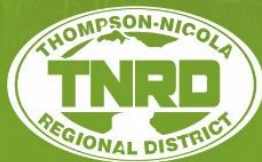




TNRD'S INVASIVE PLANT PROGRAM

MEMBER MUNICIPALITY PROPOSAL
NOVEMBER 2020



THOMPSON-NICOLA
REGIONAL DISTRICT



Overview

This proposal has been prepared by the Thompson-Nicola Regional District's Environmental Health Services Department for TNRD Member Municipalities. This proposal presents an opportunity for member municipalities to opt into the TNRD invasive plant service on an ongoing annual basis.

This proposal is intended to be used by member municipalities to inform staff and council of the benefits, and funding implications, related to joining the TNRD invasive plant service. This proposal is a follow-up to a presentation given at the TNRD Committee of the Whole meeting on October 16, 2020, where the concept was first presented.

Introduction

The TNRD Invasive Plant Program was established in 1976 with the specific purpose of funding knapweed control on private ranch lands. The service was established as an Electoral Area (EA) service funded by taxation of properties in all ten (10) TNRD EAs. Member Municipalities were not included in the service at the time, because weeds were seen as only an agriculture problem and the service was designed specifically to assist farms/ranches.

Invasive plants have become a serious concern in the urban and semi-rural areas located within municipalities. Since invasive plants do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries, successful invasive plant management in the region can only happen if all land owners, including municipalities and their residents, actively manage invasive plants on their properties. By having municipalities join the TNRD service, overall invasive plant management throughout the region will be strengthened and municipal residents will receive direct assistance in controlling invasive plants on their own land.

The Concern

The main issue is that invasive plants easily spread with no regard for jurisdictional boundaries. There are numerous organizations putting tremendous effort and resources into invasive plant management. In order to be successful, all land managers and land owners need to be actively managing invasive plants in the region. For more information on why municipalities should be concerned about invasive plants, see Appendix 1 below.

We know there is interest from residents within municipalities for invasive plant management support, as TNRD staff have been fielding inquiries from municipal residents for years. Specifically, there has been interest from landowners within municipalities in the financial assistance and equipment loan-out part of the TNRD program. At this time municipal residents do not qualify for these programs because municipalities are not part of the service area. In addition, TNRD staff have been assisting several municipal Public Works and/or Parks departments with invasive plant management issues. Again, because municipalities are not part of the service, TNRD staff can only offer limited support.



Benefits to Municipalities

There are a number of benefits to municipalities in joining the TNRD Invasive Plant Program:

- Stable and long term invasive plant management programs within municipal boundaries.
- Financial assistance for residents managing invasive plants on private properties.
- Support for municipal staff managing invasive plants on public land.
- Enhanced coordinated effort to control invasive plants throughout the region.
- Increased education, outreach and awareness within your municipality.
- Protecting land values from the impacts of invasive plants.

About the TNRD Invasive Plant Program

The TNRD invasive plant program has three main components: 1) *Landowner Assistance*, 2) *Education and Outreach*, and 3) *Coordination*. It's important to note that the invasive plant program applies to noxious weeds only, and not for treatment of lawn or garden weeds that are a nuisance, but not designated as "noxious". The content below provides an overview of each component.

1. Land Owner Assistance Programs

Landowner assistance is the largest component of the invasive plant service. The landowner assistance programs are designed to help residents protect their land from the impacts of invasive plants. The program offerings can be combined, allowing for comprehensive, affordable, and effective weed management. Below is an overview of the landowner assistance program components:

- Rebate Program** - financial support is offered in the form of rebates to landowners that hire certified applicators to manage weeds on their property. Depending on the weed species, landowners can qualify for either a 50% rebate or 100% rebate towards the cost of weed control. Rebates can be applied for on an annual basis. The maximum rebate is based on property size (either \$1,500 or \$3,000).
- Sprayer Loan-Out Program** - the TNRD has a fleet of spraying, seeding, and fertilizing equipment that is available for free loan-out to people who have the expertise to perform their own weed control. The equipment is available for loan-out for up to a week at a time.
- Biological Control Program** - the TNRD provides biological control agents to private landowners free of charge. TNRD staff and contractors collect and redistribute biological control agents (insects) to help slow the spread of select weed species. The biological control insects are available for release on both private properties and public land within the service area (subject to insect availability).
- Private Land Consultations**- landowners can take advantage of the free land consultations where invasive plant specialist visits properties (by request) to assist with weed identification and the development of a weed management plan.



2. Education and Outreach

The Thompson-Nicola Invasive Plant Management Committee (TNIPMC), administered by the TNRD, works to stop the spread and introduction of invasive plants in the region. The committee delivers an extensive regional education and outreach program. The Committee actively offers numerous services to other organizations, groups, agencies and members of the public, including workshops, training, presentations, and field days.

