

King County
Noxious Weed Control Board

2008 Annual Report

Noxious Weed Control Program
206-296-0290 www.kingcounty.gov/weeds

Mission

Provide benefits to the environment, recreation, public health and economic resources of King County by preventing and minimizing harmful impacts of noxious weeds.

Goals

Educate the community about prevention and management of noxious weed infestations and increase participation in noxious weed control activities.

Eradicate existing infestations of Class A noxious weeds.

Control regulated Class B and Class C noxious weed infestations to below levels of significant impact.

Implement early detection and rapid response for infestations of new or recently detected noxious weeds with restricted distributions.

Support the management of widespread noxious weeds and facilitation of more effective, coordinated landscape-scale control efforts.



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Alternate formats of this report are available.

Call 206-296-0290
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TTY Relay: 711

Additional information, graphs and maps available online at www.kingcounty.gov/weeds

Letter from the Chair

On behalf of the King County Noxious Weed Control Board, I thank you for your interest in the noxious weed control program and taking the time to read our 2008 annual report.

The program is predominantly funded by citizens of the County and I believe this report demonstrates the significant public value generated by this investment. Our mission is to provide benefits to the environment, recreation, public health and economic resources of King County by preventing and minimizing harmful impacts of noxious weeds.

Despite difficult conditions in 2008 which encouraged weed growth and hampered control efforts, excellent progress was again made towards achieving our goals. Gains were made in the long-term control and eradication of our highest priority noxious weeds. We have also increased our capacity and effectiveness at managing other difficult-to-control, widespread weeds. This annual report documents and quantifies this progress.

To be successful in the long run, we need a coordinated, community-wide effort. Thank you for your interest and active participation in achieving this and we look forward to working with you again in 2009 to continue this important work.

— Scott Moore

2008 Program Staff

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Major Results and Progress Toward Achieving Program Goals

Clear priorities for noxious weed control are critical for their effective management. This is achieved by classifying noxious weeds according to their potential threat and damage and tailoring a response to most efficiently minimize these. Landowner noxious weed control requirements are also mandated by the State Noxious Weed Control Law RCW 17.10.

In 2008, program staff extensively surveyed the county for high priority noxious weeds, identifying new infestations and measuring success in controlling known infested sites. Each weed infestation was monitored to determine progress towards achieving control and eradication goals for that weed species. Citizen reports were also received and verified. Program staff worked with 2,809 landowners and public agencies to achieve the required level of weed control.

Responding to our annual customer service survey, 81 percent of landowners and agency contacts rated the program's performance excellent to very good. Progress toward achieving the program's major strategic goals are as follows:

Eradication of Class A Noxious Weeds

Class A weeds are the most threatening and potentially damaging. There are 35 Class A noxious weeds on the Washington State Noxious Weed List, 14 of which have been recorded as growing in some part of the county. The goal for these weeds is eradication of existing infestations and the prevention of new invasions.

Significant progress was made toward the eradication of Class A noxious weeds. The program and property owners have eradicated 44 percent of the cumulative weed area identified to date on parcels in King County.

