



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/22/2021

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File #: 21-747

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Agricultural Commissioner

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**SUBJECT:**

Approval of Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA, known as the 2021 Noxious Weed Program with the California Department of Food and Agriculture in the amount of \$64,000

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt a finding of Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15304/Class 4 and 15308/Class 8;
2. Approve Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA, known as the 2021 Noxious Weed Program with the California Department of Food and Agriculture;
3. Authorize the Chair to sign the original agreement, then return the signed original to the Agricultural Commissioner's Office for further processing; and
4. Grant a waiver from the provisions of the Nuclear Free Ordinance.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Agricultural Commissioner 1100-261

**DISCUSSION:**

The request for a waiver from the provisions of the Nuclear Free Ordinance is requested since the State of California will not modify its cooperative agreements to accommodate local ordinances. In January 2020, CDFA began offering weed control funding to County Agricultural Commissioners through a weed grant program made possible through the Governor's Biodiversity Noxious Weed Management Initiative. The 2021 Noxious Weed Grant Program (NWGP) continues CDFA's support of cooperative and comprehensive efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive weed species.

Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA provides a second year of funding to Humboldt County to continue weed control projects begun during the first year of the grant program in 2020. The agreement provides \$64,000 to Humboldt County for work performed from Jan. 15, 2021 to June 30, 2023. The NWGP supports ongoing invasive weed control projects that result in permanent and measurable work mapping, planning, and reducing populations of invasive weeds. Approval of this agreement will provide funding to perform the following weed control projects:

**Knotweeds and Shiny Geranium:** In 2015, the Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) sponsored the North Coast Knotweed Eradication Project which was approved by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and funded through their Habitat Restoration Grant Program. Under the project, RCAA, the agriculture department and other members of the Humboldt County Weed Management Group are working cooperatively to treat knotweed populations that occur in Humboldt County. Knotweeds are invasive weeds native to Asia and arrived in North America in the 19th century as an ornamental plant. Unchecked, knotweeds can spread very quickly and form dense colonies that out-compete native vegetation by blocking sunlight and robbing nutrients and water from the soil. Knotweeds pose the greatest threat to riparian areas where they spread and significantly impact waterways in a variety of ways. Knotweeds in river systems can eventually impede water flow, displace streamside vegetation and lead to increased risk of flooding. Knotweeds can also cause damage to man-made structures such as bridge abutments, roads, sidewalks, parking lots, and building foundations. Three species of invasive knotweeds have become established in Humboldt County (Japanese Knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, Giant Knotweed *Reynoutria sachalinensis*, and Himalayan Knotweed *Polygonum polystachyum*).

In 2021, the agriculture department will continue working with RCAA on the Knotweed Eradication Project. Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA will include 17 newly identified populations of knotweed not covered by the original WCB grant. The agriculture department will treat up to 13 sites where knotweed infestations occur on County property. At most sites, infestations are limited in size to a few plants and occur in the public right-of-way adjacent to County roads. The largest single infestation occurs at the County airport and covers an area of approximately 1,000 square feet. Applications of herbicide made to sites by agriculture department staff will be done following terrestrial weed control program best management practices. Knotweeds will be treated with applications of Arsenal (Imazapyr, U.S. EPA Registration No. 241-346) applied directly to knotweed plants during the late summer when seasonal senescence of vegetation increases translocation of herbicide to the roots and treatment efficacy is increased as a result. Agriculture department staff who are responsible for pesticide applications are licensed in pesticide regulation by CDFA and considered trained for the purposes performing regulatory weed control applications. Post treatment, all sites will be surveyed to assess treatment effectiveness and to identify any new or previously undiscovered knotweed locations. The agriculture department receives no funding from the WCB Knotweed Project Grant. Agriculture department activities performed under the project are offered to RCAA as a cost share contribution. The WCB filed a notice of exemption for the project including portions of the project covered by the County since 2015.

RCAA's knotweed eradication project also includes plans to control Shiny Geranium *Geranium lucidum*. Shiny Geranium is a low-growing annual ornamental of Eurasian origin that has escaped from gardens into wildlands. Shiny Geranium is of limited distribution in Humboldt County (5 total documented sites, 2 of which occur in County rights-of-way). Agriculture department efforts to control Shiny Geranium will focus on populations that occur in County-rights of-way using manual methods including hand removal and mulching.

**Tansy Ragwort:** Tansy Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* is an invasive biennial weed native to Europe which is locally common in widely scattered locations around Humboldt County. Tansy can be toxic to

livestock if ingested and will cause illness and death. Tansy is commonly found in pastures and along roads and trails. The largest populations of Tansy occur in the Bear River Valley, an area important to the livestock industry. Another smaller population of concern occurs on Woodley Island in Humboldt Bay. The agriculture department has sought to establish self-sustaining populations of two biological control organisms which feed exclusively on Tansy. These two species from different insect families (Tansy Flea Beetle *Longitarsus jacobaeae*, and Cinnabar Moth *Tyria jacobaeae*) feed on different plant parts which reduces and prevents growth, development and reproduction of Tansy plants. Both insect species have been widely used in the western United States for decades to control Tansy and are already present in isolated populations in Humboldt County. Agriculture department staff will make collections from self-sustaining populations in Del Norte County for release in Humboldt with the goal of reducing populations below economic levels using bio-control insects. Success collecting Tansy biocontrol flea-beetles is highly dependent upon weather conditions during the growing season with best conditions occurring after the first late summer or early fall rains.

**Spotted Knapweed:** Spotted Knapweed *Centaurea maculosa*, is a European invasive that threatens wildlife habitat, pastures, and grasslands. Spotted Knapweed is a CDFA “A” rated noxious weed. The agriculture department has identified widely dispersed populations of Spotted Knapweed along an approximately 4.5-mile stretch of the Mad River beginning 3 miles upstream of the Mad River Fish Hatchery and continuing downstream to Blue Lake. Each year agriculture department staff survey the Mad River downstream from the original infestation removing Knapweed and other invasive weed species. Manually removed weeds will be bagged and heat treated prior to disposal.

**Reporting:** The agriculture department will submit a first progress report to CDFA on Sept. 15 including visual representations of the project’s progress. Final project reports to CDFA are required 30 days after completion and no later than July 31, 2023.

**Environmental:** Approval of the agreement is not a project for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to section 15304 of the CEQA Guidelines, Minor Alterations to land, because the invasive plant removal activities include minor public and private alterations to land which do not include the removal of mature, healthy trees. In addition, the activities are not a project for purposes of CEQA pursuant to section 15308 of CEQA Guidelines, because the agreement involves restoration, enhancement, and protection of the environment by a regulatory agency pursuant to state and local ordinances. Furthermore, none of the exemptions set forth in CEQA Guideline 15300.2 apply to the proposed project.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA provides \$64,000 in funding for invasive weed control projects approved under the agreement from January 15, 2021 and June 30, 2023. There is no net cost to Humboldt County for projects approved under the agreement. All costs associated with the NWGP are billed to CDFA on a quarterly basis and payment is made in arrears to Humboldt County and received by the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office (budget unit 1100-261). Due to pandemic-related impacts to state-wide weed control projects in 2020, CDFA informed counties it will roll-over unexpended funds from the 2020 grant. Humboldt County’s roll-over amount totals \$23,131. Revenue and expenditure accounts to support department activities supported by the FY 2020-21 NWGP were

previously funded.

**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:**

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by enforcing laws and regulations to protect residents.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

CDFA

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Board discretion

**ATTACHMENTS:**

One complete Cooperative Agreement No. 20-0971-000-SA

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Board Order No.:

Meeting of:

File No.: