV Clubs, mountain bike trails club, etc.)
School groups (Ag & Natural Resource class, FFA, etc.)
Community groups (Community Councils, Homeowner's Associations, etc.)
Other community members, etc.
Private Businesses, i.e. Alaska Railroad, ABR, USKH, BP, Alyeska, etc.