Top Class A Weeds in King County for 2008

Giant Hogweed
909 active sites



62% sites eradicated
99% controlled

Garlic Mustard
156 active sites



1% sites eradicated
94% controlled

Milk Thistle
64 active sites



11% sites eradicated
100% controlled

Goatsrue
36 active sites



5% sites eradicated
94% controlled

Spanish Broom
36 active sites



48% sites eradicated
94% controlled

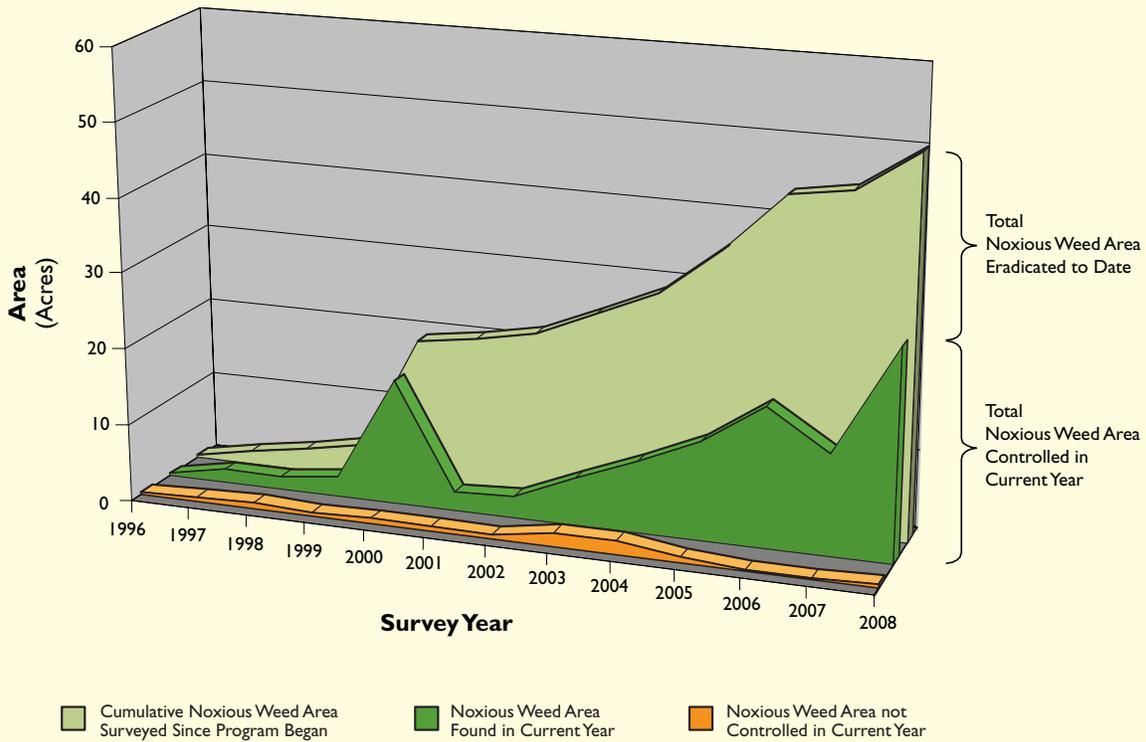
2008 Major Program Activities



Number of infestations surveyed: **7,849**
 Number of property owners contacted: **2,809**
 Number of infestations controlled: **7,250**
 Number of new infestations found: **654**
 Acres of weeds controlled by property owners: **159**
 Acres of weeds controlled by program: **108**
 Hours spent in the field: **5,965**

Additionally, 53 percent of the known sites have had no occurrence of these weeds for three or more years. Of the 1,247 Class A weed sites surveyed in King County in 2008, only 465 had weeds present and 127 of these were new discoveries. Prevention of seeding is crucial to achieving eradication of noxious weeds. The program achieved control (containment and prevention of seed or spread) on 98 percent of all Class A weed infestations found in 2008.

Eradication of Class A Noxious Weeds in King County 1996-2008*



*Based on surveys of parcels in King County

Control of Designated Class B Weeds

There are 54 designated Class B noxious weeds in King County. The program’s goal is to achieve control, bringing them to below the threshold level of significant impact.

Top Class B Weeds in King County for 2008

Tansy Ragwort
3003 active sites



21% sites eradicated
91% controlled

Purple Loosestrife
860 active sites



13% sites eradicated
86% controlled

Spotted Knapweed
581 active sites



26% sites eradicated
96% controlled

Garden Loosestrife
642 active sites



1% sites eradicated
88% controlled**

Orange Hawkweed
356 active sites



8% sites eradicated
93% controlled

**Percent controlled of the 195 sites targeted for control

Top Class B Weeds in King County for 2008 (cont.)

