

**CITY-COUNTY COMMON**  
**County-City Building \*555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street \*Lincoln, NE 68508**

**County Commissioners**  
402.441.7447

**Mayor**  
402.441.7511

**City Council**  
402.441.7515

**AGENDA**  
**CITY COUNTY COMMON**  
**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2015**  
**COUNTY-CITY BUILDING**  
**555 SOUTH 10<sup>TH</sup> STREET**  
**ROOM 113**  
**12:00 - NOON**

- 12:00 p.m. 1. Approval of Common Meeting Minutes of October 6, 2014 and Joint Meetings, May 6 and December 8, 2014
- 12:05 p.m. 2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- 12:15 p.m. 3. 2015 Common Meeting Schedule
- 12:20 p.m. 4. Presentation of Yearly Weed Report - Brent Meyer, Lancaster County Weed Control Superintendent
- 1:00 p.m. 5. Adjournment

**MINUTES  
CITY-COUNTY COMMON  
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING, ROOM 113  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2015  
12:00 P.M.**

Present: City Councilman Carl Eskridge, Chair; County Commissioner, Roma Amundson, Vice Chair; Todd Wiltgen and Larry Hudkins, County Commissioners; Jon Camp, Doug Emery, Leirion Gaylor Baird and Roy Christensen, City Council Members

Absent: Jonathan Cook and Trent Fellers; City Council Members; Deb Schorr and Bill Avery County Commissioners; and Mayor Chris Beutler

Others Present: Tory Carkoski, County Clerk's Office; Brent Meyer, Lancaster County Weed Control Superintendent

*Advance public notice of the City-County Common Meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board and on the Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska, web sites.*

The Chair noted the location of the Open Meetings Act and opened the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

Per direction of the Chair, roll call attendance was taken.

**AGENDA ITEM**

**1. APPROVAL OF COMMON MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 6, 2014 AND JOINT MEETINGS OF MAY 6, 2014 AND DECEMBER 8, 2014**

**MOTION:** Hudkins moved and Christensen seconded approval of all three sets of minutes. Hudkins, Wiltgen, Amundson, Camp, Christensen, Gaylor Baird and Eskridge voted aye. Schorr, Avery, Cook, Emery, Fellers and Beutler were absent from voting. Motion carried 7-0.

Emery arrived at 12:05 P.M.

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

**MOTION:** Hudkins moved and Amundson seconded to elect Deb Schorr Chair of the City-County Common. Hudkins, Wiltgen, Amundson, Camp, Christensen, Gaylor Baird, Emery and Eskridge voted aye. Schorr, Avery, Cook, Fellers and Beutler were absent from voting. Motion carried 8-0.

**MOTION:** Christensen moved and Wiltgen seconded to elect Trent Fellers Vice Chair of the City-County Common. Hudkins, Wiltgen, Amundson, Camp, Christensen, Gaylor Baird, Emery and Eskridge voted aye. Schorr, Avery, Cook, Fellers and Beutler were absent from voting. Motion carried 8-0.

### **3. 2015 COMMON MEETING SCHEDULE**

Informational only (Exhibit A).

### **4. PRESENTATION OF YEARLY WEED SUPPORT- BRENT MEYER, LANCASTER COUNTY WEED CONTROL SUPERINTENDENT**

Meyer gave an overview of the Lancaster County/ City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program. (Exhibit B). He distributed a monthly newsletter on Lancaster County Weed Control- City of Lincoln Weed Abatement (Exhibit C).

With regard to the Nebraska Noxious Weed Act, Meyer explained that landowners are responsible for controlling all noxious weeds and worthless vegetation. Additionally, weeds must be kept below six inches in the City. If a landowner in the City does not comply, the first step is to send a letter - the second step is a legal notice. If the landowner still does not comply, the City of Lincoln will contract for the removal of the weeds. Meyer said this cost includes \$100 for administrative fees plus contractor's fees (an hourly rate which begins when the contractor is en route to the location until completion of job). Meyer noted the average cost is \$200 - \$250 which includes both administrative and contractor fees.

Gaylor Baird asked if inspection numbers included return trips to the same property. Meyer said if the property warrants a letter or legal notice, then there will be multiple inspections. With some problem properties, the history is simply reviewed and a legal notice sent without an inspection.

