

## CRC Ramps Up Weed Mitigation Efforts

**By Megan Birzell**

For the past two years, CRC has coordinated the Clearwater Watershed Weed Mitigation Task Force, an open and diverse group of stakeholders and community members that has been working to expand weed mitigation efforts across ownership boundaries in the valley. Shortly after it formed, the Task Force decided that the most effective way to treat weeds across the valley is to first know where they are currently present and absent in the valley and to develop a coordinated strategy for mitigating weeds.

Using this approach, the Task Force began a weed mapping program in 2009. With funding and partnership from the National Forest Foundation, Missoula County Weed District, Double Arrow Ranch Land Owners' Association, Seeley Lake Community Foundation, and the Ecosystem Management Research Institute, the Task Force mapped over 150 miles of roads and 50 randomly selected ¼-mile transects in the northern end of the valley.

The Task Force also developed the Clearwater Valley Coordinated Invasive Weed Strategy to guide weed mitigation efforts. The Strategy, available at [www.crcmt.org](http://www.crcmt.org), provides descriptions of all widespread weeds and new invaders as well as several "watch list" species that currently exist in neighboring valleys but haven't invaded the Clearwater yet. The Strategy also lays out a coordinated plan for mitigating weeds by class (widespread, new invader, watch list) using biological, chemical, and manual methods.

Building on the successes of last year, the Task Force is increasing its efforts for 2010. With funding and partnership from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund, National Forest Foundation, Seeley Lake Community Foundation, Seeley Lake Ranger District, Missoula County Weed District, and Double Arrow Ranch Land Owners' Association, the Task Force plans to map 300 additional miles of roads and 100 additional randomly placed ¼-mile transects. Further, the Task Force will coordinate chemical weed treatment on 275 acres of Plum Creek and Forest Service land in the northern portion of the valley. Finally, the Task Force will host a biological control education day in August that will engage community members in the release of insects that eat spotted knapweed.

To learn more about the Weed Mitigation Task Force and all of its programs, visit [www.crcmt.org](http://www.crcmt.org), call Megan Birzell at 677-0069, or come to the next Task Force meeting scheduled for Monday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, at 10am at the CRC office (in the Montana Lakes Real Estate building).

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