Dalmation Toadflax
277 active sites



18% sites eradicated
91% controlled

Sulfur Cinquefoil
261 active sites



16% sites eradicated
98% controlled

Policeman's Helmet
252 active sites



24% sites eradicated
95% controlled

Yellow Hawkweed
189 active sites



4% sites eradicated
92% controlled

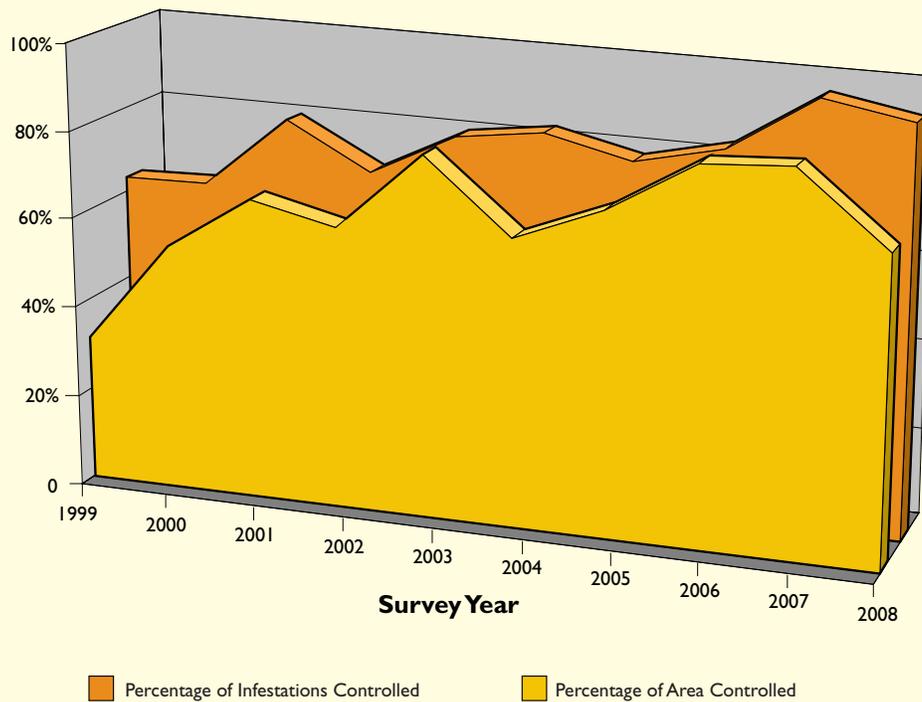
Diffuse Knapweed
168 active sites



18% sites eradicated
96% controlled

In 2008, the program achieved significant overall containment and control of designated Class B noxious weeds. Program staff surveyed 6,486 parcels and roads with Class B noxious weeds, 499 of which were new discoveries. Overall, control (containment and prevention of seeding or spread) was achieved on 91 percent of the Class B weed infestations. This was a decrease from the control level attained in 2007 (94 percent) due to several large new Class B infestations discovered too late in the season for control to be implemented in 2008. In addition, unusual weather conditions in 2008 (particularly increased summer rains), favored weed germination and growth and hampered control efforts. Despite this, the trend from 1999 to 2008 has been an increase in control based on both the percentage of sites and the area of Class B noxious weeds (see chart below). Additionally, the program has eradicated 65 percent of the cumulative Class B noxious weed area identified to date.

Control of Class B Noxious Weeds in King County 1996-2008*



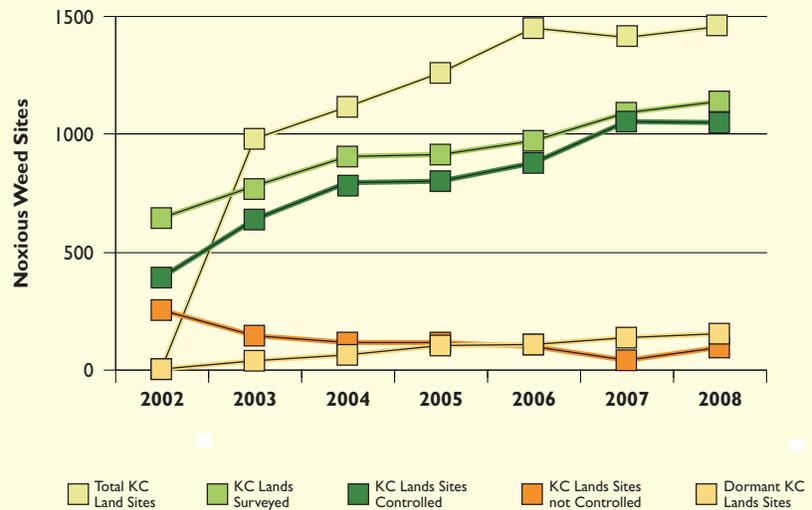
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*Based on surveys of parcels in King County

County Lands

Program staff maintained an excellent level of survey effort during 2008, and the number of sites controlled by county land managers continued to be high. This is especially notable due to the large number of tansy ragwort infestations found throughout King County in 2008. There are now 345 known regulated noxious weed sites on county-managed parcels. Staff was able to survey 239 sites and achieved control on 218 (91 percent) of those sites. Staff also surveyed over 400 county roads and identified 895 regulated noxious weed sites along county roads. Control was confirmed on 825 (92 percent) of these sites.

Number of Noxious Weed Sites on King County Lands 2002-2008



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There were seven citizen complaints about noxious weed infestations on county property in 2008, the same low number as received in 2007. Staff confirmed that six of these complaints were noxious weed infestations and ensured that the weeds were controlled prior to viable seed dispersal. Three complaints were on roadsides, two complaints were Parks-managed areas, and one occurred on Property Services-managed property that involved an unregulated noxious weed.



Surveying for invasive vegetation on county property.

County Land Invasive Plant Survey (CLIPS)

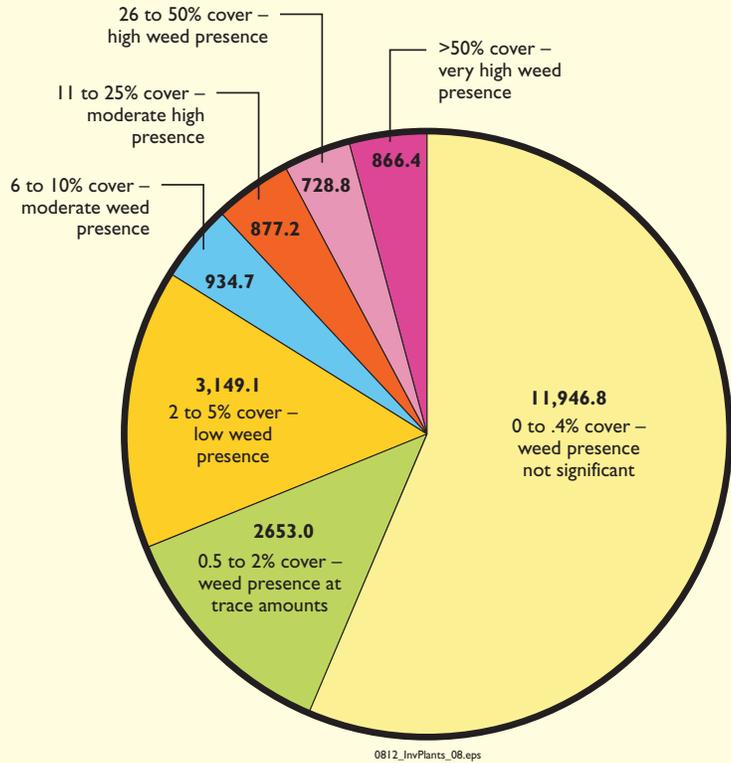
During the 2007 King County budget process, a proviso was included directing the King County Noxious Weed Control Program to submit a report on noxious weed control by county land managers. Report findings showed a good understanding and management of regulated noxious weeds; however, there was little or no data available regarding the extent of non-regulated invasive vegetation such as Scotch broom and blackberry on county-owned lands. As a result of these findings, the program contracted with ESA Adolphson to design a comprehensive methodology for surveying non-regulated weeds county lands with high and medium-high conservation value. ESA Adolphson also conducted the survey, spending over three months in the field (mid-June to October). The primary deliverables of the project were a Microsoft Access database and a GIS database containing all the field data collected during the

