Summaries of Five Focus Groups held in Cache Valley, Utah, during 2012 in Support of the Following Research Publication:

Focus Group 1 – Front Line Professionals
April 10, 2012

1. Question: Which weeds are the biggest problem in the Paradise area?

Medusahead is causing growers the largest losses (several agreed). There are also small infestations of leafy spurge, knapweed, and dalmation toadflax and these are another concern. These have small isolated patches and we don’t want them to become another Dyer’s Woad. We can eradicate these and control most of the other weeds.

Landowner’s bottleneck is spring feed. Heavy spring grazing tends to change the plant composition in favor of medusahead. Tough cycle to break. Medusahead causes the most losses, is taking the most resources, and has the most public attention. It’s a challenge to control, there’s no real prescribed way to get rid of it. It shows up where wildlife like to winter on south facing slopes; wildlife constitute a big vector problem. Controlling other species might have better return on the dollar. Landowners will see medusahead as causing the most losses. Some musk and scotch thistle are also around and perceived by the public. There is plenty of Dyer’s Woad. Medusahead has the worst economic impact right now. Medusahead is dominant on sites that are difficult to manage and the species is persistent; a real challenge and it is discouraging.

2. Question: Are any of you also landowners with noxious weed problems?

No. Some in the group have leased land, but not in the weed prevention area.

3. Question: What have been the biggest challenges for getting landowners involved in the WPA program?

There is no guaranteed fix. Why put money into something if it isn’t going to work? Or some landowners resist investing in control if their neighbors won’t do weed control. The weed infestation is “not my fault.” There is no solution. We already tried. Elk move the seeds anyway and you can’t control the wildlife.

We have failed in the past, so we have no “success story.” We started weed control but everybody left. Nobody delivered. People need confidence that the program will work and confidence in the longevity of the program.

Some people don’t like chemicals, but they will try alternatives like burning or reseeding. Rocky south slopes are hard to deal with and medusahead loves them. It is hard to burn those sites. Medusahead is a tough competitor. Treatments can’t just be one or two years; they have to continue for a long time.

The cost of treatment to landowners on south facing slopes that the medusahead likes can be high, and these sites aren’t very productive anyway. Economics are a problem, although some agencies have come up with some money. Landowners couldn’t really afford to undertake control by themselves. Not a quick fix; it takes years.
Control requires a lot more management—and different management—than people are used to, or they feel they cannot do it. Landowners may need to invest 15-20 years for weed management.

Some people just don't want to work with government agencies. The vast majority would like a certain reliable fix, but that is lacking. County makes weed-control decisions based on estimated return.

Many landowners just don't know what they have on their land. There is a lack of education and trust—people combine county politics (roads, easements) with weed control. We try to keep out of these other issues and remind landowners that we “just do weeds.”

Producers need to feel that the person starting the project with them would finish it with them; they need reliable people and programs for support over 5-7 years. We need to be there for the long haul; they don't want someone who will only be there a year or so.

We want key landowners to have control and consistency in a program. They need to have a steering committee. It helps to get funding for a WPA if landowners make decisions and agencies just help out. We have built trust among various agencies; many landowners now have stronger, trusting relations with agencies.

If landowners had a prescription and money, they would get involved.

We can't push management issues until we have a good feel for a prescription for control. It is hard to ask someone to do something if we aren't sure it will work.

4. Question: What do you believe are the most noteworthy successes of the WPA?

There has been a change of attitude in the way we approach issues and we have changed the way we run a program. We have also changed landowner’s thinking. For example, instead of where are the weeds, we think more about how to keep an area weed free. Can we protect an area before weeds get there?

We have looked back at what has been done, we coordinate and catalog results, and better records have been kept. Memory alone does not help us recall what really happened. Now when we find what works, we can share the information. We are better able to remember what happened and what worked.

We’ve had more information sharing and been more organized at what we do. A central database isn’t yet available, however. A lot of information but it is not centrally located. We would like to have a newsletter to get more information out there to all landowners in the valley.
has some historical information on how the WPA evolved. Information is out there, but it is just not in one place.

Weed mapping has been done and this has put a spatial scale on the issue. Maps have really got people's attention, "Oh, this is where it's at." "OK, now we see the problem."

There has been increased coordination of on-the-ground efforts.

How big is the problem? We can see it now. How do we prevent weeds from spreading to the rest of the state? Implications affect other areas.

