


# WYO-BIO

## Biocontrol News and Views for Wyoming

Volume 7, Number 3  Spring 2007

### DALMATION TOADFLAX - 2006 UPDATE

*Josh Shorb, Assistant Supervisor, Park County Weed & Pest*

This past year was the year the Park County Weed & Pest has been waiting for, for a long time. *Mecinus janthinus* has been present on the upper Southfork of the Shoshone River since 1997. Since that time, we have had good establishment at most of the sites where we have released them. We have gone to other counties to collect *Mecinus*, received *Mecinus* from APHIS and UW, and have been purchasing them for the past two years. Marge Rayda has conducted a large scale study looking at control levels using variable levels of Plateau and *Mecinus*. This past June, we found a large scale impact on Dalmatian toadflax. Finally! We have

found several craters in the past, and even one that approached 10 acres in size. But nothing the size of what we found this past year. It's my belief that, in part, the substantial impact was drought related, but we found a lot of stunted, wilted, and non-vigorous toadflax in the Cabin Creek area. We also found this phenomenon occurring at sites that we previously believed failed. The last seven years have seen a lot of progress in our efforts to control Dalmatian toadflax on the Southfork. Since the time when we received an emergency use exemption for the use of Plateau, our program has really taken off. The landowners in this area finally allowed



*Photos by Walt Hartung of the west side of the Cabin Creek Burn area looking to the Northeast. Photo on left is before treatment, taken in 2002. Photo on right is after treatment, taken in 2006.*

themselves to be convinced that we had a safe and effective herbicide that minimized off-target damage. From that point, we initiated a massive spray program aimed at reducing toadflax at and around transportation corridors-rivers, creeks, trails, trailheads, roads, and private lands. At the same time, we were able to get our hands on more *Mecinus* and started establishing them in some high density areas in a variety of habitats. As we started making headway with our spray program, our bugs weren't experiencing the same levels of

### Inside Wyo-Bio

Dalmation Toadflax 2006 Update .....	1
NIWAW Bears Fruit for Biological Control .....	2
Availability of Weed Bio-Controls .....	2
What's Going on with Russian Knapweed .....	3
Mailing List Updates .....	4

*continued on page 4*

# NIWAW BEARS FRUIT FOR BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Lars Baker, Supervisor, Fremont County Weed & Pest Control District

I was fortunate to be able to attend National Weeds Awareness Week in Washington, D.C. the week of February 25<sup>th</sup>. While there, I attended a briefing given by Erich Rudyj, a policy analyst at USDA/APHIS/PPQ. What a refreshing meeting! Mr. Rudyj outlined changes to the permitting process for biological control agents. These changes are largely a result of persistent efforts by Jim Larson, who serves as North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) President and Stillwater County, Montana Weed Supervisor.

Jim has been meeting with APHIS in regard to the permitting process for the last five years. The message that the process was broken has finally reached the ears of upper level officials; because of this, a policy review was conducted. This review resulted in the establishment of a Board of Advisors that include some old friends to biocontrol of weeds, Del Delfosse and Bob Nowierski. Both Del and Bob have been working internally for these changes. Del circulated a document called the "Strawman" over a decade ago.

The Strawman outlined improved rules for biological control regulation patterned after the Australian process. I commented on it favorably at the time, but it never went anywhere. Bob Nowierski was aggressively involved in biocontrol at Montana State University and I am sure was frustrated by the permitting process. New rules are being

drafted and are scheduled for publication in August of 2007. These changes signal a major shift in the treatment of biological control agents by APHIS. Just for example, the proposed rules call biological control agents "regulated beneficial organisms" instead of "plant pests".

