



# ***TESTIMONY REGARDING House Bill 2043: Weed Control Appropriations & Emergency Declaration***

*HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES*

*February 7, 2017*

## ***MEMBERS***

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Distinguished Members,

On behalf of the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), we would like to provide testimony regarding the emergency declaration and proposed appropriations to the Oregon Department of Agriculture for weed control. As a cooperative group of partners that work directly on noxious weed control issues, we know all too well the impact that these invasive plants have on our natural resources and local economy. Our members work closely with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and benefit from their expertise and leadership regarding noxious weed control and management.

As an organization focused on weed management, the member organizations that comprise the Columbia River Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area are fully aware of the resources and natural wonders under threat by invasive weeds. The unique natural features and prolific wildflowers in our area attract more than 2 million visitors annually to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area<sup>1</sup>. The impacts of noxious weeds on these resources threaten these unique and sensitive natural areas, as well as the tourism resources our region depends upon.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has been a valuable resource in our region-wide efforts to control and prevent the onslaught of invasive weeds in the Columbia River Gorge. Our Oregon members rely upon the leadership and technical resources provided by the Noxious Weed Control Program. The recent reduction in staffing announced by ODA will adversely impact our member organizations and our shared mission to control invasive species to preserve ecologic, economic, and social resources within the Columbia River Gorge.

While many of our member organizations have some capacity to control invasive weeds, many of the services provided by the Oregon Department of Agriculture are not easily duplicated at the local level. In particular the proposed elimination of the biological control program is not something that can be easily replicated by local or county-based weed control programs. Oregon has been a national leader in its biological control efforts and has realized an estimated \$13 return on every dollar invested<sup>2</sup>. The loss of this program will undermine weed control efforts across the state, especially for some of our most common and damaging weeds.

In addition, the technical expertise provided by ODA's Integrated Weed Management Coordinators is invaluable to our members as they plan weed control efforts. This expertise and technical knowledge allows our partners to employ the most effective and efficient methods to control invasive weeds. This valuable resource has greatly enhanced the work of our members, in implementing our many weed control efforts.

The proposed appropriations to the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the emergency declaration as outlined in House Bill 2043 will help to preserve a valuable program with a demonstrated history protecting the natural scenic beauty and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge for all Oregonians.

We sincerely thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue and appreciate your attention.

Sincerely,



Emily Stevenson  
Columbia Gorge CWMA, *Co-Chair*



Sarah Hamilton  
Columbia Gorge CWMA, *Coordinator*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gorgefriends.org/about-the-gorge/the-columbia-river-gorge-national-scenic-area.html>

<sup>2</sup> Radtke, H. and S. Davis. 2000. "Economic analysis of containment programs, damages, and production losses from noxious weeds in Oregon." Report prepared for Oregon Department of Agriculture, plant division, noxious weed control program.