Gaylor Baird questioned the percentage of properties that comply with violations quickly compared to those that are recurring/chronic. Meyer said while he did not know exact numbers, he does see a lot of familiar names (mostly developers). He felt 95% to 98% of the people comply; his job is to deal with the remaining population.

Meyer noted that any unpaid bills following a contracted mow become a lien on the property as a special assessment. The special assessment, plus interest, must then be paid before the land can be sold.

Meyer next discussed his involvement with education through the University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), various outreach programs and the Weed Watcher Team.

In reference to specific noxious weeds, Meyer pointed out that Phragmites is such a problem that the Legislature has budgeted \$4,000,000 since 2007 for control efforts. He said Phragmites is a 10' to 12' grass that grows rapidly and keeps encroaching so it can quickly channelize a river and eventually cut it off. Meyer shared some success stories with regard to controlling Purple Loosestrife and Knotweed. He added buy-back programs are also in place with local nurseries as three of the last five designated noxious weeds were first sold as ornamentals.

Gaylor Baird exited the meeting at 12:36 P.M.

Meyer said he is exploring the following options: a fee structure for repeat offenders to better cover administrative costs, efficiency in route planning and possible options for \$0 tax properties.

Meyer also presented the City Council with a copy of *Weeds of the Great Plains* published by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. A copy has been previously presented to the County Board.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

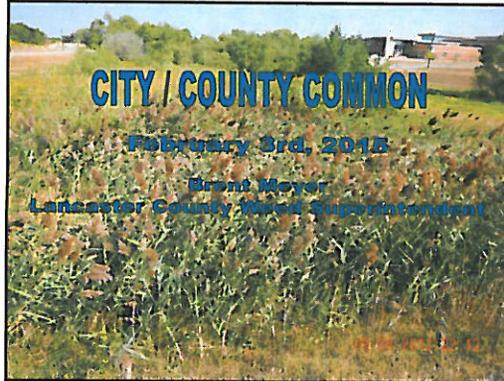
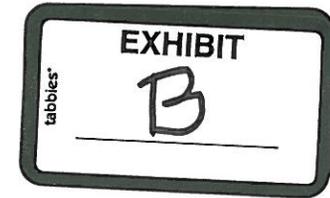
**MOTION:** Amundson moved and Wiltgen seconded to adjourn the meeting at 12:58 P.M. Hudkins, Wiltgen, Amundson, Camp, Christensen, Emery and Eskridge voted aye. Schorr, Avery, Cook, Fellers, Gaylor Baird and Beutler were absent from voting. Motion Carried 7-0.

Submitted by Tory Carkoski, County Clerk's Office



**2015 Commons Meeting Schedule**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Tuesday, February 3, 2015	12:00 p.m.
Monday, May 4, 2015	12:45 p.m.
Tuesday, September 1, 2015	9:00 a.m.
Monday, November 2, 2015	12:45 p.m.



### City of Lincoln / Lancaster County Combined Weed Program

- By Interlocal agreement in 1996 the City of Lincoln's Weed Abatement Program combined with Lancaster Counties Noxious Weed Program.
- Lancaster County Board of Commissioners are responsible to carry out the Combined Program.
- A move that created a more efficient and stronger agency.
- Making it more convenient for the citizens of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

### Weed Control Operations

- Enforce the State of Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act for Lancaster County including the City of Lincoln.
  - All Noxious weeds are required to be controlled by the landowner.
- Enforce the Weed Abatement Program for the City of Lincoln.
  - Weeds and worthless vegetation must be kept below 6 inches by the property owner.

### Weeds & Worthless Vegetation

- When plants are overgrown they become a nuisance and unacceptable to the general public and need to be controlled.
- Lincoln's ordinance specifies that weeds or worthless vegetation must not grow higher than six inches above the ground.

### What are "Weeds & Worthless Vegetation?"

The Code considers "Uncontrolled or uncultivated growth of weeds, brush, vines, grasses, or other vegetation which offers rodent harborage or vector, contribute to noxious pollens to the atmosphere, or unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of abutting public or private property," a safety and health hazard.

### Why should these plants be controlled?

- They are heavy users of soil moisture.
- They crowd out desirable plants.
- They reduce property value.
- They become a misdemeanor law violation if not controlled.