project. These datasets are now available to county land managers to assist them in developing management strategies for the control of invasive weeds on county properties.

Approximately 21,156 acres were surveyed by ESA Adolphson staff during the project. The findings documented that over two thirds (14,600 acres) of county-owned lands had only trace amounts of invasive vegetation (see chart).

The most common invasive weed found was Himalayan blackberry which was documented on 68.5 percent of the survey areas. The second-most common weed found was reed canarygrass at 42.3 percent, and the third was evergreen blackberry at 38.4 percent (see chart).

Invasive Presence (Acres) Within High and Medium-High Conservation Valued King County-Owned Lands 2008 Surveys



Top Ten Weeds Found in Study Area

Rank	Common Name	Scientific Name	Occurrence
1	Himalayan Blackberry	<i>Rubus armeniacus</i>	68.5%
2	Reed Canarygrass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	42.3%
3	Evergreen Blackberry	<i>Rubus laciniatus</i>	38.4%
4	Scotch Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	26.5%
5	English Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	25.9%
6	English Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	21.1%
7	Canada Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	19.3%
8	Tansy Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	18.5%
9	Common Tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>	15.2%
10	European Mountain Ash	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	14.0%

State and Federal Lands

The state of Washington and the federal government are among the largest landowners in King County with over 3,700 parcels comprising 38 percent of the total area of the county. In 2008, 170 known sites were surveyed. Weeds were found on 122 parcels and controlled on 98 of them. In 2008, the Iron Horse Trail (a state park) was surveyed for the first time since 2002. Orange and yellow hawkweeds were found at Snoqualmie Summit (U.S. Forest Service land). A plan has been put into place for control of these invasive alpine weeds in 2009.



Surveying for noxious weeds on Iron Horse Trail.

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Sites

Year	New Sites	Infested Sites	Controlled Sites	Percent Controlled
2008	55	729	656	90%
2007	46	460	391	85%
2006	58	649	497	77%
2005	118	839	555	67%
2004	87	540	396	74%
2003	88	819	589	72%
2002	100	701	472	67%

Program staff conducted surveys of 18 state highways managed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) covering 368 linear miles. In 2008, WSDOT crews were very effective at timely and effective weed control.

Highlights for highway rights-of-way control in 2008 include control of all rush skeletonweed sites on I-90 and in Bellevue; control of all known sites of the new Class A noxious weed European hawkweed on SR 522, SR 2, SR 202, and I-90; and new approaches to controlling Dalmatian toadflax on I-90. An intensive survey for hawkweeds was undertaken to better understand the extent of these weeds.

2008 Customer Service Survey

Over 2,450 Customer Service Survey cards were mailed to landowners contacted by program staff during the past weed season. Similar to last year's results, a majority (81 percent) of the respondents gave the program an "A" (excellent) or "B" (very good) rating.

Grades Given:

	Number	Percent
A	177	61.0
B	59	20.3
C	21	7.2
D	7	2.4
F	13	4.5
None	13	4.5



290 survey cards returned out of 2,463 mailed, a 12 percent return rate.

Aquatic Weed Control

Noxious weeds can severely degrade the environmental and recreational value of aquatic areas. Minimizing these impacts is a major program objective. Overall, 86 percent of designated aquatic noxious weed sites were controlled in 2008. Purple loosestrife was the most widespread species with 860 recorded sites, followed by garden loosestrife with 642 recorded sites (195 of which were targeted for control), common reed with 35 sites, and parrotfeather with four sites. Brazilian elodea continues to infest five lakes and the other aquatic weeds three or fewer sites. Control was achieved on 86 percent of purple loosestrife sites, 88



Tracking garden loosestrife infestations.



Looking for signs of new aquatic and riparian weeds.

