

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS

MAY 15, 2001

Chairperson Mary Jo Cady called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Mason County Fairgrounds, Building 17. Commissioners Herb Baze and Wesley E. Johnson were in attendance.

BUSINESS

HEARING – NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

The Clerk read aloud the notice of hearing to determine whether there is a need, due to a damaging infestation of noxious weeds, to activate the county noxious weed control board (per RCW 17.10.040 (1)).

The Board announced that the legislative authority per RCW establishes the noxious weed control board. Mason County had an active weed control board in the past and then it became deactivated by the Board after much discussion.

The Board noted that they would include testimony from the April 24, 2001 meeting presentation.

A letter was acknowledged from Simpson Timber Company in support of a noxious weed control board.

Mary Jo Seery stated she is a Weed Technician for Thurston County and lives in Mason County. She spoke at the April 24 meeting. She submitted a map and list of sites of noxious weeds in the County.

Judd Reynolds commented he lives on a Cloquallum ranch. He has timberland and a ranch with cattle and hay. He asked the definition of property owners and what size property would be assessed for the weed board; also how the money would be appropriated and spent to support the weed control program.

The Board commented there has been no discussion of any assessment at this time.

Public testimony was received from the following individuals:

Mr. Reynolds asked if anyone has been appointed to the weed board or if it is open for applications.

The Board responded that there has been no discussion at the Board level to assess property owners. If the Board decides to activate a noxious weed control board applications would be accepted.

Mr. Reynolds questioned if large property owners such as Simpson Timber Company would be assessed equally acre for acre as other ranchers. He asked if timberland would be exempt. He asked what size would be exempt. Also, what will happen to the weeds growing on the tidelands or will they be exempt. Who will be responsible for the weeds growing on the tidelands. The applicators have had to pass state examination for recognition of toxic noxious and unwanted weeds to have an applicators license to apply the proper chemical to fight and control the weeds. The applicator must be selective to know when and how to apply chemicals. He stated he is in support of a weed board tax if it can control unwanted toxic noxious weeds and the people can be shown it will be effective. He questioned how the program would be audited.

The Board interjected that at a meeting at the Skokomish School all three commissioners testified that the farmers are the best stewards of the land.

The Board responded that there has been no discussion on how a weed board would be established or assessed. These discussions will take place in the future.

Duggan Kinne stated he has a small farm in Matlock and a small amount of forest product land. He urged the commissioners to activate a noxious weed control board with a modest assessment on individual parcel owners.

Louis Cofoni voiced his opposition to a noxious weed control board. He was concerned about the program starting

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Lisa Lantz, Executive Director of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, expressed support for Mason County activating a noxious weed control board. Mason County is one of two counties in the state without a weed board. Douglas County is the other county. There have been recently activated boards in Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam Counties. There have been dramatic results in the four years that they have been active.

The state weed law emphasizes prevention. Sometimes it is a hard sell. Without action, over time problems progress. In a recent study out of Oregon estimates there is a 34 – 1 benefit cost ratio for controlling new invaders. There is a potential for many other devastating species in Mason County that do not yet occur which could potentially impact the livelihood of Mason County landowners such as spartina could have on the shellfish industry in the County. Working with Counties around the state, it is difficult to have a comprehensive program unless everyone is on board. There are different levels of control in different counties, based on the resources available. One of the benefits of the state weed law is it provides for local flexibility. It is not a one size fits all. It allows for a weed board in each county. That weed board can be designed to meet the needs and priorities of the county citizens. Not every county approaches things the same. Some are very enforcement minded and some are very education minded and some are a mix, based on what the local constituents want. There is flexibility in the law to have the kind of program that the citizens of Mason County would want. The State would provide support in training staff.

Anita Latch expressed support of a noxious weed control board. The need for a weed board in Mason County will grow as more people move out into the countryside and are not agriculturists or timber workers. There are people that won't have large parcels and will not be well educated about managing and being stewards of the land. It does not mean preventing erosion and cultivating native plants. It also means preventing the encroachment or erosion of the natural system. She felt the proposed funding of \$1.00 per parcel and an additional \$.10 per acre incorporated or \$.01 per acre unincorporated with no exemptions is fair.

Sandi Dunlap voiced her interest in a noxious weed control board after having several pets poisoned from eating plants in the yard. She submitted letters of support and letters from: Southwest Puget Sound Watershed Council; a jointly signed letter from agriculturists in Shelton Valley and Timberlakes Homeowners Association; Washington State Department of Ecology; Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Nancy Ness stated she is a resident and landowner with 7 acres of pasture and 3 acres of timberland. She battles Tansy and Canada Thistle in her pasture. It goes back to the saying a squeaky wheel gets the grease. There are large organizations that have responsible vegetation management plans that don't always get enacted unless someone says something. She spoke in favor of activating a weed board in Mason County.

Arthur Olver stated he has lived in Mason County for four years. Their acre of land is partly forest and open. When they first purchased the land it was covered with scotchbroom. There are grants available that need an organization and person to find grants. There is an insect that likes scotchbroom.

Kurt Kingman stated he was the Mason County weed board director in 1983. There was a weed board in Mason County with a budget of approx. \$12 - \$15,000 which was much more effective than some that had \$120,000. Half the money came from the state and half went back to the people for controlling tansy ragwort on farming agricultural lands. He did not believe the weed board has the right to assess and voiced his opposition to an assessment. The problem seems to be the growing population of Mason County rather than the land stewards. He too asked if aquatic tidelands would be assessed. He suggested asking Douglas County why they don't have a weed board as they are a large agricultural county. The County's WSU/Cooperative Extension office has always been an extension office that would identify weeds. He was against forming another government agency. He also suggested it should start as a volunteer program.

John Lund stated he agreed with the last speaker. The promotion of an assessment is not correct. He felt that the County should utilize the current programs and staff and form a weed control board with existing staff. This would be a focal point for the state to bring in educational material.

Debra Lund noted she moved to Mason County approximately 6 years ago from the city. They have battled scotchbroom. She questioned what relationship the state has with the local weed control board. She asked if it is

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ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Mary Jo Cady, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Herb Baze, Commissioner

Rebecca S. Rogers, Clerk of the Board

Wesley E. Johnson, Commissioner