

Group seeks effective way to control weeds

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Awareness. Accountability. Cooperation. Commitment. Coalitions. Opportunity.

Those are the fundamentals for an effective approach to the management of invasive species, according to Mike Sarchet of Minatare, a member of the Nebraska Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force.

Sarchet was among many speakers at the 17th Annual North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) Conference, held Sept. 21-24 in Kearney.

Topics ranged from biological control to early detection and rapid response, with reports from Nebraska, Colorado, Minnesota, Kansas, Wyoming, Utah and Canada. While the subject matter was varied—one theme remained—working together in the fight against invasive species.

The conference brought together over 250 people from 22 states and Canada. Taking center stage were riparian restoration efforts on the Platte and Republican Rivers in Nebraska. Dist. 38 Senator Tom Carlson kicked off the conference on Tuesday morning with a discussion of the Nebraska Legislature's efforts in the battle against riparian invasive species, and the benefits of clearing these plants from the river channels.

"We must finish the work on the Republican and Platte Rivers. Water is the lifeblood of the Nebraska economy," Carlson said. "We need to insure that it is available now, and for future generations."

The theme of collaboration continued on Wednesday, as attendees toured work done on the Platte River from Elm Creek to Gibbon. The group was able to see untreated areas, in comparison with areas where phragmites had been sprayed.

The aftermath of control methods such as shredding, burning and island disking were also seen, in addition to a helicopter demonstration and a lesson on processing invasive riparian plants into useful products by the Nebraska Forest Service.

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The recovery project on the Platte River in Nebraska has brought together various agencies from one end of the state to the other, including local weed control authorities, natural resources districts, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Environmental Trust and Nebraska Game and Parks, among many other local, state and federal agencies.

“It’s an accumulation of everybody’s efforts, and that’s what it takes to get this kind of work done,” said Bruce Rumsey, Clay County weed superintendent and a member of the Twin Valley Weed Management Area.

The focus on the Platte and Republican Rivers gave out-of-state visitors a look into the battle against riparian invaders, such as phragmites, to model their own statewide efforts after the projects Nebraska has already undertaken.

Early detection of invasive species, and rapid response programs were also on-topic. Several state representatives held a panel discussion regarding early detection and rapid response on Thursday to close out the conference.

Delegates from Colorado, Minnesota, Kansas, Wyoming and Utah discussed plans currently used in their states, and the direction that NAWMA could take as a whole in the effort to stop the spread of invasive species.

“Working together works, and I really believe that—across counties and across states,” said Kristi Paul, Sheridan County Weed Control superintendent. “It takes these round-table discussions where everybody shares, and takes this information home. We need to work together to educate landowners, county board members, bankers, real estate agents, students, and the public as a whole.”

The North American Weed Management Association was formed to foster cooperation among noxious weed managers throughout North America—in the exchange of information, education, training, weed management practices, programs and technologies. The group conducts an annual conference and trade show to present a forum for national speakers and enlightenment

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on state issues, and field tours to inform members on local issues.