### Other Adverse Affects

- They are unsightly.
- They attract pests.
- They may cause health problems.
- They are a fire hazard.
- They are aggressive spreaders.
- They adversely affect the appearance of the neighborhood.

### Who is Responsible for Controlling Weeds?

- Lincoln's weed control program places the responsibility for cutting vegetation on the property owner.
- Owners are responsible for controlling weeds and worthless vegetation growing on their property and in the area from the property line to the center of the alley or street abutting the property.



### Inspection's

- An inspector may visit property as a result of a complaint or their observation that there may be overgrown weeds and worthless vegetation. If there are overgrown weeds, the owner may be issued a notice requiring cutting and/or removal within five days.
- Owners that don't perform timely cutting of their weeds and worthless vegetation are subject to having the cutting and removal done by the City or a contracted weed control service.

### Inspections inside city limits in 2014

- 8,310 inspections on 3,607 parcels for weed abatement
- 923 inspections on 564 parcels for noxious weeds inside city limits.
- 9,233 total inspections on 4,171 parcels in Lincoln.

### Contracted Weed Control Service

- If a weed notice is not complied with, the City may have the cutting and/or removal done. The owner will be billed for all costs associated with this cutting.
- This will include the cost of the contracted cutting and/or removal, and related clerical and inspection costs. (currently \$100.00)
- This resulting cost will be significantly greater than if performed by the owner or someone the owner hires to do the work.

### Special Assessment

- Any unpaid bills will become a lien on the property and a special assessment levied.
- These special assessments, plus interest, have to be paid before land can be sold.

# Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program

## Trees & Bushes

- Multiple Agencies get involved
- Weed Control will remove saplings if we are able to mow over them.



## Trees & Bushes

- Parks & Rec
  - Forestry – Bob Weyhrich
- Public Works
- LES
- Weed Control



## Fallen trees & Brush piles

- Health Department
- Brush piles are a health issue and a potential rodent problem.



## 30" Height Restriction

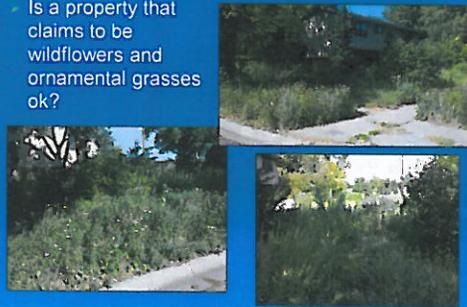
*(between sidewalk and street)*

- Ordinance 12.20.070 Enforced by Public Works - Greg Topil
- Deals with overgrown planted vegetation.
- Must follow sight distance regulations at intersections.
- Maximum 30" above the curb.
- Weed Control will handle if its weeds or worthless vegetation.



## Natural Yards?

- Is a property that claims to be wildflowers and ornamental grasses ok?



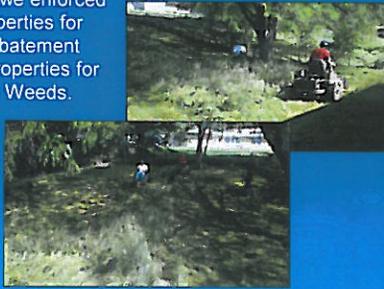
## PRT – Problem Resolution Team



# Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program

## Enforcements – City of Lincoln

- In 2014 we enforced 299 properties for Weed Abatement and 2 properties for Noxious Weeds.



## Education Opportunities – UNL Plant Pathology Class



## Outreach



## Weed Watcher Team

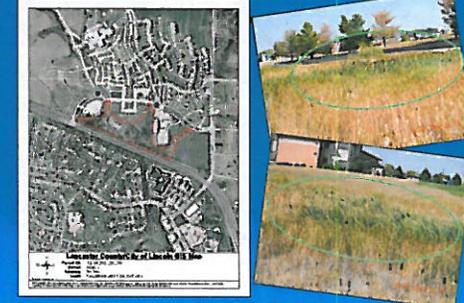
- Weed Watcher program trains and supports volunteers to look for and report harmful invasive plants.



## Challenges



## Phragmites @ Fallbrook



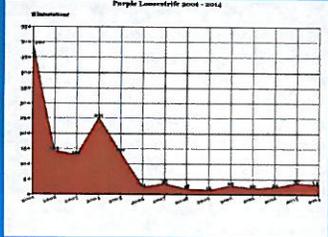
Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program

Purple loosestrife



Purple loosestrife success!

