

# Quarterly Connection

## Managing Noxious Weeds Across Fence Lines

By Sarah Ketchum

I've heard it said, "Weeds are nature's graffiti," and I've seen places where the hills are painted with yellow starthistle, spotted knapweed and common bugloss. It may be a beautiful sight for the untrained eye, but it's an eyesore for those who recognize a plant community in turmoil. The Wallowa Canyonlands Partnership (WCP) is dedicated to protecting Wallowa County and the surrounding communities from invasive plants.

Most people know Wallowa Resources has a "Weed Program," but few know much about it. The program originated from discussions between the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and Wallowa Resources 10 years ago. Discussions focused on the need to manage weeds across fence lines in the Grande Ronde River corridor of Wallowa, Union and

Asotin Counties. A few years ago, we extended this effort into the Imnaha Watershed where canyon grasslands face similar threats of noxious weed invasion. With this expanded area and to emphasize the role of cooperation, we adopted the name "Wallowa Canyonlands Partnership" (WCP) for our program.

WCP is a Cooperative Weed Management Area that works with federal, state, and county agencies, tribes, private landowners, and other groups to manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in the canyon grasslands. We use Integrated Weed Management techniques to protect grasslands from invasion and degradation by noxious weeds. Weeds out-compete native vegetation, form monocultures, contribute to soil erosion,

and fundamentally change native habitat. Weeds also threaten livelihoods by decreasing forage quality and quantity, infesting crops, and consuming time and money in attempting to control the invasions.

(Left)  
Pre-treatment: 2001 Leafy Spurge dominating a river bar on the Grande Ronde.

(Right)  
Post-treatment: 2009 The same bar shows far less spurge and natural regeneration following 8 years of repeated herbicide treatments and biological control activity.





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According to a research group in New Zealand, invasive plants (“noxious weeds”) are the number one cause of losses in food production world-wide.

Successful weed programs depend on collective effort against a common threat. Within the WCP, we work on public and private land controlled by multiple landowners and managers with different goals and objectives. Weeds don’t respect land ownership boundaries. In mixed ownership areas, it’s smart to cooperate and communicate.

It’s important to agree on common strategies, so investments by any one land owner are complementary to those across the fence. By combining expertise, energy, problem solving and resources, greater benefits result for all participants.

WCP believes strongly in this collaborative model. We meet frequently with our 130 private landowner and local weed managers to strengthen the collaborative framework. Additionally, WCP has a Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from The U.S. Forest Service, The Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Tri-County CWMA, and the Wallowa and Asotin County Vegetation Departments who help guide our actions. At the annual meeting, WCP reports past accomplishments. Future priorities are assessed by the group.

Early detection surveys are critical for discovering new invaders and identifying weeds for rapid treatment. Various methods are used including helicopter surveillance, assessments by foot, horseback reconnaissance, and inspecting the river corridors by raft. Mapping and data collection allow for monitoring of long term trends, which inform future management decisions. When choosing a treatment method, we consider the weed species, site condition and management goals of the owner. Treatments may include chemical, mechanical, competitive planting and/or biological agents. Following treatment, WCP strives to restore desirable vegetation.

WCP supports economic growth by putting local contractors to work. In this way, we contributed nearly \$200,000 into the economy last year.

WCP also educates the public about the dangers of noxious weeds and how to identify them.

Our latest endeavor is working with Dow Chemical Company, The Nature Conservancy and the Forest Service in the Upper Imnaha to see how cheat grass responds to an early application of Milestone, and the establishment of preferred pasture grasses.

Over the past 10 years, WCP has grown in response to the community’s concern over noxious weed threats in Wallowa County and the surrounding area. The real success of the program is having neighbors come together to treat noxious weeds across property lines for the benefit of all participants. Thank you for supporting the WCP program and helping us steward our lands.