We received funding in Utah to deal with the problem. We were able to bring government leaders to the area. Participation tours bring problems to government's attention. The project is still talked about at the state level.

We have been able to educate the public.

Weed mapping has been done, but it is not generally available. Access to information is limited to what was done on your property only because of privacy laws. Information is not well organized, but it is a work in progress and is available.

The WPA is not specific to any one weed. The WPA can focus on new issues. Need to work on protecting the WPA members from other invasive weeds, but we can't walk away from the medusahead issue. We can't lose trust of the landowners.

The WPA provides a rallying point to bring assistance and people together. The WPA creates new partnerships. There are benefits to creating such relationships. This is a success.

Landowners are very confident in the program now. They will work together with us even though the problem is very big.

We've had success in weed mapping and success with reduction in seed yields of some species (medusahead). More important has been the general awareness building—the biggest success.

We have created trust in agency people. We have increased education on weed awareness. Now people know what the problem is.
5. Question: What weed-control methods have been most effective so far?

Not much success to speak of.

Use of chemical treatment, and followed by reseeding and post-treatment site management, have shown success. Replace the weed community with a healthy plant community. Holistic approach works best.

Consistent efforts year after year are the most effective. Consistent spraying, reseeding, and managing are those that do best.

Chemical looks good because it has the quickest reaction, but weeds need to be replaced with something else. Have to seed and then manage the site to protect the seeding. Need to get people to manage better.

You can’t measure the success of weed control in the short term; it takes years and years. showed some success in plots after giving up 7 years before.

Fire and farming (ploughing) have been successful. Fire can be done but it takes more coordination and it has a high risk.

People need to work together and learn from each other.

Need long-term work and coordination. Consistency is lacking. Weather is also a variable. What works for one situation doesn’t work for another. The timing of precipitation each year is critical. Need to sort out site and year effects.

Burning was good and showed results, reseeding after burns really helped the effects be more persistent. Some of this work was published.

Previous fire made new treatments more effective. Burn effects were persistent from 20 years ago.

Spring treatment of herbicide and fall reseeding seems to be the most effective. If the landowner has higher precipitation, this also works better.

Pushing the thatch layer to the ground is important.
6. **Question:** What weed-control methods have been the least effective so far?

Grazing has been least effective. It is management intense and not everyone can do it.

Doing nothing is least effective.

Doing just one thing (spraying) and then walking away is not good. People don’t see solutions as an adaptive process, and they need to adjust and continue to problem solve. They need to be holistic in their approach.

One guy does something, but his neighbors don’t. He can’t keep up interventions under those conditions.

Need to see weed control as adaptive process, why did it work or not work? Keep trying and learning from mistakes.

In his enthusiasm, sometimes a government agent tries to sell a treatment to a landowner without being realistic about the commitment required. It needs a long-term approach and requires multiple elements to succeed. It is like dealing with cancer (chemo, surgery, diet, etc).

Using outside data from anther area that doesn’t apply to our situation causes problems. Causes failure when use outside data on local problems.

We focus on getting rid of medusahead, but not on how to maintain land once the weed is gone. We don’t plan far enough ahead. Didn’t warn landowners that cows need to be moved for two years. Help landowners find ways to get through time periods when grazing should be changed.

7. **Question:** Is it really possible to control the spread of weeds in the WPA?

Yes! Absolutely, for generalized weeds. Prefer early detection and rapid response so we can stop infestations early. Over the years we have limited infestations of spotted knapweed and dalmation toadflax.

We can stop certain weeds for sure. This requires a lot of cooperation, however, and landowners need to tell us what they have on their property. This is the purpose of a WPA. We can stop star thistle and others. We cannot stop Dyer’s Woad. It may be too late for some other weeds, but we should have learned our lessons and can work on others that we can still control.
It is a modest amount of work to control weeds that are just starting to invade. Cost is minimal before they get widespread. We can do a ton of early eradication work for $1000.

Many weeds are too widespread to get rid of now, but we can stop their spread and decrease their abundance. Are there any lost causes? Some of those that have been difficult to control include: Canada thistle, leafy spurge, poison hemlock, Murdock helms tongue, Dyer’s Woad, and perhaps medusahead. Medusahead is borderline, and spatial scale matters. For example, if the goal becomes how to limit the spread of medusahead from Cache County to other Utah counties, then the goal becomes attainable once again. What boundaries are we talking about?