Designated a Noxious Weed in January 2001



Saltcedar



Canada thistle

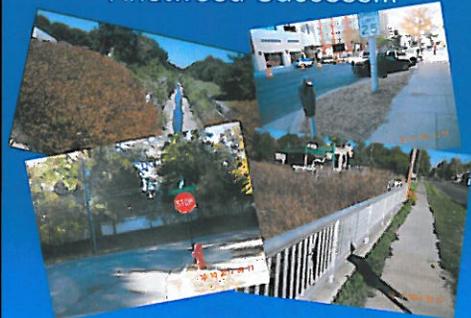
- Golf courses
- Landscaping – moved in with nursery stock



Knotweed



Knotweed Success!!!



# Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program

## Knotweed Persistence



## Leafy spurge

- 490 locations in Lancaster County
- 83 of those are within Lincoln city limits
- 16.9% inside city limits



## Musk thistle

- 371 locations in Lancaster County
- 161 of those are within city limits
- 43.4% of our musk thistle inspections are inside city limits.



## Phragmites

- 441 locations in Lancaster County
- 84 of those are within city limits
- 19% of our phragmites inspections are inside city limits.



## Cutleaf & Common Teasel

- Aggressive monocarpic perennial
- Not currently widespread here
- Noxious in Colorado, Missouri & Oregon



EDRR – Early Detection, Rapid Response  
 Added as a noxious weed in Lancaster County July 1, 2014

## What will be next?

- 3 out of the last 5 noxious weeds added to Nebraska's Noxious Weed list were first sold as ornamentals.
- Our inspectors are always looking for something out of place
  - Yellow toadflax / Sulphur cinquefoil / St. Johnswort / Giant reed / Yellow flag iris / Yellow floating-heart / garlic mustard

# Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed Program

## Giant reed / *Arundo donax*



## Chinese fleece vine, *Fallopia aubertii* aka: Lemon lace / silver lace vine



## Yellow floating-heart Benson Park, Omaha



## Recommendations

- Looking at fee structure for repeat offenders.
- Currently we have a \$100 Administrative fee.
- Continue to explore what to do with \$0 tax properties. Wassung Park and 4625 High Street successes.
- Efficiency in route planning. Are other departments using something similar

## Staff

- Brent Meyer - Superintendent
- Pat Dugan – Chief Inspector
- Ashley McAllister – Account Clerk III
- 6 seasonal inspectors
  - 3 inside city limits
  - 3 rural inspectors

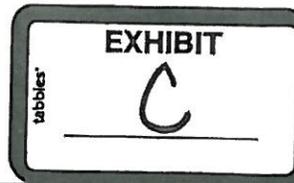
## How to Report Overgrown Vegetation

- Anyone may call the Weed Control Office at 402-441-7817 to report noxious weeds or a location within the City of Lincoln with overgrown vegetation.
- Electronically on our web site at [www.lancaster.ne/weeds](http://www.lancaster.ne/weeds)
- Lincoln's Citizen A.C.T.I.O.N. Center <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/aspx/city/action/default.aspx>

Lancaster County / City of Lincoln Combined Weed  
Program

Discussion

Brent Meyer, Superintendent  
Lancaster County Weed Control  
444 Cherrycreek Rd., Building B  
Lincoln, NE. 68528  
402-441-7817  
[bmeyer@lancaster.ne.gov](mailto:bmeyer@lancaster.ne.gov)  
[www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds](http://www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds)

