

2009 WEED ABATEMENT – POLICIES

1. NOXIOUS WEEDS – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- a. Responsibility for Removal & Disposal – Every property owner is responsible for the abatement of noxious weeds on their property and any unimproved right-of-way, parking strip, or similar area abutting and adjacent to their property.
- b. Education & Assistance - The City promotes noxious weed control through public education and/or written contact with landowners. The Code Enforcement Officer is available, on request, to assist in the identification of noxious weeds and to provide information on the ways to control and abate weeds.
- c. Authority - An infestation of noxious weeds within the City of Chelan is a prohibited condition per Chelan Municipal Code.
- d. Notification - Upon finding a weed infestation on a property the Code Enforcement Officer shall send a certified letter to the property owner informing them of the prohibited condition.
- e. Dead Line –It is the intent to mitigate *noxious weeds* by killing the weeds prior to flowering or seed development. Therefore, concentrating on removal in the months of March, April, and May are critical to obtaining good results. The effort to control and/or abate *noxious weeds* may take several years. Upon notification by the City the property owner shall have ten-days to abate the weeds.
- f. Non-Compliance - After the ten-day notification period has expired the City Council may pass a resolution authorizing the City to cause abatement of the prohibited condition. After approval the property would typically be abated by a third party vendor.
- g. Payment for Abatement Process - Failure to pay for the abatement process would be cause for a lien to be placed against the subject property.
- h. Misdemeanor Violation – The property owner may be found guilty of a misdemeanor if convicted of failure to comply with the weed abatement notification. Additionally, a fine not to exceed \$1000 may also be assessed.
- i. Remove Regardless of Other Noted Exceptions - When it is determined that *noxious weeds* exist and are required to be removed, chemical methods, or complete cutting and removal may be required regardless of the exceptions that may be noted in other areas of this policy.
- j. Disposal – Disposal of *noxious weeds* shall be done in an approved manner to prevent spreading weeds (i.e.; garbage, transfer station, or composting). Burning yard waste is no longer allowed. Cover truck loads that are being disposed of to prevent spreading of weeds and or seeds along the highway and roads. Composting of noxious weeds should only be done when the weeds do not have seeds or grow by root cuttings.

- k. Fire Hazard - A secondary problem exists whenever vegetation dries out whether or not it is a *noxious weed* or a *native species* of weed or brush. This condition continues to get worse when the seeds of *noxious weeds* are allowed to germinate and the cycle continuous the next year allowing the problem to GROW, and become worse
- l. Methods of Removal - It is the intent of the weed abatement ordinance to reduce and/or eliminate *noxious weeds* prior to the weeds going to seed. Several methods work well such as:
1. Pre-emergence Chemicals - used early in the spring prior to germination of the *noxious weed* seeds.
 2. Herbicides - used on *noxious weeds* to kill the plant and root stock prior to the plant going to seed.
 3. Mowing or cutting – removing the majority of the *noxious plant material* prior to the plant going to seed. However, this may only be a temporary mitigation method for plants which re-germinate by roots or cuttings.
 4. Planting Desirable Plants - limit areas where *noxious weeds* can germinate by planting desirable plants such as lawn, native plants, grasses, and/or bushes.
 5. Soil Moisture – By changing the moisture level of the soil you will prevent an ideal situation for the germination of *noxious weeds*.
 6. Soil Sterilizing - placing heavy plastic sheeting with the edges anchored over bare soil for a period of 6-weeks will sterilize the soil and kill all seeds and root stock near the surface of the soil. Use caution, sterilizing the soil using this method will kill everything. Once the soil has been sterilized desirable plants and grasses should be re-planted to prevent *noxious weeds* from growing in the future.
 7. Weed Fabric – Cover planting beds with weed fabric and rock or mulch to prevent *noxious weeds* from growing.
 8. Natural & Biological Control - Use of natural predators such as insects are possible to help control and eliminate *noxious weeds*. However, the use of livestock such as sheep and goats are not permitted within City Limits.