Return value on treating some acres is just not worth the investment for medusahead. Not just one problem causing it. Can’t control wildlife or quarantine animals.

Everything we do helps others avoid medusahead problem. Each landowner and county should help each other and stop the spread elsewhere. We have information to share.

Feel good about leafy spurge because the insects will do a good job controlling it over time.

8. Question: Have you considered recommending that WPA members use livestock grazing to control weeds?

No, because we need holistic, multi-factor management.

Some weeds can be controlled by grazing. Also this depends on the level of infestation. Preferences of animals for certain species matters as well.

Need to think about the evolution of plants and animals. Plants that can survive grazing have characteristics that must be compared to those of weeds. We have a lot less fuel buildup problems when we have more animals. Grazing is more than eating weeds and we need animals to graze to make things better in general.

Grazing needs to be used with other options. Grazing can knock some weeds back and then use another option. Grazing may be used to control weeds; but not weed eradication. Cows will eat white top and Dyer’s Woad.

A good example of holistic management is as follows. Goats can eat leafy spurge, then herbicide can be applied followed by reseeding. This approach is very intensive.

Need intense damage to the plant from grazing for control. Need to use enough animals. Grazing needs to be very controlled. Timing and spatial scale are important. You can control weeds if you go intensive enough. It is hard for landowners to control all the variables. The management window varies every year.
Germination also varies by year. The calendar is different every year and some producers can’t plan around the weather. They have dates on their permits to turn in and turn out. They have to run their operation based on those dates. Do smaller operators have the chance to be better grazing managers? Can we work with them to change fencing and get them to look at the plants, not the calendar? Lots of variation among landowners in their ability to implement grazing plans.

Professionals need education to do intensive grazing so they may train landowners. The potential is there where we could hit some weeds pretty hard. Thatch from medusahead is composed of silica and heavy infestations need to be trampled because cows can’t stick their noses through the thatch to get to the new growth. Also, one can’t stock too heavy for too long. Some of the operations with the most medusahead are those having heavier grazing pressure. There’s a lot of factors to consider.

Grazing has benefits beyond weed control – it also promotes a healthy stand of grass. Removing cows from the range would be detrimental. Medusahead has crowded in where there is no grazing. In some places grazing stops medusahead.

Medusahead coincides with cool season grasses (early May), so animals will eat it then. Medusahead comes in later than cheatgrass, however. Sometimes medusahead is active at the same stage as grasses. In Box Elder County medusahead greens up in the fall, so then grazing animals prefer it to the decadent, dried-up perennials at that time.

9. **Question: As the WPA moves forward, should anything be changed to improve the effectiveness of the program?**

Weed Board and Steering committee were going to give information to landowners and then let peer pressure work. Landowners were going to drive the WPA, but the process takes too much time for a volunteer to endure.

Some landowners don’t have the time or experience to do something so big. Focus is needed to reach long-term goals, explore all the options, and then provide 5-year guidelines or something to keep the members task-oriented and able to accomplish goals.

There are many great ideas, but they get scattered. It is now harder to see goals and objectives. The WPA is starting to come together again. Need better organization and clear-cut goals. Trt establ, mgt options...keep on task.

If we had started out with a “weed management guide” at the beginning, that would have been helpful. We would like to use a guide to start up other WPAs.

There is a guide now published as to how to establish a weed prevention area. Copies can be obtained from [name] at USU.
It is important that the WPA focus on more than one weed problem. This doesn’t take away from medusahead. We can stop other infestations to show some success. Need to stabilize the area. Keep the momentum going on medusahead that the group already has underway. Spotted knapweed and scotch thistle could be reduced.

Resources are coming in because of the medusahead problem; thus we need to stay in the area and keep working on medusahead as a priority. We need to expand our efforts and get more resources to manage other infestations.

We need to increase landowner participation to better combine efforts. How do you get more combined efforts? Talk about it in meetings. Fliers haven’t changed our focus. Lack of feedback.

Stay focused on medusahead and let landowners talk to weed manager about other weeds. # on medusahead and # on broader spectrum of weeds; but coordination

Be better organized and more interactive with all partners in the WPA. Need a few more coordinating meetings. Expand our horizons.

Give a bounty for finding select, priority weeds, and then go help them treat new sites. Similar to having a coyote bounty. Let’s get together and talk about it and expand the WPA without over burdening someone. Need to regain momentum and sharpen WPA focus.

