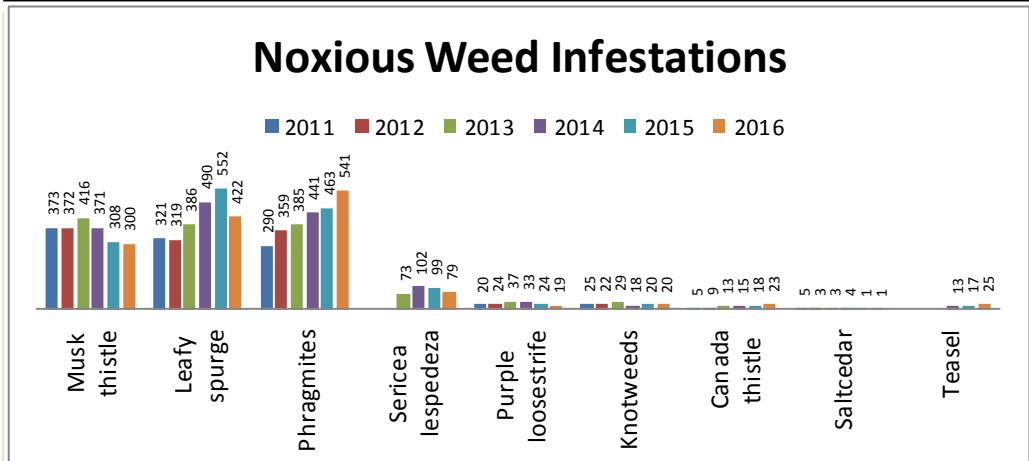


Lancaster County Weed Control – City of Lincoln Weed Abatement

2016 Combined Weed Program Review

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“Our mission is to stop the spread of new invasives before they get a strong foothold in Lancaster County”

Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) continues to be the main focus of invasive weed control in Lancaster County. The earlier the landowner can start an aggressive effort to control infestations, the better chance they have to eradicate the problem. Our mission is to stop the spread of new invasives before they get a strong foothold in Lancaster County, as well as aggressively manage the invasives that already exist. Cutleaf and common teasel were added as

noxious weeds in Lancaster County because of the aggressive nature of the plant. It has the ability to spread rapidly and cause economic loss for property owners. Our inspectors have already documented 25 locations and aggressive treatment is underway. Canada thistle, phragmites, and teasel all saw increases this year, while musk thistle, leafy spurge, purple loosestrife and sericea lespedeza infestations decreased. No piece of land is safe

from noxious weeds. They are found wherever they're able to establish a root system. In 2016, our inspectors documented 1,430 sites infested with noxious weeds. 432 of those sites were located within Lincoln city limits. Due to their introduction as ornamentals saltcedar, purple loosestrife and knotweed are more commonly found in the city than rural areas in Lancaster County. Saltcedar has escaped its ornamental settings and is now found along the banks of some creeks.



STOP INVASIVE SPECIES IN YOUR TRACKS.

PlayCleanGo.org

LB 1038 Signed Into Law

April 18th 2016, Governor Ricketts signed LB1038 and LB1038A into law providing \$1 million in state funding to help control invasive plant species along ALL waterways in Nebraska. The

funding is instrumental in treating invasive species, increasing flow conveyance, wildlife habitat, and water available for human consumption. The 14 month process had its share of ups and downs, positives

and negatives, supporters and nay-sayers, as well as some constructive debates. In the end, a great bill was signed into Law, shaping the future of invasive plant management along Nebraska's waterways.

“The overall number of enforcements in 2016 decreased by 128, totaling 258; this is a 33.2% decrease”

2016 City Enforcements

Any time a property owner does not comply with our legal notice to maintain their property below the 6” city height ordinance; our office hires a contractor to cut the property. Once the cutting is complete we file a “notice of possible unpaid weed assessment” with the Register of Deeds. If the assessment is not paid, a lien is attached to the property and is treated the same as unpaid property taxes.

Weed Abatement Enforcements

- 2012 168
- 2013 325
- 2014 299
- 2015 386
- 2016 258

Average 287

The overall number of enforcements in 2016 decreased by 128, totaling 258; this is a 33.2% decrease. The number of legal notices issued decreased from 1,575 in 2015 to 920 in 2016. The number of properties inspected decreased from 3,312 to 2,891. In addition to the legal notices, we also sent 996 letters, posted 1,447 warning signs and made 64 personal contacts to get properties controlled.

