WEEDS

Montana law (7-22-2101 MCA) provides plant definitions:

(6) "Native plant" means a plant indigenous to the state of Montana.

(7) "Native plant community" means an assemblage of native plants occurring in a natural habitat.

(8) (a) "Noxious weeds" or "weeds" means any exotic plant species established or that may be introduced in the state that may render land unfit for agriculture, forestry, livestock, wildlife, or other beneficial uses or that may harm native plant communities and that is designated:

(i) as a statewide noxious weed by rule of the department; or

(ii) as a district noxious weed by a board, following public notice of intent and a public hearing.

(10) "Weed management" or "control" means the planning and implementation of a coordinated program for the containment, suppression, and, where possible, eradication of noxious weeds.

Damage caused by noxious weeds:

Noxious weeds cause the loss of wildlife habitat. Dense infestations of noxious weeds reduce wildlife forage, alter thermal and escape cover and change water flow and availability to wildlife. Spotted knapweed and leafy spurge often lower water tables and, in some areas, has eliminated surface water and native vegetation needed by wildlife.

Noxious weeds displace native plant species…[by outcompeting] *most native plants for soil nutrients and soil…. Noxious weeds lower plant diversity. Plant diversity is needed to maintain healthy plant communities that resist weed invasion. Noxious weeds change the way a plant community works. Each plant community has evolved certain ways to cycle nutrients, cycle water, capture energy from sunlight, and store energy in a form usable by animals. …By increasing surface erosion, noxious weeds cause a loss of organic matter and nutrients that are normally concentrated in soil surface layers. The removal of organic matter also reduces infiltration capacity, thereby making water less available for plants. Because many noxious weeds have relatively sparse plant canopies, more water evaporates from the soil surface, which makes even less moisture available for plant growth.*

Noxious weeds reduce forage production for livestock and crop production… and recreational value and uses. … Noxious weeds that displace non-game wildlife lower the quality of the outdoor experience for many recreationalists… [which] *reduces the value to and the use of noxious weeds infested areas.*

Many weeds are difficult to eliminate because:

- *They produce many seeds, spreading rapidly.*

- *They have deep roots and are hard to kill.*

- *They are not palatable to livestock and wildlife so these grazers eat the other desirable plants first, leaving the weeds to flourish.*

- *They are invader species…*[and] *are adapted to rapidly colonize disturbed areas.*

- *They have allelopathy- they give off chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants.*

- *They have waxy leaves so herbicides don't stick to the plant and can't kill it.*

Source: Montana Plant Life website (montana.plant-life.org)