Spread education and expertise: give more fliers out, have smaller groups to talk about other specific weed issues. Convene special WPA subgroups.

Need research money to assist the effort, since outside data has not worked in this area. One of goals is to find research dollars. We are beginning this process now.

10. Question: What ideas do you have to get more landowners involved in the WPA program?

Need to show some success. Most important is to show how good a piece of land could be. People may not know they can have an improved situation.

The # ranch has a good chronology of weed management impact over many years. A good example of outreach education and landowner initiative.

Need more field tours to show changes over time. Need to encourage landowners to learn more and do most of the field work once he has seen success. We can demonstrate the process.

Get landowners to see how they can do the work. Educate them on the process.
Provide chemicals if they will do the work. Get a strong Weed Board member to start the process. Key landowners make a big difference. Empower our Weed Board people with the ability to do weed control.

Some people refuse to change even when they see their neighbors be successful.

Find people who would like to be active in the WPA, but don’t know how to get started or who to ask. These are the ones to work with.

Find peers and agency personnel who are willing to help. Get to know people so it is a personal, face-to-face relationship, not just an organizational relationship.

Have a piece of equipment (seed drill) people can use and the chemicals that are needed. Good demonstration value.

Help people buy smaller amounts of chemicals at lower cost. Sometimes they just need to learn how to use it and help them get the tools. Sales people are often successful because they are interested and there to help landowners get started, and we need more of that attitude.

Make weed control fun, like the paintball application idea. Don’t require a lot of equipment. Put chemicals in paintballs so it is a discrete application. Other ways to treat small patches would be good.

Post signs – “This is a Weed Prevention Management Area.” This should create interest. Make people aware so they don’t spread seed themselves. Prototype signs have been developed for Porcupine and other locations.

Attrition of landowners involved in the WPA over time is unclear.

Participation rates in the WPA may be as follows: 1/3 highly involved; 1/3 somewhat involved; 1/3 not involved.

Hard to get absentee landowners involved, they aren’t there to see problems and the treatment results. Some lack time, lack education, and are completely unaware.

Most of the absentee landowners have large acreages, but the number of these owners is small. They control large amounts of land in total.

Need to stay active and keep the enthusiasm high. Continue to get the coordinator position funded.

The coordinator position is key, since everyone is busy and has other things to do. Agency people are limited by other work-related demands. The coordinator could have an operating fund.
Field days are really important; we need to have something to show. Field days get people talking, gets them on the ground.

Need to schedule a meeting. We don’t know when the next steering committee meeting is. We could do a demonstration, a leafy spurge collection day, and show bio-control of leafy spurge. Show what the bugs can do. Tour some treated areas. Need to rejuvenate the group and increase excitement. Show some spring-treatment approaches.

We need to better understand the history of our efforts. A graduate student could compile a history of the WPA as a thesis chapter and write it up as a case study which would show all that we have done.

Meeting adjourned at 10 AM.
Focus Group 2—Pro-active Landowners

April 27, 2012

1. Question: As a landowner, which weeds are most of concern to you? Why are these weeds a concern?

Medusahead is the biggest problem. We have jointed goat grass under control. Bulbous bluegrass is getting to be a problem in hay fields and elsewhere. Bulbous bluegrass is getting into range pastures since it does well in the spring. Burdock is a bad one along streams and canals. There is a dislike for Dyer’s Woad, a highly visible weed.

Medusahead is of most concern because it has the potential to get away, and it probably has already in spite of all the work done on it. No real “this is how you control it” suggestions. So much success or lack of success (in control) depends on the timing of weather. There are varying results from year to year; some years good results. We sprayed it with Plateau and Oust. Oust has been outlawed, and Oust was doing some good—probably the most good.

Oust has been used in some sample plots recently. At the right level, Oust has a really good controlling effect. If we were able to burn, it would be helpful to get rid of the thatch. Burn permits are hard to get, but fire would be good to remove thatch.

Some people at meetings claim burning is bad because the quick nitrogen released benefits new Medusahead plants. Native plants don’t use this extra nitrogen very well. If you burned and then sprayed, so the spray could get to the ground, and then seeded with a storm following on, you would probably get the best results.

Many programs in Oregon really haven’t had the success that we have. may have had the most experience and success in this area. He also gets rid of a little bit of Bulbous bluegrass. He sprays in the spring using 10 ounces/acre of Plateau, hopefully followed by some rain. He has had the best success and has experience. He is getting back the competitive plants. He prefers that rhizomatous plants come back.

