

SAN JUAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

F-I-N-A-L MINUTES

Friday, March 7, 2025

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Meeting Held Remotely Via Teams

and at the Orcas Senior Center, 62 Henry Road, Eastsound, WA 98245

PRESENT: William Rupp, Chair (Area 2); Todd Goldsmith, Vice-Chair (Area 3); James Frampton, Secretary (Area 4); Caitie Blethen, Interim WSU Extension Director (ex officio); Susan Eshelman, Environmental Stewardship; and staff members Michele Smith, Andrew Munson and Jason Ontjes.

ABSENT: Kari McVeigh, Council Liaison (District One); and Paul Andersson, San Juan Islands Conservation District Executive Director.

The Chair brought the meeting to order at 9:09 AM.

1. Review and approval of the meeting minutes of February 7, 2025. Bill moved to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Todd. The February minutes were approved by unanimous consent and will be posted online by staff.
2. Updates from Environmental Stewardship (Susan). Among a broad array of activities, Susan described her work at Orcas Landing, weeding the restoration site monthly and encountering “shiny geranium” there. She and Michele still plan to work on Scot’s broom at the Beaverton Valley Road Operations Center in the near future.

9:30—9:45 AM. Public comment time for visitors. No visitors attended the meeting.

3. Discussion with Paul Andersson of the Conservation District regarding Youth Conservation Corps funding for 2025. Paul did not attend today’s meeting, so Bill read his 02/25/25 email aloud, and a discussion ensued about Paul’s desire for more fiscal assistance from the Board for this summer’s Youth Conservation Corps, since grant funding has allegedly dried up. Generally sympathetic, the Board requested Kari’s input on the matter, which staff will pursue. A budget amendment would need to be presented and approved by Council.

4. News from the field (Michele and Andrew). Michele and Andrew related their latest activities, including a collaboration on San Juan recently with a 'weed flaming' tool. Joined by Chief Noel Monin (Mullis Street Fire Station), they experimentally torched shiny geranium along Cattle Point Road. Andrew said that he had received feedback on an operating plan from various sources, including the County Fire Marshal and Risk Assessment Officer. He is willing to send a draft to the Board members for their feedback.
5. Presentation and discussion of the monthly report (Jason). Jason took questions regarding the monthly report.
6. Land classifications discussion, continued. Jason presented a tentative land classification revision, which included forest lands, non-forest lands and federal/tribal lands as the three classifications. In this scheme, all previously exempted classifications such as DOR-exempt properties or state and county parcels, would be charged under forest or non-forest classifications. Federal and tribal lands would not be assessed. Though the proposal would generate more revenue for the department, he said it was possible that some of the existing contracts would be terminated if the change occurred. Todd said that "contracts come and go" and are not stable sources of revenue. At present, larger land holders "are not sharing the burden of our activities", he said. Instead, he prefers to have a more equitable classification scheme, which would also help with future inflation. Susan added that there may be "pushback" in the public hearing process from SJC Parks and Public Works due to current budget issues. Todd advised staff to seek Kari's input to get a sense of "the temperature in the room".
7. Draft Contracts Discussion and Action for AquaTechnex and YMCA Camp Orkila. After review by the Board, Todd moved to approve the AquaTechnex and YMCA Camp Orkila contracts as written, seconded by Bill. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. Jason will submit the contracts to each party for signatures.
8. Budget status. According to the March 3rd Expenditure Status Report generated on Eden, 8.46% of the department's budget had been spent thus far in 2025. The noxious weed disposal fund still has a balance of \$14,731.49,

with only \$268.51 spent in the first two months of the year. Earlier in the meeting, Todd expressed surprise that three thousand dollars had been sent to the Treasurer's Office to cover the postage of the 2025 English ivy tax inserts.

9. Other business. Sending a recent email to Board members, Andrew proposed funding and staff time for native plant propagation as part of the effort to fight noxious weeds by cultural means. The Board recommended collaboration with growers already doing this sort of work, including the Land Bank's *Salish Seeds* and WSU Extension's Master Gardeners, who sell native plant propagules to local gardeners and restorationists. Andrew believed that "if our program emphasized other alternatives (to herbicides) and management tactics, that would be a good thing", perhaps winning over some of the department's critics. Responding to Susan's question about where these plantings would be used, he reasoned that they could find homes in OPALCO powerline easements, which have undergone a lot of recent ground disturbance due to fire risk management. They could be used to "restore native ecosystems".

10. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 AM.

The Board's next scheduled meeting is on Friday, April 4, 2025.