



Item # ____

Meeting Date: January 19, 2021

AGENDA MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of Town Council

Through: David L. Corliss, Town Manager

From: Matt Gohl, Special Projects Manager

Title: Update: Noxious Weed Management Plan

Executive Summary

In 2020, the Town received notification from the Colorado Department of Agriculture regarding inquiries they received regarding noxious weed management in Castle Rock. Since that time, Town staff has been reviewing current noxious weed management plans to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. Title 35 of the Colorado Revised Statutes includes the Colorado Noxious Weed Act that requires noxious weed management by land owners, including municipalities. Town Council, at a future meeting, will be asked to consider adoption of a Noxious Weed Management Plan and related changes to the Municipal Code. This memo is intended to provide background information plus anticipated next steps in this effort.

Discussion

Noxious weeds are non-native plants that displace native plants or out-compete native plants for soil moisture and degrade natural habitat. Many noxious weeds are undesirable to cattle and wildlife, and can even be toxic, thereby reducing available forage habitat. Other concerns with noxious weeds are that they can quickly establish, are difficult to eradicate and can lead to issues with property maintenance, recreational access and general biodiversity. It is important to manage noxious weeds in our area through identification, prevention and control of infestations. Noxious weeds can be introduced through seeding, as ornamental escapes or can establish in disturbed areas (roadsides, overgrazed pastures, construction areas) as well as riparian corridors and wetlands.

The statewide noxious weed list identifies all weed species of concern in Colorado. Noxious weeds are grouped into three categories and each category requires a different level of response, as shown below:

- List A plants must be completely eradicated from all lands in the State
- List B plants must be contained and spread halted when identified
- List C plants can be treated in a variety of ways – local governments are given authority to determine the best the approach

Information about each category can be found at <https://ag.colorado.gov/conservation/noxious-weeds>. Within the Town of Castle Rock,

the most common noxious weeds are diffuse knapweed, musk, bull and Canada thistles; and, myrtle spurge.

The Town's Parks Division actively manages noxious weeds found in parks and open space lands within Castle Rock boundaries. Staff utilizes an integrated process consisting of mowing, spraying, pulling, utilization of native landscaping and biological controls. In the past, the Town has utilized volunteers to assist with weed management and has also released weevils in Town parks and open space that feed on knapweed. The Town also provides information about weeds in the community on the Town website at CRgov.com/weeds. Other areas of concern include undeveloped lots or lots that have been graded in preparation of development. Graded land removes the top layer of soil and nutrients providing an opportunity for noxious weeds to invade. Other areas of concern are rights-of-way and drainage areas throughout Town.

In an effort to control or prevent noxious weed infestations, the State adopted the Colorado Noxious Weed Act as included in Title 35 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. The law requires all Colorado residents, including local land managers, to control noxious weeds using integrated methods to manage those noxious weeds. According to the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, municipalities have certain responsibilities that include:

- Establishment of a local advisory board
- Adoption and administration of a noxious weed management plan
- Treat public lands, including rights-of-way, to impede the spread of noxious weeds

Currently, section 8.12 of the Town's Municipal Code limits growth of weed height to 12 inches or less. It is the responsibility of the property owner to manage weed height on their respective property. At this time, the Municipal Code does not specifically address noxious weeds located on properties within Town boundaries, nor does it specifically reference the Colorado Noxious Weed Act.

As mentioned previously, staff in the Town's Parks & Recreation Department work to control the spread of noxious weeds in Castle Rock. However, these efforts need to be fully documented in a Noxious Weed Management Plan and through our Town Code in order to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements. Town Council action will be required in a future meeting to accommodate these changes. Staff is planning the following course of action over the coming months to facilitate these changes.

- Noxious Weed Management Plan: Town staff, led by the Parks & Recreation Department, are drafting a Noxious Weed Management Plan for future consideration by a Weed Advisory Board and Town Council. This plan will include an overview of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, management options/approaches, implementation of the plan, public education and ongoing program evaluation. This management plan, including overall compliance with the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, will be applicable to both public and private properties.
- Public Input: Since the Noxious Weed Management Plan will apply to both public and private properties, Staff plans to open a public comment period to seek input

from Castle Rock residents. This public comment period will remain open for 30 days and feedback will be used to help prepare the final draft of the plan.

- Weed Advisory Board: Staff is working to expand the role of the current Parks & Recreation Commission to also serve as the Weed Advisory Board for the Town. This board will review and provide updates to and approve of the Town's Noxious Weed Management Plan. As needed, this board will also provide guidance regarding noxious weed management in Castle Rock.
- Town Council Action: Upon completion of the Noxious Weed Management Plan, and recommended approval by the advisory board, staff will present a resolution to Town Council for consideration. Additionally, staff will also prepare recommended changes to Town Code in order to properly reference noxious weed management requirements. These changes will also require Town Council approval.

No Town Council action is required at this time as this memo is intended to provide background information. Staff intends to proceed with the plan identified above and will bring action items to Town Council at a future meeting for consideration.