3. Coordination

The TNIPMC encourages multi-party collaboration on invasive plant management in the region. The TNIPMC is comprised of 11 members representing a variety of perspectives, including: Provincial Government Agencies, Local Government (TNRD Board Directors), Agriculture, First Nations, and Conservation. Each of these representatives help guide the invasive plant management activities that take place within the TNRD, ensuring that the efforts are being made in a collaborative and coordinated manner.

Proposed Funding Model

The service is currently funded through taxation of the ten (10) electoral areas. In addition, the TNRD has historically received grants from the province specific to coordination and education, however the grants are subject to change year to year. The table below (table 1), highlights the revenue sources for the 2020 invasive plant service.

Table 1. 2020 Invasive Plant Program Funding Sources

Funding Source	2020 Contributions
TNRD tax levies (EA's only)	\$341,906
Carry Forward (surplus)	\$20,058
Provincial Grants	\$40,000

The TNRD is proposing a unique cost share model with municipalities in which only the incremental costs would be covered by municipalities, opposed to the more conventional model where tax contribution is based on converted assessment. This model is being proposed as the TNRD recognizes that the conventional model would put an unfair proportion of the cost on municipalities.

The program is designed to enable treatment of existing infestations as well as new infestations as they arise. Therefore, it is anticipated that the amount of rebates paid to properties within individual municipalities may fluctuate annually, sometimes being below and sometimes above the municipal tax contribution. The intent is not for the rebates to match the contribution amounts, the intent is for the service as a whole to have enough funding to pay out rebates where infestations are occurring.



It's important to note that under the proposed funding model, rural electoral areas will still fund the majority of the program. For example, if all 11 TNRD member municipalities join, the 10 EAs will fund over 75% of the total tax requisition. If fewer municipalities opt into the service, the EAs will fund an even larger portion.

The proposed funding model is based on estimated cost increases of adding individual municipalities. We intend to revisit the contribution model based on total rebate applications and other program costs within a few years of operation.

The table below (Table 2) shows the proposed starting tax contribution for each municipality as well as the maximum contribution percentage in relation to the total budget.

Table 2. Proposed Tax Contributions for Member Municipalities

Municipality	Population Range	Starting Tax Contribution (2022)	Maximum Contribution of Total Budget (%)
Lytton	Less than 1,000	\$5,000	1.5%
Sun Peaks	Less than 1,000	\$5,000	1.5%
Clinton	Less than 1,000	\$5,000	1.5%
Cache Creek	Less than 1,000	\$5,000	1.5%
Ashcroft	Over 1,000, less than 5,000	\$10,000	2.5%
Barriere	Over 1,000, less than 5,000	\$10,000	2.5%
Logan Lake	Over 1,000, less than 5,000	\$10,000	2.5%
Chase	Over 1,000, less than 5,000	\$10,000	2.5%
Clearwater	Over 1,000, less than 5,000	\$10,000	2.5%
Merritt	Over 5,000, Less than 50,000	\$20,000	4.5%
Kamloops	Over 50,000	\$40,000	9%



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Next Steps

In order to amend the TNRD service to include municipalities, a council resolution will be required from interested municipalities. Once resolutions have been received, the TNRD Board will go through the process of amending the service establishment bylaw.

Below is a proposed timeline for next steps:

- March 31, 2021 - Council resolutions in favour of joining TNRD service received
- May 2021 – Service establishment bylaw amendment to TNRD Board
- 2022 – Taxes levied and service begins

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Appendix 1 - Why Care?

Invasive plants were once thought to be only an issue in the agriculture and ranching sector. Unfortunately we are now seeing many problem plants in municipalities. The economic damage from invasive plants is not insignificant. A 2009 report estimated the damage of only six (6) specific invasive plant species to be \$65 million in the province.

Real estate values can be negatively impacted by invasive plants. A study in Manitoba estimated reduction in land values due to noxious weeds is \$30 million. As more people become aware of the risks and management challenges of invasives, people are thinking twice about purchasing infested properties.

There are also costs associated with the damage to infrastructure cause by some weeds. For example, Japanese knotweed which has been identified in most towns in the TNRD, is very difficult to eliminate once established. It can grow through asphalt and concrete and cause extensive damage to private and public property. Knotweed is known to damage septic tanks beyond repair, requiring complete replacement. It can easy spread by fragments of the plant being moved (intentionally or unintentionally).

Invasive plants can also have impacts on the health of humans and livestock. Giant hogweed can cause sever skin burns that can persists for months. It has even been highlighted by WorkSafe BC as a workplace hazard. Fortunately we have not seen this plant in the TNRD, but it is near our boarder (Lower Mainland).

Hoary alyssum is another significant plant of concern, especially for horse owners. It is toxic to horses and is easy spread through contaminated hay. Hoary alyssum is widespread throughout the TNRD.

There are dozens of other provincially listed noxious weed species that can damage property, reduce land value, and have negative impact of animals that are actively being treated on both public and private land.



Figure 1. Japanese Knotweed growing through asphalt



Figure 2. Japanese Knotweed in Kamloops