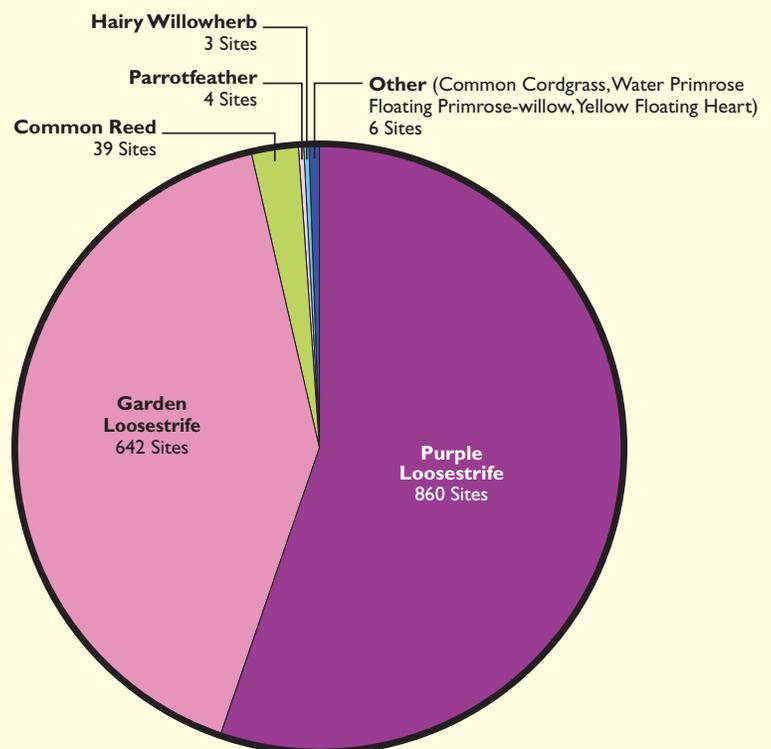
percent of targeted garden loosestrife sites and 89 percent of common reed sites. All parrotfeather, floating primrose-willow, water primrose, hairy willowherb, yellow floating-heart, and hydrilla sites were also treated. Staff continued monitoring a few dormant common cordgrass sites where no weeds have been seen for two to seven years. The decrease in the percent of sites controlled in 2008 is in part due to an increase in the total number of sites found, up 460 sites from 2007.

Program staff continued working toward the eradication of four high-priority aquatic weeds. A new infestation of the Class B weed yellow floating-heart was found in two ponds on Vashon Island, and

treatment was initiated on this site with positive results. The only floating primrose-willow (Class A) infestation in Washington state was treated in 2008, and although the infestation had increased due to flooding and beaver activity, control was achieved. Of four existing parrotfeather sites, one remained weed free for a second year in a row and the other three were successfully treated. The only state infestation of Hydrilla (Class A), in Pipe and Lucerne Lakes in King County, continued to be treated in a long-term project administered by the King County Lake Stewardship Program. In 2008, no plants were found for the second year in a row.

Intensive surveying is an important program activity. This facilitates early detection of new infestations and a more rapid, effective control response. In 2008, the program surveyed 14 small lakes, 37 river miles, five large wetlands and the southeast quadrant of Lake Washington.

Major Aquatic Noxious Weeds in King County 2008 Survey



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Education and Community Programs

A primary goal of the program is to develop a knowledgeable and engaged community that actively works toward reducing noxious weed impacts in the county. The following activities were undertaken to work toward this goal:

Technical Assistance to Landowners and Agencies

Program staff worked directly with over 2,809 private and public landowners and agency staff and answered over 700 public inquiries. Information was provided to a broad audience through the program's updated and re-designed website and the program's newsletter "KC Weed News," which highlights issues relevant to weed control in King County. The program's printed materials were distributed at events throughout the county and were provided to other agencies and non-profit organizations.

Workshops and Public Outreach

In 2008, the program provided 47 workshops, trainings and presentations for professionals, students, garden clubs, community groups, homeowner associations, livestock owners, forest owners, volunteers and many other audiences. In addition, the program held three workshops on invasive knotweed control for property owners in the Snoqualmie, Cedar, and Green River watersheds in conjunction with the program's knotweed control projects in those watersheds. The program also staffed informational booths at 23 public events and fairs.

Green King County Partnership

The program initiated a cooperative planning partnership with Cascade Land Conservancy and Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust to build a broad-based and strategic effort to protect the county's wilderness and natural areas from the impacts of invasive plants. This effort seeks to bring additional public and private resources and community involvement to combating widespread, non-regulated invasive weeds in the county's conservation and wilderness areas.



Training in weed identification was provided to many groups including this volunteer community group.

2008 Education Activities

Public Outreach Tables	23
Workshops and Events	47
Infestation Reports from the Public	192
Information Requests	717
Newsletter Subscribers	975
Contacts at Events and Workshops	6,839
Brochures and Bulletins Distributed	20,806
Website Visitor Sessions	180,082

