



As we mark the midpoint of 2025, the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture continues to prioritize sustainable farming practices, pest management, and environmental stewardship amid evolving challenges in our rural landscape. Key highlights for July relate to Noxious Weed management include:

- The successful award opportunity of a new three-year grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) under the 2025 Weed Management Area Grant Program (WMAGP), providing up to \$40,000 annually to reactivate and strengthen our county's Weed Management Area (WMA) initiatives and existing noxious weed work removing Gorse along the coastal area around Caspar.
- Intensified efforts to combat noxious weeds, which pose significant threats to local agriculture, biodiversity, and wildfire risk, with targeted surveys and eradication programs yielding measurable progress in high-priority areas.
- Collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders, including the Mendocino County University of California Cooperative Extension (MCUCCE), Resource Conservation District (MCRCD), Lake County WMA, and federal agencies, to enhance integrated weed management strategies.

These accomplishments underscore our commitment to protecting Mendocino County's \$200 million+ agricultural economy while fostering resilient ecosystems.

### **Tackling Noxious Weeds: A Persistent Challenge**

Noxious weeds remain a pressing issue for Mendocino County's farmers, ranchers, and land managers. Invasive species such as Yellow Starthistle, Gorse, Goat Rue, Shiny Geranium, Medusahead, Bull Thistle, and Poison Hemlock continue to encroach on productive lands, outcompeting native vegetation, reducing forage quality for livestock, and increasing wildfire hazards in our forested regions. Noxious weeds are plants designated by governmental entities as harmful to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property. They are often non-native and invasive, meaning they can outcompete native vegetation and disrupt ecosystems. Legally, a noxious weed is a plant officially declared injurious by federal, state, or local governments. These weeds, many classified as A- or Q-rated by the state, can spread rapidly through seeds, vehicles, and wildlife, resulting in annual economic losses estimated in the millions statewide.

In July, our team submitted a Project Progress Report to CDFA on our successful multi-year Caspar Gorse Eradication Project on high-risk zones coastal rangelands. Through integrated pest management (IPM) approaches—including mechanical removal and biological controls—we eradicated approximately 100 acres of Gorse infestations. Community education played a vital role, engaging over 25 landowners in matching commitments to these eradication efforts. Reports of new sightings, such as those encouraged by our partnership with the, have enabled swift responses to emerging threats.

A significant milestone this month is the formal reactivation of our CDFA WMAGP grant project opportunity. This agreement revitalizes the Mendocino County WMA, a collaborative framework chaired by our department and involving partners such as the MCRCD, U.S. Forest Service, and local nonprofits. Previously limited by funding constraints, the WMA is now poised for expansion with multi-year support to coordinate countywide efforts.

This Weed Management Area designation can fund key activities, including:

- Enhanced mapping and monitoring using GIS technology to track weed distributions.
- Public outreach campaigns to promote “clean equipment” protocols and volunteer eradication events.
- Pilot projects for innovative controls, such as sheep and cattle grazing in sensitive habitats.

This reactivation aligns with CDFA’s statewide goals to bolster local WMAs, ensuring Mendocino County remains successful with invasive species management. We anticipate measurable reductions in weed densities by year’s end, safeguarding our vineyards, timberlands, and natural resources.

Looking ahead, we will invite stakeholders to join our upcoming WMA steering committee meetings.

“Weeds are great travelers; they are, indeed, the tramps of the vegetable world. They are going east, west, north, south; they walk; they fly; they swim; they steal a ride; they travel by rail, by flood, by wind; they go underground, and they go above, across lots, and by the highway. ~John Burroughs (1837–1921)

Together, we can build a weed-resilient future for Mendocino County.