

Weed Wars and Woes in the Far North

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The far north end of the state is well known for land features such as: Mount Shasta, Mount Lassen and the Modoc Plateau. A lesser known story synonymous with the far north is that of the State of Jefferson. In 1941 a group of unsatisfied citizens along the southern Oregon and northern California border started a movement to create their own state, the State of Jefferson. The movement reached its peak in November of 1941 when an armed group stopped all traffic along U.S. Route 99 to distribute the group's Proclamation of Independence. These "Jeffersonians" pledged to stop traffic every Thursday there after until they were officially recognized. The movement came to an abrupt halt in December of 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Efforts of all citizens went into the war effort. Today, the State of Jefferson is merely a state of mind.

At present, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has six designated weed districts across the state. Each District has a biologist that is responsible for A-rated noxious weed survey and eradication. A-rated noxious weeds are typically small, incipient populations and therefore are worked toward complete eradication. To this end, State Food and Agriculture Biologists work with County Agricultural Commissioner's Offices, Pest Boards, local Weed Management Area groups, as well ranchers and homeowners.

A large percentage of all A-rated noxious weeds are found in the State of Jefferson. The more typical central and southern California weeds such as: Arundo, pampas grass, sesbania and brooms are not found in the far north. A host of more obscure A-rated weeds that are found in the far north include:

- **Scotch thistle** (*Onopordum acanthium*)
- **Taurian thistle** (*Onopordum tauricum*)
- **Musk thistle** (*Carduus nutans*)
- **Plumeless thistle** (*Carduus acanthoides*)
- **Perennial sowthistle** (*Sonchus arvensis*)
- **Smooth (long-leaf) groundcherry** (*Physalis longifolia*)
- **Yellowspine thistle** (*Cirsium ochrocentrum*)
- **Knapweeds** [spotted (*Centaurea maculosa*), squarrose (*C. squarrosa*), diffuse (*C. diffusa*), and meadow (*C. X moncktonii*)]
- **Dalmatian toadflax** (*Linaria genistifolia*)
- **Leafy spurge** (*Euphorbia esula*)

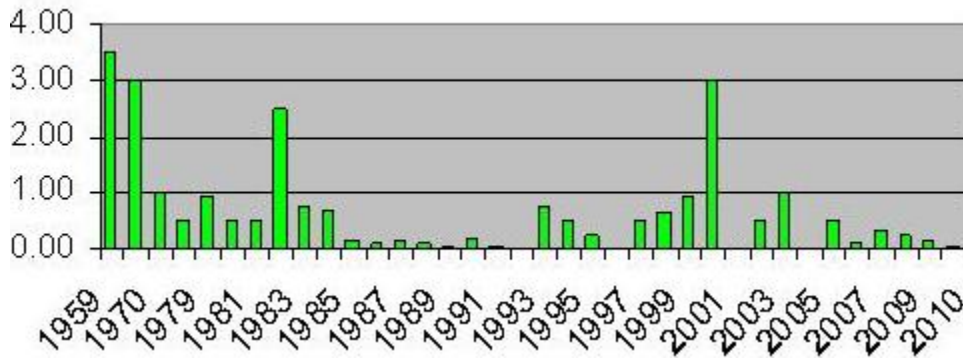


Fig 1. Musk thistle, Taurian thistle, Scotch thistle, Meadow knapweed, and Leafy spurge.

In Modoc and Lassen Counties, yellow starthistle is not widespread and therefore worked toward eradication. Perennial pepperweed is another weed that is still worked toward eradication in the State of Jefferson (currently only 2 populations exist in Susanville and Tule Lake).

Siskiyou County lies in the heart of the State of Jefferson. The County Agricultural Commissioner's Office maintains a data-set of weed acres treated (net acres) and weed acres worked (gross acres) that dates back to 1959. This data-set tells the story and exemplifies the weed wars and woes of an A-rated weed eradication program. Decades of data records for smooth groundcherry and taurian thistle show long stretches of no weeds found, a statewide eradication success story. However, on several occasions from 1959 to present, historic sites were disturbed and long-lived seed banks resulted in resurgence of these A-rated weed sites. The Siskiyou data-set establishes the importance of annual surveys when battling such long-lived seed producers, as is the case with most A-rated noxious weeds.

Figure 1. Taurian Thistle Acres Treated



Prevention is the key and therefore annual survey and detection is a high priority. Once weeds are established however the tool box for A-rated weed control in the far north is fairly simple. Herbicides include: Milestone, Transline, Telar, 2,4-D, and Perspective (Perspective or aminocyclopyrachlor has been used experimentally to date; registration expected in 2011). Milestone has become a great tool particularly in thistle and knapweed control. Milestone has been shown under high-desert conditions to provide season-long control and in some cases, control into the next season. Higher rates of Milestone can be hard on desirable grass species and therefore Transline is still a valuable tool. Telar remains the preferred tool for mustards, namely perennial pepperweed. Telar has also proven effective on thistles later in the season when thistles have already bolted and started branching out; seed development virtually stops upon application. Telar and 2,4-D are the preferred mix mid-to late summer on the tough A-rated noxious weeds like Scotch thistle.