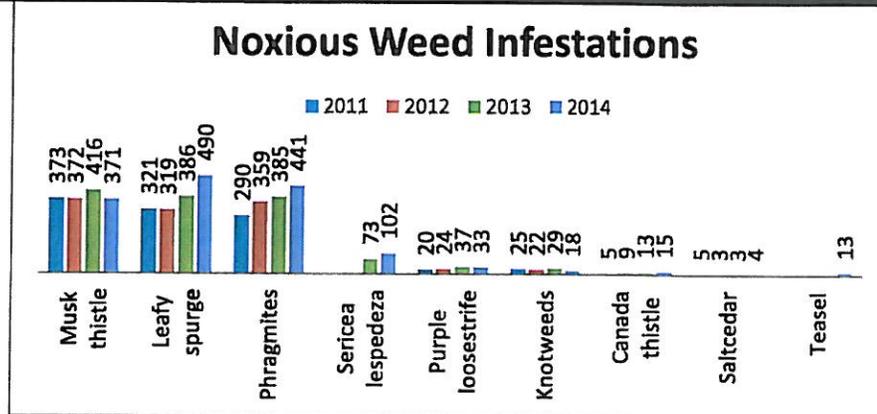


# Lancaster County Weed Control – City of Lincoln Weed Abatement

## 2014 Weed Program Review

### INSIDE THIS REPORT:

- 2014 Weed Program Review 1
- Cutleaf & Common Teasel 1
- 2014 Enforcements 2
- Noxious Weeds Inside City 2
- Weed Abatement Program 2
- Map of All Weed Violations 3
- Combined Weed Program 4
- Education & Outreach 4



**STOP INVASIVE SPECIES  
IN YOUR TRACKS.**  
PlayCleanGo.org

*"I am very proud of our staff to be able to handle this 46.9% increase in work, while being able to hold our budget to only a 1.78% increase"*

### Early Detection Rapid Response

(EDRR) continues to be the main focuses of invasive weed control in Lancaster County. The earlier the landowner can start an aggressive effort to control infestations, the better chance they have to eradicate the problem. Our mission is to stop the spread of new invasives before they get a strong foothold in Lancaster County and to aggressively manage the invasives that already exist.

Cutleaf and common teasel were added as

noxious weeds in Lancaster County because of the aggressive nature of the plant and its ability to rapidly spread and cause economic loss for property owners. Our inspectors have already documented 13 locations and aggressive treatment is underway. Leafy spurge, phragmites and sericea lespedeza all saw increases this year, while musk thistle, purple loosestrife and knotweed infestations decreased. Canada thistle and saltcedar have remained steady in recent years.

Inspection totals increased dramatically in 2014. Our overall inspections were up 14.1% over 2013, this following a year where inspections were up 28.8% from 2012 to 2013. In short, our 2-year workload increased by a whopping 46.9%. In 2012 we completed 7,510 total inspections compared to 11,034 in 2014. I am very proud of our staff to be able to handle this 46.9% increase in work, while being able to hold our budget to only a 1.78% increase over the same period.



Common teasel



Cutleaf teasel

## Cutleaf & Common Teasel Added To County Noxious List

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 Greg Ibach, Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture approved the designation of cutleaf and common teasel as noxious weeds in Lancaster County. The Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act allows

individual counties to designate local invasive weed problems to their own county list, without being added to Nebraska's statewide list. After holding public hearings, gathering information and testimony, Lancaster

County Weed Control proceeded with the process to add both teasels to our noxious weed list. Lancaster County is the first county in Nebraska to add cutleaf and common teasel.

### 2014 City Enforcements above 5-Year Average

*“The overall number of enforcements in 2014 dropped by 26, totaling 299, this is an 8.7% decrease”*

Any time a property owner does not comply with our legal notice to maintain their property below the 6” city height ordinance; our office hires a contractor to cut the property. Once the cutting is complete we file a “notice of possible unpaid weed assessment” with the Register of Deeds office. If the assessment is not paid, a lien is attached to the property and is treated the same as unpaid property taxes.

#### Weed Abatement Enforcements

- 2010 189
- 2011 261
- 2012 168
- 2013 325
- 2014 299

**Average 248**

The overall number of enforcements in 2014 dropped by 26, totaling 299, this is an 8.7% decrease. The number of legal notices issued dropped from 1,629 in 2013 to 1,485 in 2014. During the same period the number of properties inspected rose from 3,099 to 3,607. In addition to the legal notices, we also sent 2,391 letters and made 40 personal contacts to get properties controlled.

### Noxious Weeds Inside Lincoln City Limits



*Ornamental purple loosestrife in Lincoln*

Noxious weeds know no boundaries. They find themselves at home inside the city limits along the creeks, in wetlands and waste areas just as well as in the rural areas. Saltcedar, purple loosestrife and knotweed were first introduced as ornamentals and planted in our landscapes, so they are found more in the city than in rural areas. It’s important to control them in the city to prevent the spread into rural areas.