Noxious Weeds Inside Lincoln City Limits



Cutleaf teasel along Salt Creek in Lincoln

Noxious weeds know no boundaries. They find themselves at home inside the city limits, along the creeks, in wetlands and waste areas just as well as in the rural areas. Saltcedar, purple loosestrife and knotweed were first introduced as ornamentals and planted in our landscapes, so they are found more in the city than in rural areas. It’s important to control them in the city to prevent the spread into rural areas.

In 2016, 32.2% of our noxious weed inspections occurred inside the city limits. While these infestations are very small in the total number of acres infested, we continue to find noxious weeds all around the city, many along the creeks and in waste areas.

Our city inspectors made 1,087 inspections on 584 sites and found 432 sites infested with noxious weeds.

Lincoln’s Noxious Weeds

number of sites infested in 2016

- Musk thistle 159
- Phragmites 124
- Leafy spurge 91
- Purple loosestrife 11
- Knotweed 20
- Canada thistle 14
- Teasel 12
- Saltcedar 1

“With the ease of turning in complaints electronically on our web site, the Citizen Action Center, smart phones and tablets we received 1,763 complaints”

City of Lincoln Weed Abatement Program

Weed Abatement

total inspections

2012	5,354
2013	7,099
2014	8,310
2015	7,802
2016	6,210

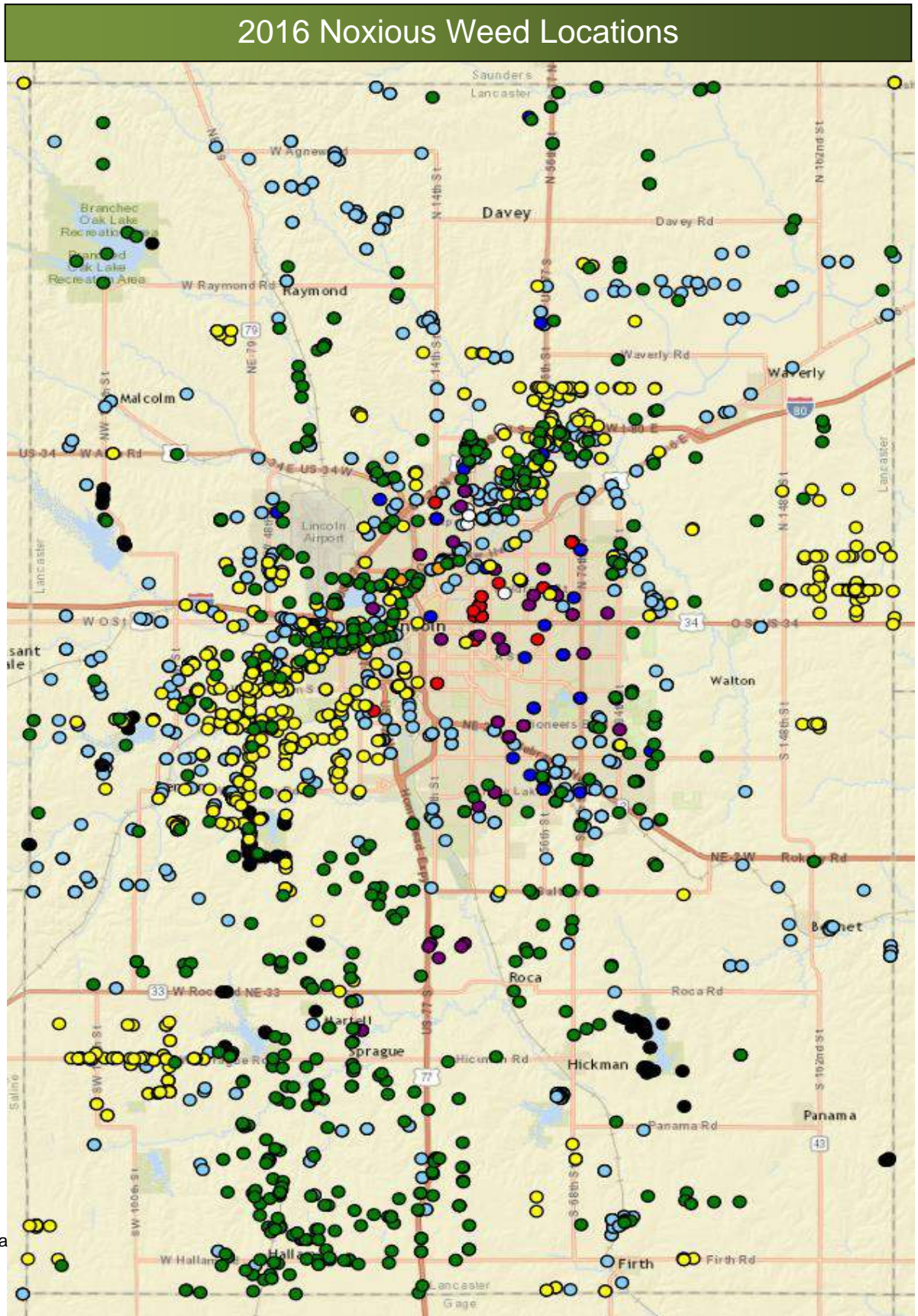
Weed Abatement inspections decreased from 7,802 in 2015 to

