

**Land, Water, and Wildlife Program
Weed Warriors Action Program Expansion
Environmental Resource Center (ERC)
Report on LAB's Recommendation to the BCC for Funding
In Preparation for June 7, 2022, BCC hearing**

To: Commissioners Fosbury, McCleary, and Davis (BCC)
From: Wendy Pabich, Program Coordinator
cc: Levy Advisory Board; Tom Bergin

Date: June 2, 2022

LAB'S RECOMMENDATION FOR FUNDING: On May 18, 2022, the Levy Advisory Board (LAB) conducted its Final Review of the Project and voted 5 - 0 to recommend it to the BCC for Funding with the conditions that (1) the Applicant coordinate with LWWP on appropriate monitoring, reporting, and mapping of weed spread and share results with US Forest Service, Blaine County Noxious Weeds Department, and landowners, and (2) the Applicant work with partner agencies and organizations to identify and treat areas more suitable for herbicide treatment than mechanical removal.

The Environmental Resource Center (ERC) requests \$25,000 or 48% of a total project cost of \$52,074 from LWWP to pay for a Program Manager (May-October), four seasonal Summer Staff, transportation, and native seed for reseeding projects to expand its existing Weed Warriors Action Program by doubling the number of sites and events. Over three hundred local students are expected to participate in targeted weed pulling events and native reseeding events under the supervision of the program manager. The remainder of project costs will be covered by funds secured from the National Forest Foundation and the Sawtooth Society. The Program will be partnering with Kay Draper, the Blaine County Noxious Weeds Department Support Specialist, and Debarah Taylor, Sawtooth National Forest Botanist with the US Forest Service.

Invasive weed spread is swift and vast, with a single plant capable of producing tens of thousands of seeds that can quickly reach even the most remote and pristine areas. This can have devastating consequences: Invasive weeds can cause habitat alteration, and many are toxic to wildlife, reduce native plant, alter nutrient cycling in the soil, reduce water availability, and affect soil erosion. Blaine County has twenty-five known listed noxious invasive weeds, many with deleterious impacts. An estimated that eight million acres of lands in Idaho are severely impacted by noxious weeds, threatening to "destroy Idaho's natural beauty and economy" (Idaho Department of Agriculture). Given the potential for rapid spread of unmanaged invasive weeds and the significant risks to our ecosystems, this is an important effort to actively manage the spread of invasive weeds without toxic chemicals and to restore areas previously impacted by invasive weeds.

ERC estimates over 80,000 invasive weeds will be removed (for knapweed plants, that will prevent 2 billion seeds from being spread) and 800 acres treated. Ten acres will be reseeded with native seed or plantings. In coordination with the Blaine County Noxious Weed Department and the US Forest Service, the program will also collect field data on weed removal and spread that will allow the organizations to update their own databases with current information and inform future operations.

The list of planned sites ranges from US Forest Service lands including the Little Wood Drainage (Copper Creek), SNRA Headquarters, Deer Creek, Greenhorn Gulch, Fox Creek, Lake Creek, Adam's Gulch, and Boundary Campground (Trail Creek), to public recreation and open spaces (e.g., Founder's Field, Rotarun, Howard Preserve, and BCRD bike path), and a number of river access points (e.g., near Bradford Bridge, Big Wood Bridge, Warm Springs, City of Ketchum, and Zinc Spur).

The Project was reviewed via the LAB's Expedited Project Review. Expedited Review was requested by the Applicant in order to support project efforts beginning May 2022. The LAB concluded the Project meets the goals of the Levy and criteria of the LWWP, and that given its nature and relatively small size, Expedited Review was appropriate.

Satisfaction of LWWP Minimum Requirements

1. The Project is located in Blaine County.
2. The Project will protect land, water, and wildlife by preventing habitat alteration, soil erosion, wildlife poisonings, and deleterious impacts to native plants, soil nutrient cycles, and water availability.
3. The landowners, including USFS and local municipalities, are willing participants.
4. ERC is a qualified entity willing to take responsibility for the completion of the Project.
5. Matching funds will be provided by National Forest Foundation and the Sawtooth Society.
6. The Project will have lasting conservation outcomes by actively managing the spread of invasive weeds without toxic chemicals and restoring areas previously impacted by invasive weeds.

Alignment with LWWP Goals

Of the eight Primary Conservation Goals set out in BCC Resolution 2008-71 and the LWWP Program Guide, the Project appears to address the following three goals:

- Protect water quality, rivers and streams, riparian corridors, flood plains, wetlands and water rights.
- Protect and preserve wildlife, habitat, and transit and migration corridors.
- Conserve, restore, or maintain and otherwise provide for proper stewardship of lands and waters.

Financial Comparison to Other LWWP Projects

To date, LWWP has provided funding to twelve other non-acquisition projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$496,300*, with LWWP contributions ranging from 20.0% to 64.7%:

	LWWP Funds (\$)	Project Total (\$)	LWWP (%)	Year
Loving Creek Fish Passage	13,900	27,800	50.0%	2013
USFS Aerial Seeding	48,500	75,000	64.7%	2013
Haystack Depredation	40,000	80,000	50.0%	2016
Deer Creek	319,163*	1,446,600	22.1%	2016
Rock Creek Ranch	113,793	176,410	64.5%	2017
IDFG Pronghorn Study	90,075	360,300	25.0%	2019
Pollinator Project	7,521	33,429	22.5%	2020
SNRA Restoration	158,200	336,500	47.0%	2020
Colorado Gulch Restoration	29,632	59,263	50.0%	2020
SVI Itty Bitty Farms	5,000	10,000	50.0%	2021
SVI Lookout Farm	15,000	35,000	43.0%	2021
Wood River Wolf	23,805	119,089	20.0%	2021

*Note: This project was funded to a total of \$496,300; \$319,163 was actually disbursed.

At a grant amount of \$25,000, representing 48% of total project costs, this Project represents a relatively small grant and consistent with other funded projects.