2. FIRE HAZARDS - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- a. Height above Grade – cut, mow, or rod combustible weeds and brush within 3” of the soil after they have dried out.
- b. Dead line – Remove weeds and brush that are a fire hazard after June 15th to avoid cutting them again due to re-growth. Fire-hazards shall be mitigated by July 1st.
- c. Naturally Combustible - Some *native species* of plants are extremely combustible and may not have to dry out to be considered a fire-hazard. Cutting or thinning of these species may still be necessary to minimize the fire-hazard even when they are *native species*.
- d. Large Bushes & Trees – Cutting limbs of bushes and trees to a minimum height of 8’ above grade helps to prevent grass fires from extending into the crown of the tree or large bush.

3. LARGE LOTS – ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO 100% CUTTING

- a. Lots <1 Acre – Lots of less than 1 acre where weeds and brush are determined to be a fire hazard shall be cut 100%. See exception for *native species*.
- b. Lots >1 Acre – Lots of greater than 1 acre where *native weeds and brush* are determined to be a fire hazard may cut a fire break 50’-75’ around the perimeter of the lot in lieu of cutting the entire lot and provide a minimum 100’ fire break around the entire perimeter of structures. See item #2a regarding noxious weeds.

4. NATIVE SPECIES – ALTERNATIVE METHODS

- a. Low Combustibility – No need to trim and cut *native plant species* when it is determined that the *native species* is known to be of a low combustibility. See item #5a, b, & c regarding height of vegetation above the City Right-of-Way.
- b. High Combustibility - When a *native plant species* is known to be a high-combustibility and a high fire-hazard, and it is still desired to be maintained, the use of selective cutting to thin out or trim up the specimen may be used as an acceptable alternative method in lieu of complete removal.

5. MINIMUM & MAXIMUM HEIGHTS OF VEGETATION WITHIN CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY & SIGHT DISTANCES

- a. Sidewalks - Maintain 8' minimum from tree limbs and large bushes above sidewalks.
- b. Streets - Maintain 14' minimum clearance from tree limbs above streets.
- c. Sight Distance - Maintain bushes and grasses at a maximum of 3' height within sight distance (25' from the corners of the street intersections). Plant new trees outside of the sight distance area.
- d. Exceptions - Trunks of mature trees may be within the sight distance when the lower limbs can be trimmed and maintained to a minimum of 8' height above the sidewalk and 14' above the street.

6. SLOPES > 30% (1 VERT. / 3 HORZ.)

- a. Native Grasses and Brush that are a Fire Hazard – An alternative to removing combustible fuel is to mitigate the fire hazard by providing a minimum 100' fire break around the entire perimeter of the residence. This alternative is allowed only when it is determined that it is too difficult to mow or remove the combustible vegetation on slopes greater than 30 percent slopes.
- b. Steep Rock Outcroppings – that have combustible native vegetation in which it would be too difficult to mow or remove the vegetation may remain uncut when the rock outcroppings are isolated and the uncut areas would not significantly contribute to the spread of a wild-fire or damage adjacent residences.
- c. Erosion of Slopes – When removal of combustible native vegetation on steep slopes would contribute to excessive erosion of the soil. The use of selective cutting to thin out or trim up native bushes and grasses may be used as an acceptable alternative method in lieu of complete removal.

7. WETLANDS & RIPERIAN AREAS

- a. Wetlands – Wetlands typically are not required to be moved or cut to mitigate fire-hazards. However, there may be noxious weeds that thrive in moist areas that will need to be removed, or native species that need to be thinned out when it is determined that they are an aggressive species that is not desirable.
- b. Riparian Areas – The primary use of riparian areas is for the plants to remain in a native condition. Where the area is already designated as a riparian area, the removal of plant material is typically limited to noxious weeds and non-native species. When residences are allowed to encroach into riparian areas the use of non-combustible construction should be used and defensible fire breaks of 100' around the perimeters of the structures should be maintained. The fire break may be planted with low growing ground cover that is a native species that is of a low-flammability.