

Invasive Weed Task Force Meeting

January 15, 2020, 1:00-1:30 PM

Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center

Meeting called to order at 1:10 p.m

Present: Joe Woods (Volutaria Volunteer, Cal-IPC), Pat Matthews (Botany Society, ABDNHA), Sicco Rood (UCI Research Center), Chris McDonald (UC Cooperative Extension), Steve Schoenig (Cal-IPC)

Cal-IPC = California Invasive Plant Council

- V = Volutaria
- SM = Sahara Mustard

We are experimenting with topic project report based format to help keep the meeting more focused:

County (Revitalization Committee report)

PM: One of the outcomes of the revitalization meeting, Pat talked about what we needed, control the edges of spread, and provide safe disposal of the weeds. And create an info center. Dinna Morris from the County of San Diego indicated that the county could provide posters for the library and a dumpster. Pat has a friend Christy who's a graphic designer, and she came up with a simplification of the flyer illustrations that Chris already has. PM suggests Chris and Christy can come together to work on the photos/illustrations.

Invasives Disposal

SR: Reported on the biochar. presentation by Mike Seley of Seley Ranch (currently they have about 370 acres of citrus groves in Borrego, with grapefruit, lemons and tangerines). Biochar is a charcoal-like substance that's made by burning organic material from agricultural and forestry wastes (also called biomass) in a controlled process called pyrolysis. Although it looks a lot like common charcoal, biochar is produced using a specific process to reduce contamination (cleaner burn, less smoke/pollution) and safely store carbon. Mike showed two kinds of biochar, one more coarse, and one more refined. The refined version takes more energy/cost to produce but has more economic value. However, in order for us to remove the viability of the invasive seeds, the coarse cheaper method would be fine to use. Biochar can be used to enhance the soil. Biochar is the form of charcoal that is only produced from plant organic matter which helps in absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and helps fertilize crops, thus benefiting both crops, and the environment. Besides carbon sequestration one of the benefits mentioned by Mike was that studies showed that the utilization of biochar can be extremely useful for the improvement of Soil organic Carbon, capacity of water holding, stimulating soil microbes, increasing the microbial activity and biomass, decreasing in needs and leaching of fertilizers, availability and retention of nutrients, soil aeration, bettering the growth and yield of crop growth.

We are considering borrowing a tank from Seley's Farm. CM says we should contact CDFA if we end up moving the full container for biochar processing with the farm in Indio. Seley offered his land to host the solarization experiment as well as large tanks. Mike suggested that he could help with a collaboration between growers and Task Force whereby we could help identify V on his and other ranches, and ranchers could help with spraying private locations and equipment. JW thinks his property needs to be surveyed anyway. So we plan to go out there to help him identify V. Seley is a great way to get in with the other growers, and start to work together.

SR will contact Seley and make arrangements for several of us to meet with him at his farm (middle of Feb week of the 10th or 17th), could try early as well. Mention CM is available to meet Seley at his office location in Orange County as well.

Weeding Efforts including new locations

JW: V is all along the paved paths where people bike now in BSR. JW sent Mark Martinez an email about this. Mark did get the right of entry into BSR according to SS. JW wants the county to start spraying the Southern end, and then maybe coming back later in the season. People get educated during the weed walks. The worst is on the west end according to JW. It wasn't that bad 2 years, but last year, half way through the season, things exploded there. Joe couldn't handle it manually without county involvement. BSR is the worst place as far as traffic right next to pavement. Now that the additional 9 holes have been fallowed, it's being adopted as a park for people to bike and walk. Including Club Circle is also dried up. PM noted that in Coyote Canyon at the demo plot they found lots of germination as well, random V, with rosettes getting larger. Last week PM weedwalk went to Pegleg, there was a lot of V east of Pegleg before the Rockhouse canyon road. JW noted last year there was V on both sides of the road. JW says it is difficult to plan for hiring 6 people for weed, when you have dry years. CM say you can still chip away on stuff during dry years, like with educating. SS notes you can still do surveying during a dry year. JW thinks its easier to do that with 2 people than with 6 people.

Nursery inspections: CM says he is going to talk with Nick (regional supervising inspector) and Mark on what chemicals are going to be used this year. Also talk with Mark about roadside surveys. To see if the roadside spraying has helped with reduction of SM. He's also going to nurseries in early Feb to do a nursery inspection either real or practice. Dan Wright would be a good friendly nursery to start with. CM cancelled the training talk on Jan 6, so that needs rescheduling. He has a guy in San Diego's CE office to help with graphics, and work with Dinna to get a poster to eradicate both weeds. Both Mark and Deena agreed the poster should be simple. SR says he'll make a couple instructional videos when we visit Seley's farm. There is a grant program offered by the county that CM thinks a nonprofit (such as ABDNHA or ABF) could apply for and use it for the flyers/poster project. PM not sure ABDNHA would be interested.

SS: is now 100% a volunteer, conduit for Cal-IPC. He and Doug care about the desert in particular. They were hoping to get a large grant, but it makes more sense to help a local organization get the grant. First they thought Mark and Dinna would be good, but that didn't work. Then they thought Mark Gipson from the Nature Collective would be good. They decided to get more ambitious and do projects in other parts of San Diego County, instead of just the lagoon. But due to medical issues they lost Doug Gibson for the past few months. So Doug Johnson and SS, wanted to just focus on protecting the edges of populations. Also supporting the local education efforts. We want to get Joe Woods money and support his work. Which comes down to applying to the Borrego Valley Endowment Fund for \$5000 to be matched by a

local donor. This is better than nothing. Steve just wants to stay current on what's going on, and appreciates that we're continuing to work on both the mustard and the new V weed. We are going to do Cal-IPC day in Sacramento, and make more progress in doing multi-year progress.

JW mentions the emails he's waiting for Mark to find out when the crews will come out to Borrego, still not sure if he's going to use Milestone or residual, hoping he will use Milestone herbicide. Also needs to find out about the right of entry into BSR, and Viking Ranch would be the second place, although they already have a right of entry from last year. JW is doing survey work to define the extent at the tributary of Butler Canyon. New observations and points, nothing scary out there yet. There are a few thousand plants there now, but hasn't seen any issues with spreading into Rockhouse or the main part of Butler Canyon. But may be early in the season. He went out there because of an iNaturalist posting that was forwarded to him. He also went to survey the upper part of Coyote Canyon. Still more survey work to do up there. Danny texted JW about signing paperwork to get the part time position about \$5K worth hopefully by next Wednesday. They can't do back pay. Joe didn't find any V around Salton City, but checking other areas like Borrego Spring (got about 50-100 plants) and Ocotillo Wells. Wants to work more with the outlying edges that are higher priority. Hope to get 100% control on those sites.

SR will get additional pics of V to put on the web site from Chris.

Next meeting will take place on Feb 12, 2020.