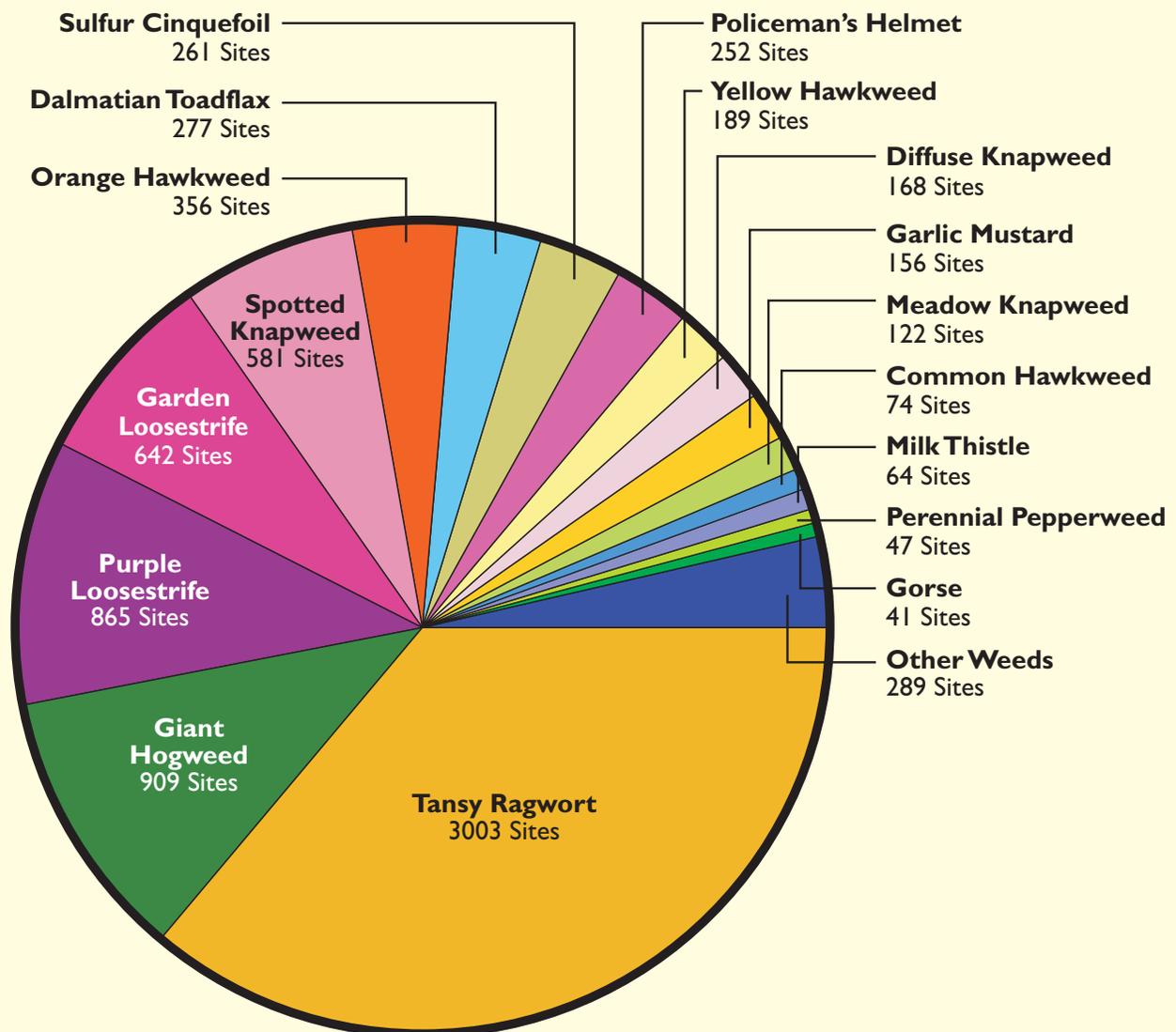
Mid Fork Snoqualmie Trails Weed Watcher Program

To increase the detection of invasive weeds in the county's wilderness areas, the program teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service to train volunteer weed surveyors for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Invasive Weed Project. Eleven volunteers surveyed 25 miles, covering eight different trails. Data from the surveys was provided to the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, which is leading the cooperative effort to control invasive weeds in the Middle Fork Valley.

East King County Native Plant Stewardship Program

The program helped plan a new stewardship program for east King County residents that aims to increase community participation in invasive weed management and restoration of native plant habitat. Program staff partnered with Washington Native Plant Society, Cascade Land Conservancy, King County Parks and several eastside cities on this project.

Noxious Weeds of King County 2008 Distribution



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Special Projects

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program was successful in securing grant funding to implement several large-scale, coordinated weed control projects. These projects targeted high priority weed infestations where significant public resources are threatened.

Knotweed Control

In 2008, the program managed invasive knotweed control projects on five King County rivers (Green/Duwamish, Cedar, Middle and South Fork Snoqualmie and South Fork Skykomish) and assisted Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust on



Knotweed can grow over six feet tall.

two additional projects (Issaquah Creek and Raging River). See the summary table below for the 2008 results.

In all cases, the work focused on the riparian areas where the habitat

benefits of knotweed removal would be the greatest. Knotweed was significantly reduced in all project areas. For example, the overall



Especially difficult to control in riparian areas where it grows aggressively, knotweed has even been found growing in the middle of a river channel as pictured here on a remote stretch of the South Fork of the Skykomish River.

footprint of knotweed in the Middle Fork Snoqualmie project area has been reduced by 75 percent since the onset of the project. Infestations were treated using the stem injection method and foliar applications of herbicide. Grant funding for the projects, amounting to \$111,280, was provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Washington State Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the King Conservation District. The program provided in-kind contributions to each project.