# Partnering the Wallowa

By Don Harker



Through partnerships, WR Community Solutions now manages and maintains 11 campgrounds

On May 28th, 2008 Wallowa Resources Community Solutions entered into an important three way partnership with the US Forest Service (USFS) and Wallowa

County which seeks to keep open and maintain public campgrounds. This partnership was developed in response to the declining resources available to the USFS to man-

# USFS Provides Real-Life Research for Summer WREN Participants

By Penny Arentsen



The crew, including field instructor Todd Kruger (left) with Joe Gurrieri, USFS Hydrologist from Ogden, UT

The Youth Stewardship Education Program seeks to involve students in real-world science research as often as possible. Partnerships with natural resource agencies provide perfect opportunities for research,

as well as providing volunteers for the work. Wallowa Resources–Wallowa Mountain Institute (WR-WMI) and the US Forest Service (USFS) partnered this summer during the Summer WREN Back-

packing Adventure, July 19-24, to monitor air quality, via water samples in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Sweyn Wall represented the Eagle Cap Ranger District in the partnership, while Rick Graw, the USFS Region 9 Air Quality Monitoring Specialist, oversaw the sampling program. Rick arranged for USFS hydrologist Joseph (Joe) Gurrieri from Ogden, Utah to train the students and field instructors on the sampling protocols.

Student researchers included Landra Skovlin, Kyle Roepke, Dominic Anders, Natalie Zeigler, Hailey McDonald, and Keinan Hermans. Joe Gurrieri backpacked in the first day to train the group at John Henry Lake. Four lakes were sampled in the lakes basin, including John Henry, Steamboat, Mirror, and Craig, for ANC (Acid Neutralizing Capacity). ANC indicates the amount of atmospheric acids, like sulfur and nitrogen deposited through precipitation in lakes.

Rick, Joe, and Sweyn were enthusiastic about involving students in real-life research. Joe and Penny Arentsen, WR-WMI Youth Stewardship Program Coordinator, also taught the students about watershed ecology. Joe taught the crew about fens at John Henry Lake and their importance as carbon sinks. Penny built on the knowledge gained by students from WR-WMI's watershed monitoring program (WET). During the WET program, students sample the water quality of the Wallowa River in the valley. Now students had the opportunity to sample 2 lakes in the headwaters of the Wallowa River. It helped provide a holistic look at a watershed. Wallowa Resources–Wallowa Mountain Institute and the USFS are hoping build on this partnership in the future.

## Wallowa County Way!

age and maintain many of our national recreation campgrounds in Wallowa County. Funding for this endeavor is being provided primarily by Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation. Keeping these facilities open and accessible to the public was the driving force for all three partners.

Through this partnership, WR Community Solutions now manages and maintains nine campgrounds in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, two within the Wallowa Valley Ranger District and Hells Canyon and Buckhorn overlooks. WR Community Solutions employs one full time and one part time seasonal employee along with help from a volunteer Camp Host on the Imnaha Corridor to maintain

the day to day operations of the 105 camp sites. Day to day management includes keeping 23 toilets cleaned and stocked, fire rings shoveled clean, grass and brush trimmed from campsites and paths, buildings maintained, signage and, of course, garbage gathered and hauled out. All this effort so locals and visitors may enjoy our spectacular county and local businesses can realize the economic impact that comes from tourists visiting the area.

This successful partnership relies on all three partners to make it a great working relationship. Here's looking forward to continuing this success story for many years to come.



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## 1st Fundraiser – A Success!

Don Harker and Nancy Knoble hosted Wallowa Resources' first annual dinner and barn dance fundraiser at their ranch east of Joseph in August. The event featured wine tasting, grass-fed beef, Columbia River salmon, and local organic foods from Backyard Gardens Catering. The evening culminated in foot-stomping music performed by Craig Nichols and Diverse, which rocked the barn well into the night.

The evening was a huge success: 200 people attended the event, which netted over \$5000 in general operating funds. In addition to a fine meal and live music, participants enjoyed a live auction featuring a scenic flight for two over Wallowa County, a river-to-rails trip, cords of cut (and delivered!) firewood, and a colt, among other items.

Although we've worked on land and community stewardship in Wallowa County for fourteen years, this was a first for Wallowa Resources. It brought together scores of community members—many of whom have collaborated with Wallowa Resources on projects from stewardship education to job creation—and introduced those less familiar with the organization to our staff, board members, and programs. Many thanks to those who joined us in August, and to the WR staff and board who helped make it happen!

**Please explore and enjoy our  
updated Website at  
[www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org)**

In addition to the articles presented here, Wallowa Resources is working on a broad variety of educational, range stewardship, natural resource, policy and watershed restoration projects throughout Wallowa County.

To find out more about what is happening at Wallowa Resources, just go to [www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org) or call us at 541-426-8053 today!

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