

SAN JUAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

FINAL MINUTES

Friday, September 5, 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), Kari McVeigh, Council Liaison (District One); Adam Martin, member of the public; Kiara McLaughlin, member of the public; and staff members Michele Smith, Andrew Munson, and Jason Ontjes.

ABSENT: Susan Eshelman, Environmental Stewardship.

The Chair brought the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

1. Review and approval of the meeting minutes of July 18, 2025. Bill moved to approve the July draft minutes as written, seconded by Jim. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. Staff will post the final minutes on the County website.
2. Recommendation of Adam Martin for Board membership Area #5. Adam Martin, a San Juan Island resident and plant ecologist, has applied to join the Board for its vacant seat for Area #5 (North San Juan, Stuart). He currently works for the EcoStudies Institute and has extensive experience managing grasslands and native prairies in our region and has gained an intimate familiarity with both native and non-native plant species in the San Juan Islands. The Board voted unanimously to recommend his candidacy to the Council for approval. Kari was confident that his nomination would “sail through” with her support (she is a fan).
3. Updates from Environmental Stewardship (Susan). Jason read an email from Susan summarizing the past month’s activities in the Environmental Stewardship Department. She wrote that “*Andrew has been working hard to keep the Lopez bioswale free of weeds and overgrown grass, and on Tuesday we put down a compostable weed barrier and 8 cu yd of mulch from Midnight’s Farm. Plants are ordered from Fourth Corner Nursery and we plan*”

to plant in November and December.” She added that her department’s staff is discussing their 4 budgets and “adjusting our revenue needs” as they grapple with the changing landscape for federal and state grants.

9:30—9:45 AM. Public comment time for visitors. Kiara and Adam, both members of the public, made their comments in the course of the board meeting.

4. News from the field (Michele and Andrew). Michele summarized the highlights of her work during July and August, noting her appreciation for volunteer groups like the one on Lopez which has made a real impact on noxious weed control in some of our public areas, particularly county roadsides and power easements. She said that such groups can easily become discouraged if they perceive that “big organizations” are not controlling their weeds. Michele said that public support on San Juan Island continues to be strong for their field work, though our staff is small.
5. Presentation and discussion of the monthly report. Kari gave the Board the grim news about the state of the County’s budget over the next biennium (2026-2027), saying that costs are going up but revenue has remained flat, while inflation eats into spending power (they are limited to raising taxes at 1% at most). If a levy lid lift were proposed, one “would have to make a strong case for it”, she added. To balance the budget over the next two years, the County has to either increase taxes or reduce services, neither a popular choice. The County must decide what its core services are.
6. Sportsman’s Lake update (Jason). Jason reviewed the latest on DCD and the Shoreline Exemption application, which was submitted to Colin Maycock (Planner IV) in August. Todd continued to express concern that the Ecology grant funding will “go away”. Jason will make sure that Joseph Teresi, our Ecology contact, is aware that we are still engaged in this project.
7. Present and Potential Future Weed Calamity in OPALCO’s Recently Logged Powerline Easements without Revegetation. The Board had a long conversation about the negative impact that recent vegetation clearing in OPALCO powerline easements is having, particularly as it regards noxious weeds on Lopez. Todd’s efforts to communicate with OPALCO staff and a board member have not yielded any positive results. Jim had a recent

conversation with the OPALCO Board's District One member, Vince Dauciunas, who was adamant that the utility bore no responsibility for noxious weed control in these settings (the owner is). Todd requested again that Mason Wiley (Deputy PA) or staff get at the root of the responsibility question by finding out if easement agreements specify "vegetation management" on the part of OPALCO, which would make them legally responsible (RCW 17.10.010). Adam offered some potential remedies using native grass seed but said the question of responsibility would have to be resolved first before such projects were likely. Andrew will share photos of the easement impacts and mentioned that OPALCO has an upcoming meeting on September 18th, when the Noxious Weed Board's members, staff and the public can provide input on the subject. With the amount of thistles (bull, Canada) coming up in these cleared areas, "it is going to be a disaster" in future, Todd warned. Kiara said that she had been doing some noxious weed control work on an OPALCO property on San Juan and felt she had a good rapport with one of its staff members there.

8. 2026-2027 Biennial Budget discussion. The discussion of the budget took place during the monthly report summary.
9. Weed disposal policy: reform needed? Jason said the 2025 noxious weed disposal budget was nearly spent and likely to run out no later than the end of September (the program will thus be closed for the year). With repeat customer usage especially on Orcas, he suggested a public hearing at some point to possibly rein in costs. Kiara asked about "efficient" disposal best practices to help reduce the volume of material brought in. Todd said that some of the department's literature addressed that subject and suggested how to do so. The whole plant does not necessarily need to be brought in for effective control.
10. Other business. Staff will let the transfer stations know about closure of the weed disposal program for the year, and Andrew will work with Erin Andrews (Communications Coordinator) on relaying this message to the general public.
11. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 11:07.

The Board's next scheduled meeting is on Friday, October 2, 2025.