In 2014, 33.8% of our noxious weed inspections occurred inside the city limits. While these infestations are very small in the total number of acres infested, we continue to find noxious weeds all around the city.

Our city inspectors made 923 inspections on 564 sites and found 399 sites to be infested with noxious weeds.

#### Lincoln’s Noxious Weeds *number of sites infested in 2014*

- Musk thistle 161
- Phragmites 84
- Leafy spurge 83
- Purple loosestrife 23
- Knotweed 18
- Canada thistle 14
- Teasel 12
- Saltcedar 4

### City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program

*“the ease of turning in complaints electronically on the web and smart phones has led to the biggest share of the increase”*

#### Weed Abatement *total inspections*

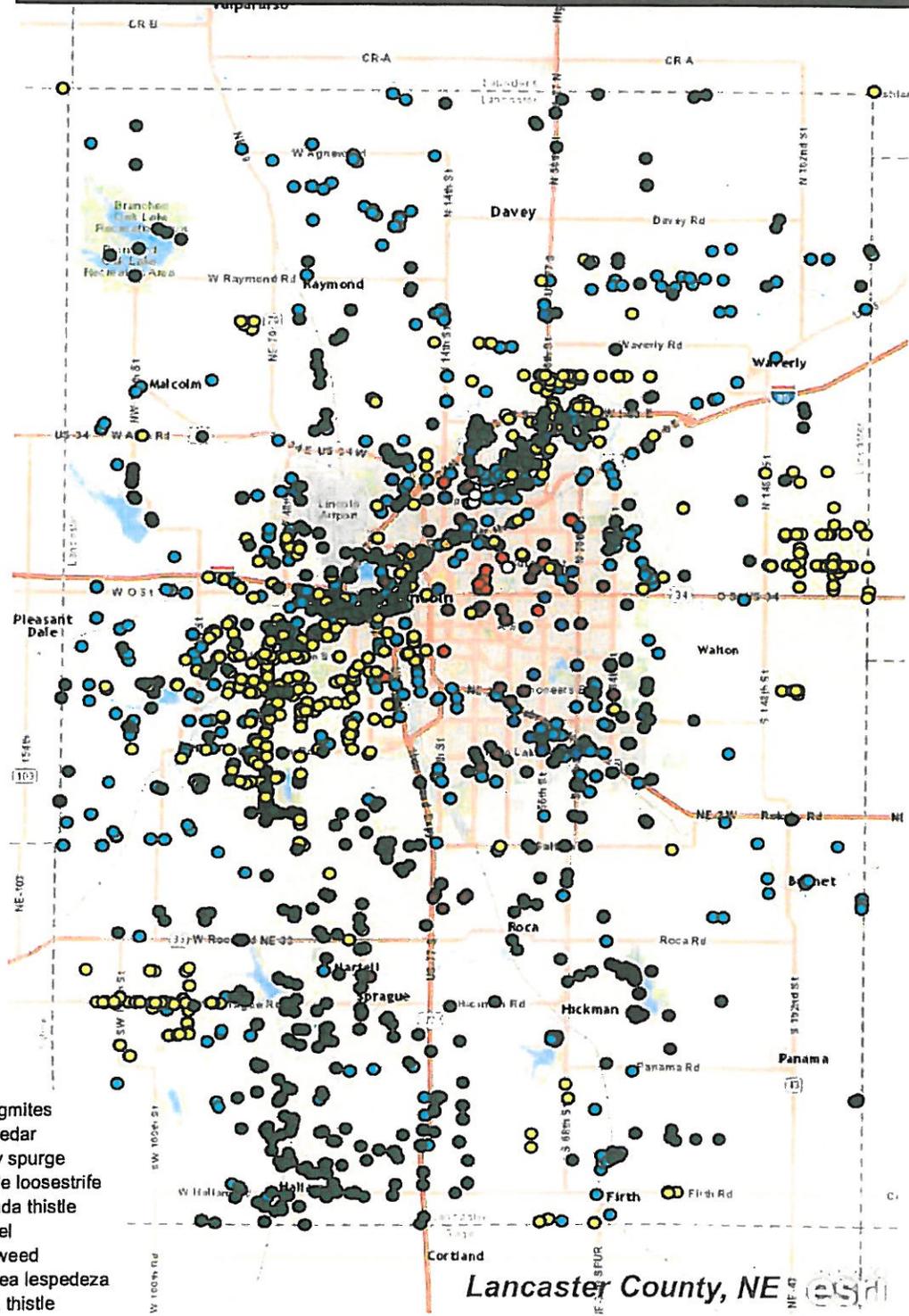
2010	4,344
2011	4,788
2012	5,354
2013	7,099
2014	8,310

