Noxious Weed Management FAQ

Who is handling the noxious weed mitigation for the Town?

Olson Outdoors, under the direction of wildfire consultant Bintel Inc., was selected by the Town to conduct wildfire mitigation treatments in open space areas, funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

Olson Outdoors has been in business for over 12 years and has held a pesticide applicator license since 2017. The company has experience working on projects ranging from residential herbicide applications to large-scale sites, including a 2,000-acre property in Longmont.

What is Olson Outdoors' general approach to herbicide application?

Locations must be pre-approved by FEMA.

Each site is evaluated based on:

- **Environmental factors**, including wind, humidity, and fire risk
- **Technical difficulties** for treatments such as terrain
- **Social considerations**, such as nearby residents, trails, pesticide-sensitive individuals

The goal is to determine the safest and most effective method for each situation.

What mitigation methods are being implemented?

Weed mitigation efforts on Open Space throughout Town include both mechanical removal of weeds, typically by hand, as well as targeted herbicide applications to address aggressive weed invasion. Olson is applying herbicide using 300-gallon tanks in trailers as well as backpack sprayers for windy conditions, difficult terrain, or high-precision areas.

This treatment has been selected because it helps encourage long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness. Herbicide is used specifically on high-density, noxious weed patches. This will help reduce the overall fuel-load, making the landscape more resistant to fire spread.

What herbicide is being used?

The primary pre-emergent herbicide contains **prodiamine**, commonly applied using products such as LESCO Stonewall.

- Prodiamine has **very low to low toxicity ratings** across five key categories, including people, birds, and aquatic life
- It ranks on the **lowest end of the toxicity scale** overall.

How do you ensure safety during application?

- Applications stop if sustained winds reach ~10 mph
- Spray direction is controlled (kept low to the ground)
- Crews stop spraying if people are nearby
- A traffic control/fire spotter is present during operations
- Spraying is restricted to 100 feet from waterways and 50 feet from trails

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Is the herbicide safe after application?

Yes. The spray bonds to the ground and becomes inert once dry, ensuring it will not impact wildlife.

Will trails remain open during application?

Yes. Trails will remain open with Olson maintaining a minimum 10-foot buffer from trails. The crew will actively monitor for trail users and pause spraying if people approach.

How do you handle weather conditions?

- Weather is monitored daily
- Work is paused during Red Flag Warning Days or other high wind events.
- Conditions are evaluated continuously before and during application

What is the treatment schedule?

- **Pre-emergent applications:** January–April (ending by late April)
- **Post-emergent treatments:** Follow shortly after and moves faster

Scheduling is flexible, dependent on weather and other conditions.

How does pre-emergent herbicide work?

Pre-emergent herbicides prevent weed seeds from germinating and stop seed pods from developing into plants. This is critical for species like mullein, which can produce up to 200,000 seeds per plant.

Why not rely only on goats?

Different tools serve different purposes, and the Town of Superior uses a strategic approach, combining methods for the best results. This typically includes goat grazing, targeted herbicide application, mowing, and hand pulling.

Why is weed management important for fire prevention?

Noxious weeds burn hotter and faster than grass, and high fuel loads increase fire intensity and spread. Mitigating noxious weeds can help lower fire intensity, protect neighborhoods, and improve firefighter safety. Fuel reduction efforts aim to create a fire-resilient landscape and reduce the likelihood of severe fire spread.

Additional Resources

- Pesticide Applicator Search: https://ag.colorado.gov/plants/pesticides/pesticide-applicator-search
- Pesticide Sensitive Registry: https://ag.colorado.gov/pesticide-sensitive-registry-psr