

SAN JUAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

F-I-N-A-L MINUTES

Friday, October 10, 2025

10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.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); Adam Martin (Area 5); Susan Eshelman, Environmental Stewardship; Kiara McLaughlin, member of the public; and staff members Michele Smith, Andrew Munson, and Jason Ontjes.

ABSENT: James Frampton, Secretary (Area 4); Caitie Blethen, interim WSU Extension Director (ex officio), Kari McVeigh, Council Liaison (District One).

The Chair brought the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

1. Review and approval of the meeting minutes of September 5, 2025. Bill moved to approve the September minutes, seconded by Todd. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. Staff will post the approved minutes on the County website.
2. Updates from Environmental Stewardship (Susan). Susan informed the Board about the impacts of recent budget challenges to the Environmental Stewardship staff, with recent maneuvers to maintain current staffing levels. The Climate Sustainability Coordinator, due to funding cuts, will take on supplementary work with Clean Water, though the Climate Action Plan is fully funded. Susan touched on the Marine Program, Derelict Vessel Program, National Stormwater Awareness Week, Solid Waste, and recent eDNA and culvert replacement work. A new intern with a filmmaking background is working on Solid Waste and Marine topics. Meanwhile, budget talks continue.

9:30—9:45 AM. Public comment time for visitors.

3. News from the field (Michele and Andrew). Michele recounted two highlights over the past month: collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

during September 22-26 and the “North Forty” neighborhood weed pull event on San Juan. She shared an email from a North Forty resident who praised the Board’s staff (Andrew included) for their help on a large spurge laurel infestation. Andrew was encouraged by its success, believing that “growing capacity for these volunteer groups is a good place to focus our efforts”. He added that native seeds were collected on behalf of the Salish Seeds Project during the USFWS outing, and he continues to work on the Lopez bioswale project with Susan. Andrew plans to update his blog on noxious weeds, noting a recent posting by King County’s Noxious Weeds staff regarding the upkeep of motivation when dealing with noxious weeds.

4. Presentation and discussion of the monthly report (Jason). Jason took questions about the monthly report. Todd praised Public Works’ quick response on roadside wild carrot, which was mowed on Lopez recently. The Sportsman Lake project is awaiting final judgment from the DCD’s Colin Maycock on the Shoreline Exemption Application. Todd suggested checking in with him “at least once a month” to make sure it got done by this winter.
5. OPALCO Draft Letter Discussion (Todd and Andrew). Seeking additional feedback, Andrew shared his latest draft letter to OPALCO regarding the recent large-scale vegetation clearing along its powerline corridors. A discussion ensued about the management recommendations in the letter and whether suggested plant materials (seed) would be “preferably native” or simply non-invasive. The use of local hay or straw to cover disturbed, bare ground could be implemented, though there was some concern about the quality of such material and whether it was “weed-free” (Todd suggested oat straw hay as a clean alternative). With a few minor changes suggested to the letter, Todd made a motion to approve the letter with its “red lines” and send it on (once signed by Chair Rupp) to OPALCO’s Board members and manager, Foster Hildreth. Adam seconded the motion: ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. Todd also recommended that this topic be recommended as an agenda item for OPALCO’s Board at some point in the future as a way to foster discussion, not to “poke them in the eye”.
6. 2026-2027 Biennial Budget discussion. Jason presented the latest news on the state of the County’s budget for 2026-2027, outlining possible increases in revenues for the department (more contract work) and potential cuts if asked

to do so (each department with current expense funding must propose 9.5 to 10% in cuts to Council). Susan mentioned the use of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) money if used to maintain capital projects, such as Bailer Hill Road weed control after culvert replacement. Adam was in favor of increasing our contract work and believed it was most important to protect current staffing levels rather than furloughs or layoffs. Providing landowners with noxious weed control assistance without charge “is core to the mission”, he added. Todd agreed and said staff cuts would be a “self-defeating procedure”, given the difficulty in finding experienced workers with a suitable level of training. He suggested other possible programmatic cuts and again was concerned that the contract work, if increased, might spread staff too thin and make customers unhappy. The Noxious Weed Department is not currently being asked to make any budget cuts, though Jason said it was good to be prepared.

7. Weed disposal 2025 totals and potential policy changes. (Jason) Due to the length of the previous discussion, Jason recommended putting off this item until next meeting, as the present meeting was nearing its end.
8. Other business. Andrew suggested the possibility of giving up one Fleet Services vehicle to save costs, suggesting he and Michele could share on a week-to-week basis. Todd thought it a good idea but stressed the need for flexibility only if the department had to “cut to the bone” on its budget.
9. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 11:59 AM.

The Board’s next scheduled meeting is on Friday, November 7, 2025.