

SAN JUAN COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

F-I-N-A-L MINUTES

Friday, June 5, 2026

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Meeting held on Teams and in person at 531 Fern Street, Eastsound, WA

PRESENT: Adam Martin (Chair), Area 5; Todd Goldsmith (Vice-Chair) Area 3; Jim Frampton (Secretary), Area 4; Bill Rupp, Area 2; Caitie Blethen (WSU Extension Director) ex officio; Jane Fuller, (Council Liaison) District 3; Susan Eshelman (Environmental Stewardship); Kiara McLaughlin, a member of the public; and staff members Michele Smith, Andrew Munson, and Jason Ontjes.

Meeting brought to order at 9:01 AM.

1. Review and approval of the meeting minutes of April 3, 2026 (9-9:05 AM). Adam moved to approve the revised minutes, seconded by Bill. Jim found an error requiring change (“agenda” to “minutes”). ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED. A copy of the final minutes will be posted online.
2. Updates from WSU Extension: Caitie (9:05-9:10). Caitie said that she just got back from a statewide Master Gardener conference in Puyallup. There has been nothing new to report from the WSU Leadership Team, though WSU is looking into streamlining how County Extension directors manage their programs (a pilot program is getting underway in other portions of the state). In preparation for the County Fair this August, 4-H participants recently held a “weigh-in” for animals at the fairgrounds. The Ag Program is currently working on a few grants to provide additional funding. Master Gardeners have been active with food gardening on San Juan and outreach.
3. Updates from Environmental Stewardship: Susan (9:10-9:15). Susan gave the Board a broad review of recent Environmental Stewardship activities, including reports on solid waste (shrink wrap recycling), Clean Water Advisory Committee (looking for new members), the ongoing budget situation (grants and fringe benefits), the Climate Action Plan (due by June 12th), and Marine Resources (Frankie Robertson’s recent trip to D.C. to lobby for Puget Sound Marine Initiative funding). She said the dry weather had led to unexpected watering for Oregon grape plantings at the Beaverton Valley property, a site

she has helped to maintain with Michele's help.

4. Fleet Services Discussion with John Roach (9:15-9:30). SJC Fleet Services Director, John Roach, gave the Board a brief history of how expenses were managed for the department's vehicles in the past several years, with replacement costs and overhead underfunded for inflation until the past year. Of the total charge for 2026 (\$25,868), about \$9,000 per vehicle went to overhead costs, while the remainder is for replacement once the vehicles are retired (fuel is a separate charge). Jim asked if that retirement date could be delayed in order to reduce costs, but John cautioned that if vehicles are kept too long, they do not retain much residual value (salvage only) and are harder and more expensive to maintain as they age (parts may be harder to find). Another advantage of earlier trade-in is that new vehicles have more safety features and are more fuel-efficient, like the 2024 Maverick (the 2017 Nissan Frontier is due to be sold in 2028). With new labor data from their staff, Fleet Services has reduced the estimated 2027 overhead costs for maintaining these vehicles at around \$4,000 each, down from \$9,000 each in 2026. He said that because he does not have any control over the Noxious Weed Department's budget, he could not dictate whether or not it should continue paying for replacement or even overhead itself. Council had given each department the opportunity to opt out of the lease program entirely. The Fleet will continue to adjust costs in future iterations as the 2027 budget process continues. The Land Bank, he noted, will stay in the lease program in 2027 (overhead costs for maintenance) but will manage future replacement costs on its own.

9:30—10:00 AM. Public Comment Period. Kiara McLaughlin, a member of the public, expressed concern about the very dry conditions on San Juan Island and the Scot's broom that she and Michele have recently cut or pulled in OPALCO easements. She appreciated Susan's summary of Environmental Stewardship's activities of late.

