

Kent County Weed Control Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday December 6, 2018, 9:00 AM
Kent County Public Works Building

Welcome and Introductions

Scott Rowe, Kent County Weed Control Coordinator, welcomed the group and introductions followed. Participants were Steve Yeager (County Roads), Al Hammer (County Roads), Brooks Kennedy (SHA), Jim Calao (MDA), Jay Bennett (Kent Weed Control), Richard Winters (farmer), Nate Richards (UME - Kent), George Kendall (SCD rep and retired farmer), Tom Mason (County Commissioner and farmer), Rob Clark (farmer), Susan Taylor (FSA), Dan Voshell (County Roads), Nancy Metcalf (NRCS).

Review of Purpose

Scott reviewed the purpose of the Kent County Weed Control Program and the Advisory Committee. The Maryland Noxious Weed Law requires all land owners and managers to control weeds declared noxious (Johnsongrass, shattercane, and thistles.) MDA works with Kent County Government through a cooperative agreement to enforce the weed law and aid farmers and landowners on controlling noxious weeds and other invasive species. The Committee is responsible for providing guidance and direction to the program, setting custom rates and identifying problem areas. The Kent Weed Control Program was re-established in 2017 after being inactive for several years.

Update on Program Equipment and Personnel

Scott now reports to Mike Moulds, Kent County Public Works Director. In 2018, the program hired a second part-time employee, Jay Bennett, who has 7 years of experience spraying in Cecil County. With two part-time employees and 2 trucks, production increased considerably in 2018.

The program acquired a 4x4 Chevy truck from County Roads in Spring, 2018, and MDA provided equipment: pump, hose reel, 200-gallon tank, toolbox, etc.

Summary of 2018 Activities

SHA contract for FY19 is \$60,000 to control *Phragmites*, Johnsongrass and thistles on state highways. In Calendar Year 2018, Weed Control personnel sprayed thistles on 133 of 168 miles of State Highway (28% increase over 2017.), Johnsongrass on nearly all state highway mileage, and all but one identified *Phragmites* sites. This year, as required by SHA, they started using the SHA-supplied GPS mapping program to track where and what they sprayed. Kent County was required to provide the tablet to run the tracking program.

Weed Control completed several non-SHA jobs including Osprey Point Marina (*Phragmites*); a \$3000 contract with Sassafras NRMA for thistle, Johnsongrass and multiflora rose control; and work for several private landowners.

Total receipts for Calendar Year 2018 (CY2018) were 38% above CY2017, as shown below.

Weed Control Income			
Year Over Year Comparison			
	<u>CY2017</u>	<u>CY2018</u>	<u>Change</u>
State Highway Administration	\$44,025	\$58,572	+33%
Other Landowners/Managers	<u>\$3,366</u>	<u>\$6947</u>	+106%
TOTAL REVENUES	<u>\$47,391</u>	<u>\$65,519</u>	<u>+38%</u>

UPDATE on Palmer Amaranth in Kent County

Prior to 2018, Palmer amaranth was reported in the county but not confirmed. This year, Scott found it in a road ditch on Flatland Road, Chestertown, in August. Identity of the weed was confirmed by University of Maryland Extension personnel and University of Delaware Weed Science Professor Mark VanGessel. Infestations have since been confirmed northwest of Chestertown near SR514, along SR290 and 291 east of Chestertown, along SR299 near Massey, south of Rock Hall, north of Worton and in the Pomona area.

Palmer amaranth public awareness efforts included a UME-Kent Palmer amaranth training session on September 26, hosted by Extension Educator Nate Richards; articles in Extension, FSA and Kent SCD newsletters; and Scott’s presentation at Extension’s Harvest Breakfast in Chestertown on December 5. Scott is scheduled to present an update at the Palmer Amaranth Stakeholders’ Meeting at Maryland Department of Agriculture, Annapolis, on December 11.

The ability to identify the plant when it’s under 4 inches is helpful because once it’s over 4 inches tall, it’s difficult to kill. Mowing isn’t helpful for this plant because the ancillary buds take off when the top is cut, and the plant will bush out.

Richard Winters asked why Maryland is slow to add the plant to the noxious weed list. It was noted that Palmer was added to Delaware’s noxious weed list. Jim Calao talked about the stakeholder meeting where the state is seeking public input on the issue. Jim has concerns with MDA’s and counties’ abilities to meet the need if the plant is added to the noxious weed list. Scouting and identifying the plant when it’s two inches tall is critical to the plant’s control. A lot of discussion on the topic followed. Marshall Cahall representing Farm Bureau wasn’t present at the meeting but had asked Scott to get the committee’s thoughts on the issue. Farm Bureau is supporting a bill to add it to the noxious weed list. Rob Clark made a motion to support Palmer being added to the list, and George Kendall seconded. Discussion followed.

Tom Mason discussed the cost to the producer if it's regulated. The committee voted in favor of the motion. Scott mentioned there was no one at UMD-College Park working on practical research to deal with Palmer especially at the professorial level. He suggested that citizens should request help at that level. Scott will communicate the Committee's decision to recommend adding Palmer to the list when he attends the Stakeholders' meeting on December 11.

OTHER Items of Discussion

- Susan brought up a concern that Kent County Weed Control doesn't have responsibility for spraying county roads. Most members were unaware of this. There was discussion on how to get county roads sprayed. Steve Yeager from County Roads has responsibility to spray noxious weeds in addition to his other duties and doesn't have as much time to get the roads sprayed like Weed Control could. The general opinion of the group was for the Weed Control Program to have responsibility for noxious weed control on the county roads. Scott commented that if he had two more part-time helpers, he and Jay could double their output and cover the county roads while still handling their current workload.
- Tom Mason said he was supportive of the Weed Committee.
- Jim Calao recommended getting a weed plan in place this winter before the weed season begins in 2019.
- The committee reviewed the custom rates. Discussion ensued on removing the \$25 per hour helper charge but leaving the rest as is. Rob Clark moved to drop the helper charge. Motion was seconded by Susan Taylor and approved by majority vote.
- Jim Calao commended Scott and Jay for a good job.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Metcalf

Edited by Scott Rowe