Columbia River Gorge Aquatic Weed Project
Project Completion Report
Washington State Department of Ecology
Aquatic Weeds Management Fund Grant G140006

June 30, 2015

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Grant Recipient:
Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program

Grant Number:
G140006

Project Title:
Columbia River Gorge Aquatic Weed Project

Project Period:
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2015

Project Summary:

The Columbia River Gorge Aquatic Weed Project is comprised of three elements. The first is the installation of aquatic weed prevention signs at three public boat launches in Skamania County to help prevent the spread of known aquatic weeds to uninfested lakes and water bodies within the region. Skamania County also cooperated with Clark and Klickitat counties to install signs at the Port of Washougal and the boat launch in Bingen.

Secondly, 104 miles of the Columbia River shoreline on the Washington side form the Klickitat River to the Washougal River was inventoried for five aquatic species of concern designated for Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) in the Gorge. Information was collected using mobile Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and integrated into a geodatabase. This information was disseminated to regional partners to assist in vegetation management planning.

Finally, Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program hosted a workshop that provided aquatic weed identification and management tools for biologists, resource managers, planners, lake management areas, and interested public. The workshop offered information on species identification, permitting processes, and integrated aquatic vegetation management plan development.

The goal of this project was to provide information and tools to groups and managers in order to empower their organizations to address aquatic noxious weeds within the Columbia River Gorge region.
Accomplishments/Performances Met:

Task 1 – (Project Administration and Management)

- Management and maintenance of project records
- Development and submittal of invoices
- Submittal of all required performance items

Task 2 – (Project Implementation)

- Aquatic Noxious Weed Prevention

Skamania County procured five aquatic weed prevention signs and supervised installation at Drano Lake, the Wind River boat launch, and the Port of Skamania in Stevenson. Signs were also posted by cooperating agencies at the Port of Washougal/Camas and the Bingen boat launch. Installation permits were not required.
Task 3 – (Inventory of Columbia River Shoreline and Planning)

- Inventory 104 miles of the Columbia River shoreline, river confluences, & islands within the Columbia
- Integrate inventory data into geodatabase and share information with partner organizations
- Create and distribute template additions for inventory species to partners for IAVMP updates

In July 2013, the program staff conducted a survey of 104 miles of the Columbia River shoreline in Washington within Klickitat, Skamania, and Clark counties. The project area started at the mouth of the Klickitat River and continued downstream and included the mouth of the White Salmon River, Drano Lake and the mouth of the Little White Salmon River, the mouth of the Wind River, Rock Creek Cove, the mouth of the Washougal River and the islands on the Washington side of the Columbia. The survey was conducted primarily by boat, but some areas were more closely surveyed by foot. ArcPad software and inventory protocol adopted by Columbia Gorge CWMA members was used to document occurrences of survey target species including flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*) yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), and indigobush (*Amorpha fruticosa*).

Survey inventory data was compiled into a project geodatabase and disseminated to resource management agencies in Washington and Oregon, Clark and Klickitat counties and the Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Area.
Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program developed survey maps and a template for the five target species using the information from the shoreline inventory. These templates can be added to existing Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plans (IAVMP) or can assist in the creation of new plans. The templates have been distributed to resource managers within the project area.

Example of Shoreline Survey Map:
Task 4 – (Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Workshop)

- Create a comprehensive training tool kit for aquatic noxious weeds
- Transfer information to resource managers and interested public within Columbia Gorge regions at a regional workshop
- Transfer created training materials to the DEPARTMENT to share statewide

On April 10, 2014, Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program staff hosted the Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Workshop. The workshop provided the public, non-profit partners, lake management groups, and partnering agencies the information and tools needed for success in aquatic vegetation identification and control. Washington Department of Ecology’s Jenifer Parsons taught attendees about aquatic weeds within the region and shared an overview on their impact and control measures. Skamania County’s Cyndi Soliz provided an overview of Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plans and the development process. An overview of permits and the permitting process was also presented to attendees by Ben Peterson from King County, Washington.

In addition to the three hour training, attendees also received a bag of aquatic resources including laminated weed ID charts, brochures, *An Aquatic Plant Identification Manual for Washington’s Freshwater Plants* published by Washington State Department of Ecology, and a USB flash drive containing the workshop presentations and aquatic vegetation resources.
Challenges to Performance:

Challenges to the overall project included high Columbia River and tributary water levels at the beginning of the survey in the area below the Bonneville Dam. At times, high wind in the Gorge presented minor complications and required flexible planning.

General Comments and Project Results:

Throughout the project area and Columbia Gorge, there are many lakes, rivers, and water bodies with no aquatic noxious weeds present. The majority of aquatic noxious weeds entering the area are located within and transported down the Columbia River. Promoting prevention at the source will prevent damage to the local environment and water quality within the region. Although hard to quantify, displaying the prevention signage at public boat ramps will reinforce the directive of resource managers and will help educate recreationalists about the threat of aquatic noxious weed dispersal and the benefit of prevention.

The Skamania County Noxious Weed Control Program hosted the Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan Workshop for twenty natural resource managers, Lake Club members, and noxious weed technicians. Agencies represented included the US Forest Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Department of Natural Resources, Sanitary District, Port of Skamania, and the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission. Positive reviews showed attendees gained valuable knowledge about aquatic vegetation management and found the workshop a benefit.

Overall, the project goals of increasing awareness of aquatic noxious weeds and sharing information have been successful. Within the Columbia River Gorge region, multiple partnering agencies are now empowered with working knowledge of location and scope of infestations and have the resources they need in order to address their populations of these target species. As a direct result of the Columbia Gorge Aquatic Weed Project, management projects have already been initiated.