Knotweed Control Projects 2008 Results

Project	2008 Treatment Area	Years	Net Acres Treated
Green/Duwamish	Upper and Middle Green River, Soos Creek, Crisp Creek	5	16.68
South Fork Skykomish	Upper SF Skykomish and Tye Rivers	4	8.84
Middle Fork Snoqualmie	All sites on MF Snoqualmie and Roaring Creek	3	2.00
South Fork Snoqualmie	From Olallie State Park to edge of Twin Falls State Park	2	5.94
Cedar River	Upper/Middle Cedar, Lansburg to SR 18	1	8.33
TOTAL			41.79



Goatsrue stems and leaves contain a poisonous alkaloid.

Goatsrue Eradication Project

The goatsrue infestations in Federal Way remain the only known sites in the northwestern United States of this Class A weed. As such, the program continues to be aggressive and diligent in its control and eradication efforts. Site surveys in the spring of 2008 revealed excellent seedling control from work completed in 2007; additionally, there were no seed-bearing plants. Changes in control strategies in 2008 included site mowing and raking prior to herbicide application. All landowners remain cooperative, appreciative and helpful in their support of the project. The area of goatsrue treated in 2008 was approximately 10,000 square feet in the first treatment and 1,000 square feet in the second treatment. This marks a steady decline in density and actual area treated from previous years. Consistent monitoring and control work as needed will be continued as long as needed to achieve complete eradication.

Miller/Walker Creek Invasive Plant Removal

The summer of 2008 marked the third season of work on the \$35,000 grant awarded by the Port of Seattle to remove noxious weeds from Miller and Walker creeks in Seatac and Normandy Park. Program staff conducted extensive surveys on both creeks and accessible tributaries. Over 200 parcels were surveyed and target weeds were found on 101 of the parcels. As in the past, Washington Conservation Corps crews and a professional herbicide applicator were hired to assist in control work. All areas of policeman's helmet, purple loosestrife, giant hogweed and invasive knotweeds were controlled. Staff received support from landowners and stakeholders alike. Additionally, a \$6,200 grant was received from the King Conservation District in 2008 for invasive knotweed control. This helped augment the remainder of the budget and achieve more knotweed control within tributaries to the creeks. In 2009, responsibility will return to the landowner or land manager for control of policeman's helmet, giant hogweed and purple loosestrife. Priority weed infestations along these creeks will continue to be closely monitored to maintain success.

Snoqualmie Garden Loosestrife Project

The program received an early infestation grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology to attempt eradication of the Class B noxious weed garden loosestrife on the lower Snoqualmie River over five years, beginning in 2007. Thirty river miles of the Snoqualmie River between Fall City and the King County line were surveyed and all garden loosestrife infestations found (132 sites) were controlled by a contractor and program staff. All landowners with garden loosestrife on their property supported the project. Fifteen patches on the Raging River were surveyed and controlled by staff; professional herbicide applicators controlled the existing infestation in Rutherford Slough. An additional infestation in an unnamed slough just north of Rutherford was located too late in the season to be controlled, but it will be a high priority in 2009.



Staff surveyed 30 river miles for garden loosestrife.



Milk thistle can be toxic to dairy cattle.

Milk Thistle Control Project

Progress continues in the intensive effort to eradicate milk thistle, currently infesting 10 acres in seven square miles of agricultural land near Enumclaw. The program received a Class A noxious weed control grant for 2008-2009 from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) for milk thistle eradication. All populations of milk thistle including three new infestations were controlled in 2008. Prevention of seed production during the last three seasons has reduced the existing seed bank. This is a key step toward the goal of eradication. Landowners continue to be cooperative and have noticed a significant decline in density.

Garlic Mustard Control Project

In 2008, WSDA also awarded the program \$10,000 for garlic mustard control. Previously, individual landowners had been required to remove garlic mustard on their land, but this produced variable results due to lack of landowner skill in identification, especially when growing among native look-alikes. Additionally, some landowners had difficulty accessing sites or following prescribed control methods. The additional funding enabled the program to expand the survey area and hire Washington Conservation Corps crews and professional herbicide applicators to do control work in difficult-to-reach areas. Although the square footage of infestation has increased this year, this is largely due to increased crew time for surveying. Seed set was prevented at all sites. This year, staff identified and mapped 23,296 square feet



A Class A noxious weed, garlic mustard grows in dense patches that displaces native plants.

(0.5 acres)

infested with garlic mustard on 15 road sites, all of which was controlled; and 404,351 square feet (9 acres) on 141 parcels, of which 94 percent was controlled.



Calling all volunteers.

Volunteer Lake Weed Watcher Program

Following up on the successful pilot Lake Weed Watcher Program in 2007, the program expanded to include all interested volunteers. Forty-nine volunteers on 29 lakes participated. Volunteers were trained in how to identify native and invasive aquatic plants and asked to survey their lakes twice during the growing season. Twenty-three of the 29 lakes had volunteers complete at least one survey. The volunteer program will be refined for 2009 to include even more participants.