Weed Abatement inspections increased from 7,099 in 2013 to

8,310 in 2014, a 17.1% increase. These inspection numbers represent only the 6” height ordinance on overgrown properties; they do NOT include noxious weed inspections. The total number of properties on which these inspections occurred has also increased from 3,099 in 2013 to 3,607 in 2014,

a 16.4% increase. I don’t think the city has more overgrown properties than in prior years, I see the awareness of the program and the success we’ve had in cleaning up properties along with the ease of turning in complaints electronically on the web and smart phones has led to the biggest share of the increase.

### 2014 Noxious Weed Locations



**Map Key**

- Phragmites
- Saltcedar
- Leafy spurge
- Purple loosestrife
- Canada thistle
- Teasel
- Knotweed
- Sericea lespedeza
- Musk thistle

**Lancaster County Weed Control**  
 444 Cherrycreek Rd. Bldg B  
 Lincoln, NE. 68528

**Phone:** 402.441.7817  
**Fax:** 402.441.8616  
**E-mail:**  
[weeds@lancaster.ne.gov](mailto:weeds@lancaster.ne.gov)



## Combined Weed Program

Almost every parcel outside of developed residential lots has or had one or more kinds of noxious weeds present. The key to noxious weed control is not allowing the plants to seed. This requires persistence and follow-up. Most of the public and private landowners understand this and are keeping their noxious weeds under control. It is the job of noxious weed control authority staff to assist landowners in the job of controlling noxious weeds. Many landowners are accomplishing control without any assistance or contact from the authority. The authority carries out a strong information and awareness program along with an extensive inspection program to encourage voluntary compliance of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act.

The authority has also provided the inspection and administration of the City of Lincoln's Weed Abatement program since entering into an Interlocal agreement with the City in 1996. The County Commissioners serve as the Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Authority. Brent Meyer serves as the superintendent and supervises a seasonal staff of six weed inspectors with the assistance of Chief Inspector Pat Dugan and Account Clerk Ashley McAllister.

## Education & Outreach Activities

We're on the Web!

[www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds](http://www.lancaster.ne.gov/weeds)



*Kiosk along the trail at Salt Creek*

**Good Neighbors –  
 Control Invasive Weeds !!!**

Education and outreach are an important ongoing part of our weed control program. The public is generally not aware of the economic and environmental impacts of noxious weeds. There is a need to increase awareness of noxious weeds and to provide educational information to cooperators, land managers, and the public. As people become more aware of noxious weeds, the probability of detecting them is greatly increased, which allows for more effective and timely control. Education and awareness assist with weed identification, reporting of new infestations, prevention, control, and fosters cooperation and partnerships.

### Activities in 2014:

- UNL private applicator trainings begin in early January, we give

presentations on Weed ID to those with a private applicator license.

- The display booth is busy throughout the year at a variety of locations including: UNL Extension, State Capitol, State Fair, Husker Harvest Days, Nebraska Power Farming Show, and landowner and agency meetings.

- UNL Extension – Lincoln is a great partner to reach out to citizens throughout Lancaster county and surrounding areas. The 4 page insert in the April Nebline is by far the biggest outreach effort of the year, mailed out to 12,000 and is available online.

- The Acreage owners e-news, the Weed Watcher Program as well as our monthly newsletter keep residents up to date on what is going on at key points during the year.

- Our Web page hits continue to increase

annually so we are always keeping new, updated information on that.

- Landowner and Multi-agency meetings this year included the sericea lespedeza cost share grant meeting as well as our multi-agency noxious and invasive weed ID training.

- Other groups we were able to present to this year include; UNL-Plant Pathology class, Master Naturalist training, homeowners and neighborhood associations as well as local high schools.

- Our partnerships with City of Lincoln Parks Department and the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District have provided us with many locations to erect kiosk to inform the public using the trails and parks about invasive weeds and how to report them.