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Panhandle RC&D gives nod to High Plains Weed Management Asso.

A major advancement for the High Plains Weed Management Association was made Thursday when the newly formed group was unanimously approved sponsorship by the Panhandle Resources Conservation & Development (RC&D). High Plains WMA President Jeff Schledewitz and RC&D Program Coordinator Ron Moore call the marriage a win-win situation.

“The RC&D is the perfect fit for us,” said Schledewitz. “With their guidance we will be able to smoothly complete our non-profit status, and they will be able to help the Association with administrative, financial, grant-seeking, and development assistance.”

Moore said the High Plains WMA’s work will tie in with the RC&D’s focus areas of natural resources and community improvement.

Schledewitz and other representatives of the High Plains WMA went before the RC&D Board of Directors Thursday to request project assistance. The High Plains Weed Management Association, with cooperation from the North Platte and South Platte Natural Resources Districts and county weed superintendents, serves an eight-county area (Scotts Bluff, Banner, Kimball, Morrill, Cheyenne, Garden, Deuel and southern Sioux).

According to Schledewitz, it is the purpose and intent of the High Plains WMA to work with local landowners, business owners, and local, state, and federal wildlife and conservation agencies to target invasive species in the upper Platte River Basin. Targeted species include Russian olive, Saltcedar, Canada thistle, Musk thistle, Scotch thistle, phragmites, and other noxious weeds.

RC&D directors Mike Marker, David Ostdiek, Terry McCord, Ron Miller, and Gary Grubbs formed a subcommittee to work with the High Plains WMA’s current executive committee to further develop specific project goals.

In addition to conducting specific weed removal and management projects in each of the eight counties, the High Plains WMA is also co-sponsoring a three-day Invasive Species Control Summit to be held May 6-8 in Gering. Information and tours to be presented at the summit will greatly enhance local landowners’ understanding of invasive weed removal and management.

“Things are happening fast and we’re looking forward to getting out and working with landowners this spring and getting some of these projects moving,” Schledewitz said.

Through the arrangement, the High Plains WMA will be housed in the RC&D office in downtown Scottsbluff and receive administrative assistance from Moore and

RC&D Program Support Assistant Jennifer Rogers. The High Plains WMA project manager and field coordinator will also be based out of the RC&D location.

For more information about the High Plains WMA, including membership or project sites, contact Schledewitz at 436-6709 or your county weed superintendent. Information is also posted at <http://www.npnrd.org/hpwma.htm>.