

SAN JUAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

F-I-N-A-L MINUTES

Friday, December 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: Bill Rupp, Area 2 (Chair); Todd Goldsmith, Area 3 (Vice-Chair); Jim Frampton, Area 4 (Secretary); Adam Martin, Area 5; Caitie Blethen, ex officio (WSU Extension Director); Kari McVeigh, Council liaison (District 1); Susan Eshelman (Environmental Services); Ed Lago (OPALCO), Rinda McGarry (Orcas Recycling Services), Asa Kinney (Lopez Solid Waste), Jane Wentworth (San Juan resident), Laura Derevensky (San Juan resident), Cyndi Smith (Lopez resident), and staff members Michele Smith, Andrew Munson, and Jason Ontjes.

ABSENT: None.

Chairman Rupp brought the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

1. Review and approval of the meeting minutes of October 3 and November 7, 2025. Bill moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Todd. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. The approved minutes will be posted on the County website.
2. Nomination and Election of 2026 Officers. Andrew nominated Adam Martin for Chair, seconded by Bill. ALL AYES. Adam accepted the position. Todd offered to be Vice-Chair again, ALL AYES. Jim Frampton offered to serve as Secretary, seconded by Bill. ALL AYES. The new officers will begin their one-year terms in January 2026.
3. Updates from Environmental Stewardship (Susan). Environmental Stewardship has six different components: Clean Water, Marine Resources, Solid Waste, Cultural Resources, Climate and Sustainability. With recent cuts of about 70% of its budget, Environmental Stewardship is actively seeking out grant funding to make up for the shortfall. They currently have ten staff members. As a GIS

specialist, Susan has recently worked on mapping eDNA data for salmonids, avian species and other terrestrial life in the counties' watersheds. She is also involved in mapping creosote pilings after a DNR assessment. Her department collaborates with others (such as Public Works) on projects that are often 'ground-disturbing', such as the Lopez bioswale project that Noxious Weeds' staff has assisted with in recent months.

4. Updates from WSU Extension (Caitie). Caitie said that the upcoming Ag Summit will be held Feb. 27-28 on San Juan Island. Jenny Glass of WSU Extension will be there and has offered pesticide credits for attendance of her workshop. The Master Gardener newsletter, which recently featured an article on English holly and another on hedge bindweed, is sent out to around 600 recipients. The WSU Extension native plant sale will launch in January with volunteer labor.

9:30—9:45 AM. Public comment time for visitors. Members of the public (Laura Derevensky and Jane Wentworth of San Juan Island, and Cyndi Smith of Lopez), made comments about recent vegetation management impacts in OPALCO's powerline easements, which have been accompanied by the emergence of noxious and other weeds. Cyndi, who mentioned Richardson Road as an example on Lopez, was encouraged by OPALCO's presence at the meeting and thankful that the Board was "holding them accountable". It would be so much nicer if we didn't allow the weeds to get established, she added. Laura and Jane cited examples of impacts at MacGinitie Road, Bailer Hill and False Bay Drive on San Juan.

5. Weed disposal discussion with guests (transfer station operators). Asa Kinney of the Lopez Solid Waste Disposal District and Rinda McGarry of Orcas Recycling Services attended the meeting to offer feedback on the noxious weed disposal policy (2022). On Orcas, Rinda said that one of the problems involved what she believed were recently purchased large properties whose owners are hiring landscape maintenance crews to bring in trailers of noxious weeds, but paying nothing for disposal as they keep below the 300-pound "free" threshold. She said they come in about once per week. Adam felt that the entitlement of contractors to use this program "didn't meet the spirit of what we are trying to do" and that it was really meant for individual landowners. Michele expressed concern that excluding contractors would

discourage use of the program by those property owners, and it would put additional burden on transfer station employees. Andrew asked if the program were to go away, would people be less likely to control their noxious weeds, and pointed out the environmental costs of landfilling this organic matter. Todd said that the Board has wanted staff to offer training to contractors and the general public about proper noxious weed disposal and weed identification. The weed disposal program costs \$15,000 per year and ran out of money in early October in 2025. A future meeting on the subject was recommended, with possible collaboration with the Native Plant Society. Rinda stressed the importance of outreach and acknowledged the large effort needed to change the public's behavior, as with recycling.

6. OPALCO discussion with Russell Guerry and Ed Lago. OPALCO's Ed Lago (Engineering Technician) met with the Board to learn about its views on powerline corridor vegetation management and its suggested improvements to reduce the presence of noxious weeds. Laura Derevensky, a resident of San Juan, listed a few of the weed species she has noticed following recent mowing and cutting in powerline easements, and noted that one area that had been seeded afterwards had relatively few weeds emerging. Jane Wentworth, a former King County Noxious Weed Board manager and also a San Juan resident, said she had reached out to others on possible fast-growing native seed mixes that might be suitable for weed suppression and that could potentially become part of a standardized response each time these areas are disturbed. The group discussed how altering mow height (perhaps to 3 to 4 inches?) could lessen site disturbance while still allowing OPALCO's equipment to travel unimpeded in these corridors. In future, Ed wants to utilize the expertise of Jane and the Board's Adam Martin (a restoration ecologist) on potential revegetation solutions and expressed his desire to "do the right thing". Board member, Jim Frampton, was encouraged by the potential change in OPALCO operations that might lead to greater use of seed mixes while shifting the burden of weed control in these corridors.
7. News from the field (Andrew and Michele). After attending a biocontrol workshop recently, Andrew suggested that the Board contribute more funds to the WSU Extension Integrated Weed Control Project, which now receives \$1,500 per year from the department's budget. He said that these "silent

heroes of invasive plant control” were of interest to the public and could be used to engage people, including our volunteers. The IWCP has undergone severe budget cuts of late. This coming Tuesday (Dec. 9), Andrew’s “weed wrestlers” will come together on Lopez to work on Scot’s broom along the roadside (Fisherman Bay Road and Channel Road). Michele said the cool, wet weather was a good time to evaluate the effectiveness of past work and plan projects for the following spring. She recounted her recent work with Andrew and Kiara McLaughlin (a private contractor) on OPALCO powerline easements in the Turn Point and Pear Point Road area. She also recently collaborated with staff of the SJC Land Bank on control of old man’s beard (*Clematis vitalba*) at their Cady Mountain Preserve.

8. Presentation and discussion of the monthly report (Jason). There were no questions about the monthly report, so the monthly report was not discussed.
9. Budget update. According to the Expenditure Status Report printed on December 3rd, only 50.24% of the department’s budget has been spent so far in 2025. Jason said that there is normally a lag time of about a week for these data to be updated by the Auditor’s Office.
10. Other business. No other business was discussed.
11. Adjournment. Chairman Rupp adjourned the meeting at 10:55 AM.

The Board’s next scheduled meeting is on Friday, January 2, 2026.