For the past few years, APHIS has been working on new rules for hand carrying agents into the US. Those rules were finally adopted, but changed little other than to additionally complicate the process and guarantee that the imported agents were DOA and ready for pinning. Permitting almost slowed to a stop during that time while they awaited "new rules". I am concerned that the agency response to this rule making effort will be to stop working on permits during the process. Assuming that we see the new rules on schedule in August, there will be many months of review, scoping meetings across the country and no doubt extensions to the comment period as affected parties digest the impact to their area of interest. So, it could be a year before there are new rules controlling the process. That may mean that we will see no new permits during the process. I asked Erich Rudyj about that possibility and he thought there would be no delay of permitting during the comment period.

My hope is that the pending changes, which may not be in place for a year or more, will help to expedite the process for agents already in the pipeline. Our

*continued on page 3*

## Availability of Weed Biological Control Insects in Wyoming

The Wyoming Weed & Pest Control Districts expect to have the following biological control agents available for redistribution in 2007. Feel free to contact the counties that have the agents that you need. Keep in mind that insect emergence and numbers depend on a number of factors and can be unpredictable.

WEED	INSECT AGENT	COUNTY	DATES AVAILABLE	CONTACT PERSON	PHONE	EMAIL
Leafy Spurge	<i>Aphthona</i> species	Crook	Jun - July	Dick Sacket	283-2375	ccwp@vcn.com
	<i>Aphthona</i> species	Campbell	June - July	Allen Mooney	682-4369	alm76@ccg.co.campbell.wy.us
	<i>Spurgia esulae</i>	Fremont	May- June	Nancy Webber	332-1052	nancy@fcwp.org
	<i>Aphthona</i> species	Fremont	Jun - July	Nancy Webber	332-1052	nancy@fcwp.org
Dalmation Toadflax	<i>Mecinus janthinus</i>	Fremont	May - June	Nancy Webber	332-1052	nancy@fcwp.org
	<i>Mecinus janthinus</i>	Park	June	Josh Shorb	754-8884	pcwp@wir.net
Spotted Knapweed	<i>Cyphocleonus achates</i>	Johnson	July	Rod Litzel	684-5715	jcweedpest@ven.com
	<i>Agapeta zoegana</i>	Johnson	July	Rod Litzel	684-5715	jcweedpest@ven.com
Diffuse Knapweed	<i>Larinus minutus</i>	Johnson	July	Rod Litzel	684-5715	jcweedpest@ven.com
Canada Thistle	<i>Urophora cardui</i>	Fremont	Sept-Oct	Nancy Webber	332-1052	nancy@fcwp.org
	<i>Ceutorhynchus litura</i>	Goshen	July - August	Steve Brill	532-3713	gocoweeds@earthlink.net
	<i>Ceutorhynchus litura</i>	Teton	August	Aaron Foster	733-8419	afoster@tcweed.org
Musk Thistle	<i>T. horridus</i>	Goshen	June - July	Steve Brill	532-3713	gocoweeds@earthlink.net

meetings with Wyoming legislators and their staffs included a plea to recognize APHIS for this positive response to our concerns and to encourage them to move forward in this new spirit to the degree current rules allow. These new rules will certainly increase the predictability and transparency of the permitting process while maintaining protections for the nation's ecological resources.

I also spent a few minutes with Rita Beard, who heads up weed control efforts or programs for the National Park Service. She asserts that as a result of the efforts of NIWAW, and the Intermountain Noxious Weed Advisory Council (INWAC) among others, most federal agencies understand the invasive species issue and are looking to increase weed control funding in significant ways. Yet, funding increases for weed control are not possible without cuts to other department or agency programs because budget allocations are barely keeping up with inflation. I also note that they have closed the books on the 2007 budget process and are now thinking about 2008 spending.

Hurricanes, forest fires, and military conflicts always seem to trump weeds for the extra cash. The Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act was signed into law in 2004 and will sunset in 2009. This law authorizes weed control spending on public land, but it has never been funded. Unless that legislation is funded in the next few months, the work that went into getting it passed will have been for naught.