6,210 in 2016, a 20.4% decrease. These inspection numbers represent only the 6” height ordinance on overgrown properties; they do NOT include noxious weed inspections. The total number of properties on which these inspections occurred has also decreased from 3,312 in 2015 to 2,891 in

2016, a 12.7% decrease. Our office relies on citizen’s to let us know when their neighbor’s properties become a violation. With the ease of turning in complaints electronically on our web site, the Citizen Action Center, smart phones and tablets we received 1,763 complaints from the public.



Lancaster County, NE



Lancaster County Weed Control
 444 Cherrycreek Rd. Bldg B
 Lincoln, NE. 68528

Phone: 402.441.7817
Fax: 402.441.8616
E-mail:
weeds@lancaster.ne.gov



We're on the Web!
lancaster.ne.gov/weeds



"We reduced the number of letters sent by 34.5% and legal notices by 31.9% saving approximately \$3,265 in postal cost"

Good Neighbors – Control Invasive Weeds !!!

Combined Weed Program

Almost every parcel outside of developed residential lots has or had one or more kinds of noxious weeds present. The key to noxious weed control is not allowing the plants to seed. This requires persistence and follow-up. Most of the public and private landowners understand this and are keeping their noxious weeds under control. It is the job of noxious weed control authority staff to assist landowners in the job of controlling noxious weeds. Many landowners are accomplishing control without any assistance or contact from the authority. The authority carries out a strong information and awareness program along with an extensive inspection program to encourage voluntary compliance of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act.

The authority has also provided the inspection and administration of the City of Lincoln's Weed Abatement program since entering into an Interlocal agreement with the City in 1996. The County Commissioners serve as the Lancaster County Noxious Weed Control Authority. Brent Meyer serves as the superintendent and supervises a seasonal staff of six weed inspectors with the assistance of Chief Inspector Pat Dugan and Account Clerk Jasmine Slezak.

Weed Abatement Yard Signs Prove Successful

As with any business the Weed Control Authority is always looking at ways to be more efficient, as well as making our operation more effective. While reviewing the 2015 season, one of the things that stood out was the fact that we received a lot of complaints from property owners saying they had just received the letter and we were already back doing a follow up inspection. This was a result of the mail being routed through Omaha instead of Lincoln which made the delivery time 3 – 4 days to reach most residents. With the Weed Abatement ordinance requiring control in 5 days this created a timing issue. Several factors led to the decision to use yard signs with the postal issue being only one. Others were; **Rental properties** – many of the

problems are on rentals, by the time we sent the letter to the landowner and the landowner notified the tenant, we more than likely had already done a follow up inspection and sent the legal notice. ***In 2016 we closed 469 files by only posting the property without sending a letter. An additional 427 files were closed on known rentals where we posted the property as well as sent a letter to the owner, 31% of our files were closed this way.*** **Complaints** – by posting the property the person complaining is able to see something is being done. This cuts down on additional complaints while we work the case. ***In 2015 our office received 1,469 initial complaints compared to 1,521 in 2016. While receiving 52 more***

complaints our additional complaints were down from 383 in 2015 to only 236 in 2016. Posting the property reduced additional complaints by 38.4%. I feel this was due to quicker compliance by the person living at the property as well as the person complaining seeing the sign and knowing something is being done. **Returned letters & notices** – Our ordinance requires us to send to the last known address according to the Register of Deeds. If the landowner hasn't updated their new address the letter gets returned and no one receives notice. Posting makes sure someone is notified. In 2016 we reduced the number of letters sent by 34.5% and legal notices by 31.9% saving approximately \$3,265 in postal cost.