Future Directions

The King County Noxious Weed Control Board has identified the following strategic directions and priorities for the program in 2009:

- ✦ Increase focus on early detection and rapid response of new Class A noxious weed infestations, including the new listings for 2009 of false brome, shiny geranium and flowering-rush.
- ✦ Concentrate attention on roadside weed infestations on county, state and locally managed roadsides in response to major concerns of many King County landowners.
- ✦ Increase the number of projects funded by grants that address the serious problem of noxious weed impacts to sensitive riverbank environments.
- ✦ Continue to elevate the level of commitment and resources for long-term reductions in the impacts of noxious weeds through greater collaboration with public land managers in the county.
- ✦ Fund biological control research and development through Washington State University's King County Extension office to keep current with the latest advancements in Integrated Pest Management.
- ✦ Work with county land managers to develop a more systematic, planned approach to the management of noxious weeds and other invasive plants on county lands, as described in King County Council Motion 12573.
- ✦ Expand the resources and effort in stewardship activities on public lands to build and maintain this capacity, including expanding the level of volunteer effort in weed control on public lands.

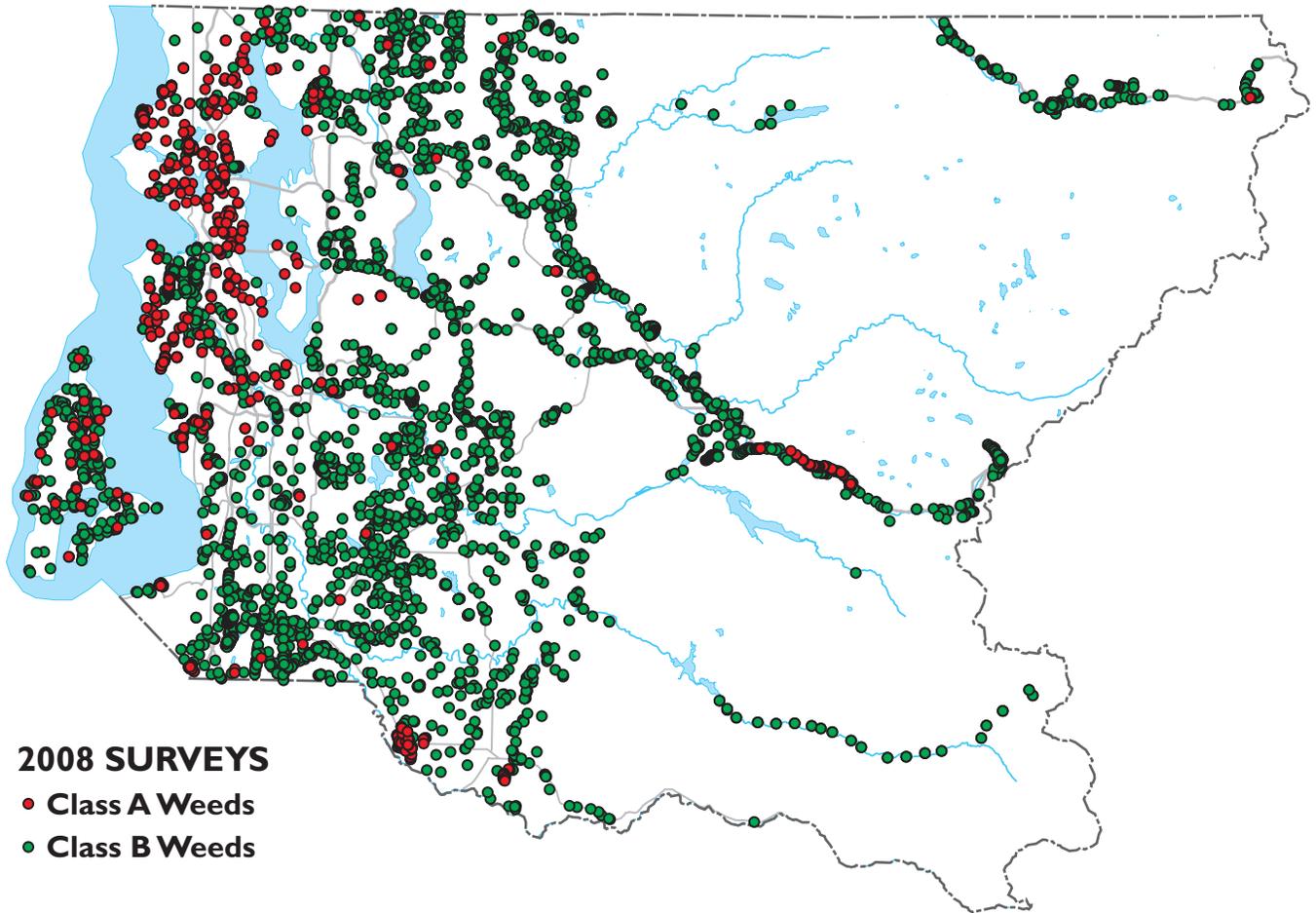


Biocontrol continues to be an important part of weed management.



Everyone can get into the act of weed control by volunteering with their local community group.

Class A & B Weed Sites Surveyed in 2008 in King County



Map shows 2008 distribution of Class A and B noxious weeds in King County. An interactive version of this map is available in the King County imap system: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/weeds>



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Water and Land Resources Division

Noxious Weed Control Program

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