

## **Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable Project Accomplishments – Final Report 2008**

Cooperative weed management on the Rocky Mountain Front, from the South Fork of the Dearborn River north to the Canadian Border, is coordinated or assisted by the Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable. Most consistently the Roundtable is attended by representatives from 12 public agencies, four county weed districts, staff of three conservation organizations, and landowners.

This year, the Roundtable expanded our project area boundary north to include lands along the Front from the Upper Dearborn River drainage north to the Canadian border. We continued work with Blackfeet Nation land managers to expand mapping and biocontrol efforts north onto reservation lands, and the tribe's chief, Earl Old Person, signed our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2008 to formally establish a working relationship with all of our partners. The Roundtable also strengthened bonds to the north by adding Glacier County and Glacier National Park to the MOU and helping to organize the first annual Marias Pass Cooperative Spray Day. These expansion efforts complement the seven ongoing drainage-based cooperative weed management area programs in the Upper Dearborn River, Upper Sun River, Ford Creek, Deep/Willow Creek, Teton River, Blackleaf/WillowCreek and Birch Creek drainages. Initial outreach and control activities in Elk/Smith Creek continued, and landowners in the Dupuyer/Birch Creek area had the opportunity to learn to utilize GPS units and computer software for weed mapping and chemical record keeping.

During cooperative efforts this year, over 1,100 acres were treated using herbicide, and about 8,570 acres were surveyed and mapped for noxious weed infestations. Over 1,880 pounds of spotted knapweed were pulled at community events, and 87 acres were treated by post-spray day hand pulling. We released 263 containers of root-boring spotted knapweed weevils, *Cyphocleonus achates*, and 53 containers of leafy spurge flea beetles, *Aphthona spp.*, through the Front-wide biological control program. We also purchased 60 containers of *Larinus minutus/obtusus*, a knapweed seedhead weevil. About 200 private landowners and volunteers and 65 representatives of 33 public agencies and private organizations worked together to affect these acres in 2008.

The in-kind and cash contributions of private landowner, organization, and agency partners, and funds from diverse sources helped make our work possible this season. Funding sources included The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Montana State University's Weed Prevention Area Pilot Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Noxious Weed Control Special Initiative, The Cinnabar Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Lewis & Clark, Pondera, Teton, and Glacier County Weed Districts, the Lewis & Clark Conservation District, the Front Range Conservation Education Group, \$3,600 from Teton River area landowners, and an \$8,000 private landowner donor challenge that brought an additional \$2,230 in funding from private landowners across the landscape. Project highlights follow.

### **Upper Dearborn River Drainage**

#### *Noxious Weed Management Planning Using Computer Model Analysis*

Partner organizations working in the Upper Dearborn Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) collaborated to seek USFWS Challenge Cost Share grant funding to implement weed control actions in the CWMA. Funding from this grant hired a Montana Conservation Corps crew to inventory and map noxious weeds on a private ranch located in the upper Middle Fork Dearborn drainage, with additional mapping assistance provided by the USFWS Invasive Species Strike Team. Approximately 3,500 acres were surveyed. Mapping led to development of a weed management plan, using recommendations from a weed spread computer model analysis spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy. In addition, a half-day workshop, including short site visits to two participating ranches, was held. Thirty landowners representing fifteen ranches and the Elk Meadows subdivision, attended presentations on the computer model recommendations, the mapping and management planning process used, and field review of biological control effectiveness.

### **Upper Sun River Drainage**

#### *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Sun Canyon Weed Whacker Rodeo*

The Roundtable hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Sun Canyon Weed Whacker Rodeo in 2008. Seventy volunteers and agency/organization representatives pulled over 1,000 pounds of spotted knapweed. The community weed pull is designed to educate the public on the biology, management, and impact of noxious weeds. This year the group succeeded in engaging several local recreational property owners for the first time, and enjoyed continued support from families who make the weed pull an annual tradition. Participants focused on sensitive riparian areas that are not appropriate sites for chemical application, as well as key areas for weed spread like trailheads and parking spots.

### **Ford Creek Drainage**

#### *3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Ford Creek Spray Day and Mapping and Inventory Project*

In 2008, US Forest Service (USFS) staff and permit holders on area USFS lands continued to fight weeds in the Ford Creek drainage by working together in a third annual Community Spray Day event. This cooperative effort was complemented by a mapping and inventory project that will help provide information vital to a continuing cooperative effort in the drainage. A Montana Conservation Corps crew assisted Roundtable members in surveying approximately twelve miles of riparian habitat, or about 1,100 acres, in a one week period. The information gathered by the crew will provide essential baseline data to help guide future cooperative actions in the watershed.

### **Upper Teton River Drainage**

#### *Teton River Road Weed Management Area*

Private landowners and agency representatives worked together to successfully complete the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Teton Spray Day. In addition the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Teton Canyon Weed Pull attracted 66 participants to further clean up roadsides and campgrounds of noxious weeds. Weed fighters also partnered with the USFWS and MCC for the 6<sup>th</sup> year to finalize Teton Canyon Road weed control and survey/map weeds on 1100 acres of private land.

### **Blackleaf/Muddy Creek Drainage**

#### *Blackleaf/Muddy Creek Weed Prevention Area*

Last year the Teton County Weed District received funding from the Montana State University Weed Prevention Area (WPA) program to continue a cooperative WPA to formalize weed prevention strategies in the Blackleaf/Muddy Creek drainage. Landowners and agency partners in the drainage have identified increased recreational traffic as one major concern for weed spread in the drainage. This season the Roundtable, Teton County Weed District, and MSU worked together to start a car wash coupon program that is designed to encourage hunters to wash the undercarriages of vehicles before heading into the WPA.

### **Birch Creek Drainage**

#### *5<sup>th</sup> Annual Swift Dam Spray Day*

Landowners and agency partners participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Swift Dam Spray Day. This event is designed to contain a major infestation of spotted knapweed that appeared when Swift Dam was rebuilt in the mid-1960s and is spreading into adjacent public and private lands. This year a formal agreement with the Blackfeet Nation allowed crews to expand work north, past the Reservation boundary. The new collaboration between the Blackfeet Nation and the Roundtable is resulting in more effective weed management along Birch Creek and in lands further north.

### **Two Medicine Drainage**

#### *1<sup>st</sup> Annual Marias Pass Spray Day*

Glacier National Park and the Lewis and Clark National Forest teamed up to plan and execute the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Marias Pass Spray Day on June 30 in consultation with other Roundtable spray day coordinators. About 30 people attended the event that focused on raising awareness about local weed problems and cooperating to effectively manage weeds along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway corridor adjacent to Highway 2.