NIWAW has played a significant role in elevating weed issues in importance since it was first organized. Only consistent, long term pressure brings change in our nation's capital, which high lights the need for Wyoming to continue to support these efforts for many years to come. There remains a lot of work to do before we can establish biological control as the base technology for invasive weed management in the United States and see the federal funding required to mitigate the impact weeds on public lands.

## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH RUSSIAN KNAPWEED BIOLOGICAL CONTROL?

Tim Collier, College of Agriculture, University of Wyoming

The road to Russian knapweed biological control has been a long one – twenty years and counting. This year some steps forward have been made but we have further to go before field releases of new agents. As many of you know, one of the agents that CABI Switzerland has been working on is an Asian gall wasp (*Aulacidea acroptilonica*). The good news is that gall wasp is actually already being successfully reared in quarantine at the USDA APHIS Quarantine in Mission, Texas, and the Agri-Canada Quarantine in Lethbridge, Canada. The initial difficulties with parasites and low emergence of adults from galls has been overcome, so gall wasps should be available in good numbers for field release when that time comes. The second major development in Russian knapweed biological control is that the advisory group for USDA (TAG) has commented on the petition for the gall wasp that Urs Schaffner, Jeff Littlefield and I submitted last year. Many of the comments were favorable, however, some were not so favorable. There are now two more steps to go. We need to respond to the half-dozen criticisms of the petition by TAG members, and then, if TAG recommends release, prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the gall wasp. This, we hope, will lead to final approval for release by USDA APHIS. The third step forward in Russian knapweed biological control is that the petition for another new agent was submitted in March. This petition is for a gall midge (*Jaapiella ivannikovii*). Like the gall wasp, the midge is highly specific to Russian knapweed, so we hope that this agent will be approved in the near future. Realistically, we are probably a few years away from releasing biological control agents for Russian knapweed. Nevertheless, there are a few agents on the horizon, and prospects for biological control seem to be moving in the right direction.

### ABOUT WYO-BIO

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Published four times yearly, **Wyo-Bio** is intended to keep individuals concerned with weed control in Wyoming informed about the latest in biological control news. Free to interested parties, **Wyo-Bio** includes upcoming insect collection dates, the latest finds in biological control research, and other news as it relates to biological control in Wyoming.

**Wyo-Bio** is a joint effort of the Wyoming Biological Control Steering Committee, the University of Wyoming Department of Renewable Resources and the Wyoming Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAP) program.

Suggestions on content and submissions for features are welcome at the above addresses.

continued from page 1

success. They established in most every place we released them, but never to outbreak levels. At the same time we initiated our horsepack spraying program. Reducing and eliminating many satellite and back country infestations. We took *Mecinus* into remote areas using pack horses. We also received a boost from Marge's project as she released nearly 5,000 *Mecinus* in her project area.

As you drive up the Southfork today, there isn't nearly as much toadflax around as there once was. We have contained and reduced the spread of toadflax by focusing our spray programs in those areas. We feel a lot better about our backcountry infestations than a few years ago. The Park County biocontrol program is finally reaching the levels where they need to be to eliminate toadflax on a landscape level. We will continue to spray a lot of toadflax with herbicides with more of an emphasis on using our horsepack units to access remote and rugged infestations. It is our hope that the sites will be at the levels they were last year and we will have collectable sites available for other Wyoming counties.

## Wyo-Bio Mailing List

If you know of anyone who you think would like to receive a Wyo-Bio Newsletter and has not, please email the information to [Roz@fcwp.org](mailto:Roz@fcwp.org). If you would like to be removed from the mailing list you can write to the Fremont County Weed & Pest Control District, 450 North 2nd Street, Room 315, Lander, Wyoming, 82520-2371 or email your request to the above email address and your name will be removed. Anyone interested in receiving the Wyo-Bio newsletter electronically in a .pdf format please forward your email address. Check out our website at [www.fcwp.org](http://www.fcwp.org), each issue of the newsletter will be posted in full color on the website at the link [www.fcwp.org/wyobio](http://www.fcwp.org/wyobio).



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