WSWS Noxious Weed Short Course
2011 Final Report
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Summary – The Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) Noxious Weed Short Course is an intensive three-day introduction to current technologies and best management practices associated with noxious and invasive weeds in the Western United States. It is designed for local, state, federal, and private land managers throughout the Western US who desire a better understanding of invasive weed management.

The course was continued much as it has functioned in the past under the direction of Celestine Duncan. The 2011 course stressed ecologically-based invasive plant management and included monitoring and assessment, prevention, cultural, mechanical and chemical plant management using interactive sessions. A variety of training techniques were utilized including classroom lecture, hands-on demonstration, field plots, live weed and herbicide syptomology specimens, facilitated discussion, small group projects, educational games, and time for individual interaction with instructors.

Objectives

1. To conduct a "hands-on" course providing Western land managers with knowledge and resources dealing with herbicide performance and behavior, weed ecology, and invasion processes.
2. To provide additional training in weed identification, herbicide formulations and calibration, herbicide absorption, translocation and mode of action, pesticide safety, ecological principles of weed management including biological and cultural control methods, weed mapping and monitoring, integrated pest management strategies, and restoration ecology
3. To provide participants with the opportunity to acquire Continuing Education Units (CEUs) from all participating states.

Course Design – Classroom lecture, discussion, laboratory and field exercises, hands-on activities, field plots and interactive assignments were utilized. The program was designed to encourage interaction between students and instructors. Activities provided networking opportunities for participants. Games provided fun and active reinforcement of course concepts. Sylvan Dale allowed the WSWS Short Course to establish permanent demonstration plots for use during the 2011 and subsequent Short Courses.

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Short Course Format – The short course began Monday evening with registration, assignment of an audience response "clicker" and an audience response system based pretest. Tuesday and Wednesday were full day sessions with a lunch break at midday and coffee breaks midmorning and mid-afternoon. The course ended on late afternoon on Thursday with group presentations, post-test, evaluation and a graduation ceremony. On Monday evening after registration, the participants joined instructors for a "Weed Walk." Tuesday evening was dedicated to a group picnic and games night. The games all had a weed-related theme. Optional sessions were provided by the Sylvan Dale Naturalist, Dave Armstrong, on Monday and Wednesday night.

Participant Notebook and CD – The CD included all visuals, including PowerPoints, and references used in the course; in addition, materials that summarize and supplement the course will be identified and included. The Participant Notebook included training materials and worksheets for use during the course. The CD and Notebook were well received by the 2011 participants. Based on the evaluations a "cheat sheet" of herbicides by common name, trade name and mode-of-action will be included for reference in the notebook.

Participants – Twenty-five (25) people registered for the 2011 Short Course, but only 24 attended. The individual that was unable to attend will be given partial credit towards the 2012 Short Course.

Participants represented seven states:
- Colorado – 14
- Idaho – 1
- Montana - 2
- New Mexico – 1
- Washington -1
- Wyoming – 5

Participants represented nine organization categories:
- County Weed Program – 10
- US Forest Service – 5
- State Weed Program – 2
- University Extension - 1
- BLM – 1
- Private Consultants - 2
- EPA - 1
- Military - 1
- State Department of Transportation - 1

Pesticide continuing education units (CEUs) were sought and received for sessions meeting the state's requirements in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Washington, and Wyoming.

Course Evaluation – Participants were asked to evaluate using an audience response system the following:

- Effectiveness of speakers evaluated by presentation
- Value of the training they received in the Short Course
- Usefulness of the subject matter

A paper form was used to gather suggestions to improve the Short Course. The evaluation summary is attached.

Proposed Dates for 2012 – April 16 - 19, 2012

2012 Short Course – Based on the experiences of the trainers, participant evaluations and input from the WSWS Board the format will be tweaked slightly. The instructors will remain the same as the 2011 Course as will the basic agenda. The 2012 Participant Survey will dictate the participant directed sessions. Based on suggestions form the 2011 participants, the 2012 participants will be asked to bring weed outreach and education success stories; these will be displayed in one of the session rooms and used during the Public Awareness of Weeds discussion.

Continuous evaluation and modification will result in improvements in delivery, increased efficiency, and an expanded short course curriculum that serves the needs of weed managers in the Western US.