5. News from the field: Michele/Andrew (10:00-10:10). Andrew has been focusing on Scot's broom and poison hemlock of late, finding a lot of the latter on septic drainfields. With Andrew's maintenance of the past year, the Lopez Village bioswale at the farmer's market is looking good and "filling in nicely" with the native plantings there. He did not attend the recent "Ag Retreat" in Friday Harbor but said that he listened in on a May 20th Agriculture Resource

Committee meeting in which Kari McVeigh, the ARC's Council liaison, cautioned against "false hopes" of keeping the ARC Coordinator position funded, as the County is having to consider cuts to "non-essential" positions in the County to close the budget gap for 2027 (Caitie said WSU Extension is also facing this situation with its own staff). On San Juan, Michele continues to work with Kiara on OPALCO contract work, most recently clearing Scot's broom and spurge laurel from powerline easements, with positive property owner feedback in those areas. She described some of the recent work with slenderflower thistle on San Juan, working with a local property owner to clear it from the roadside along her parcel. All told, it is the largest such infestation that she has encountered, and its source is still undetermined. Caitie suggested posting a link on slenderflower thistle with the Master Gardeners. Adam would like this infestation mapped with GIS and added that Public Works' road equipment should also be checked.

6. Presentation and discussion of the monthly report: Jason (10:10-10:20). Jason went over the monthly report and took questions from the Board. Adam said that there is a different native hawthorn, Suksdorf's, that is similar in appearance to Douglas' hawthorn. Both are in bloom right now on San Juan Island. Todd asked about the poison hemlock situation at a particular Lopez property, whose owner reached out to him about possible assistance in controlling it. He would like Andrew to follow up with an offer to consult.
7. Budget update: Jason (10:20--10:25). Based on the Expenditure Status Report from June 1st, Jason said that 24.9% of the department's budget has been spent so far. A discussion of the GIS interdepartmental charge (\$6,229 for 2026) took place, with questions on whether it was needed or even utilized for Noxious Weeds. Jane said there is currently a \$4 million deficit in the County budget, and staffing cuts will be necessary. She felt it was important for the County to demonstrate the use of GIS services from this budget if the costs were to be justified. A future board meeting with Information Services Director, Tony Harrell, was suggested. Adam stressed the importance of gathering spatial data via GIS as a way to track noxious weed populations and help determine "where we ought to be going". Susan, who is herself a GIS technician, said that Environmental Stewardship had outsourced some of their GIS work, since IT's GIS staff was too small to take on analytical tasks. Adam suggested exploring the topic further in the next Board meeting.

On the subject of Fleet Services, Todd cautioned against “trying to chase our tail on costs”, suggesting it would take more time than it is worth based on his professional experience. Jane commented that John Roach (Fleet Director) was due to speak before Council in the next week, so it would be helpful to give him some indication of whether the Noxious Weed Department will remain in the fleet for his 2027 budget preparation (Jason needs to seek further clarity on costs from John). In the Council’s effort to reduce financial burdens for these maintenance costs, she said that the “fleet conundrum” will have to be sorted out this year. Todd said the Noxious Weed Department would have to consider the potential cost of retaining its current vehicles if it decided to leave, with residual value of those vehicles to consider if a buy-back were required. Jane felt that John’s estimates of repair labor costs for shop time (\$192/hour) were not out of line with her experience on Lopez. Adam offered to table the decision for now.

8. Discussion on monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly meetings. The Board did not make any final decision on the frequency of its meetings (monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly) due to the occurrence of certain upcoming events (the County Fair, annual tax insert). They will postpone the vote on this topic until the July meeting.
9. Other business. There was discussion about the need to recruit new board members (Jim and Bill are leaving the Board soon) and how to accomplish that. Susan mentioned the Grange Hall on San Juan, and Todd suggested the Agriculture Resource Committee, as Andrew is a participant. Caitie mentioned that WSU Extension keeps a farmer email list as well. Adam would like to bring up the budget items (Fleet and IT) during the next Board meeting in July (the 10th). He would also like more discussion and analysis on the use of GIS by the Board’s staff. Jason offered to arrange a meeting with the Department of Agriculture’s Landan Udo, who oversees GIS collection of noxious weed data for the state and assists county noxious weed boards in that endeavor.
10. Adjournment. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:55 AM.