Airplane seeding really worked on one person’s place. Along with some rains, he kept the cattle off until fall. Want to see native grasses coming back. Since spraying and seeding for three years, the grasses are thicker and he kept cattle off for 1.5 years to spur improved grass cover. Now he can see the grasses coming. Hopefully, they can out-compete the Medusahead.

We can’t duplicate our own program year to year because of changes in the weather. Results vary; one year we did this and didn’t get results, then the next year we got good results. The next year there were medium results. There’s a lot of different variables with a lot of the weeds. Broad leafed weeds can be killed with 2-4 D; this is relatively easy.

Some of these weeds like Dyer’s Woad we will be fighting for 50 more years unless we can find some sort of biological control methods—a beetle or a mold or something—the same with Medusahead. Spraying alone just won’t work. There is a lot of expense with
spray, seeds, helicopters; could just about buy my place (with what I have spent). One of the problems with treatments is that we are spending more than the acres are worth. Medusahead is very persistent and the seeds are blown with the wind; it reseeds itself. No one has really said where Medusahead came from or how it is spread. Probably it didn’t come with a sheep flock or an elk herd. It is on property that has never had sheep on it and there’s also no elk. Think it spreads through the wind. The Ruby Pipeline will probably also get blamed for spreading weeds. They have spread some weeds the last two years.

2. Question: Why are you fearful of Medusahead?

No one has an answer for it. There is no consensus on control. Originally we said “let’s spray in October, then the next year the (herbicide company) representatives said we were wrong.” No real answer. Can’t get the results needed to control Medusahead.

Medusahead has taken over the range, and has even killed other undesirables – it takes over and none of the animals will eat it. We have a fear of the unknown. We know how to control burrs even though we can’t get rid of them. We don’t know how to control Medusahead. Also there is a large expense in control attempts.

Medusahead appears in “hard to get at spots;” can’t get on it with a tractor, you have to use a helicopter or a plane to do good control. That is expensive and you have to treat it year after year. Medusahead is still spreading even after treatments. Within 5 years it may take over and we may not have any grazing at all.

We need to fear Medusahead because of fire; the thatch will burn but it (the fire) will sweep up the slopes and won’t be stopped until it reaches Bear Lake. Thatch gets really thick so native grasses can’t reseed. Medusahead is even decreasing the sagebrush. We are concerned about where/when/how we are going to stop it.

We can see in the future that if we don’t get it stopped, it will take over. Medusahead won’t do well on north-facing slopes, but everything facing south will be taken over by Medusahead. We have noticed that nothing will eat it – not even grasshoppers. It has a lot of silica. It must have a bitter, rotten taste.

[Some animals will eat it at first, but once it heads out nothing will eat it. Sheep will eat it until it heads out. Silica (content) increases with plant maturity. Need to run chemical analyses on Medusahead.]

3. Question: Do you believe it is possible to control the spread of weeds on your property?

Absolutely – we need to figure it out and get the right tools. People will figure it out. That’s what humans do, we figure these things out. There isn’t a magic bullet and it will take a long time before we get it whipped. We need new tools—probably a biological
tool (rust, mold, or an insect)—then we can eventually control it, although some will always be there. Or we need a cost-effective spray.

4. **Question: What types of weed control have you used on your land?**

Round-up was tried—then sites were reseeded. Haven’t seen results from that. Most types of spray have been used—mainly Plateau. Also Round-up and Oust. We tried some spraying of weeds with [redacted] and Cache County as collaborators. Used Oust, then burned, and could see results. Reseeding was bad because it happened during a few dry years. We just couldn’t get things to grow again. Oust can limit the recovery of other native plants.

Not sure what [redacted] used. Might be Landmaster, but it was knocking out Medusahead. But it was also reducing native grasses, which might be bad for spreading Medusahead. In Montana, Oust was blown around and caused crop damage to neighbors, so it was outlawed.

5. **Question: Which of these methods have worked best for you so far?**

We sprayed Plateau at the end of October at a rate of about 6 ounces per acre. We only got about 10% killed by the next spring. The next fall we used 8 ounces per acre about the second week of September, and this showed good results the next spring. Good storms came along. We had better luck on areas when sprayed with our own equipment in the fall, because we can control the application rates a bit better. Maybe we got better coverage when using our own tractor. We got a better kill than spraying with the helicopter. When sprayed with the helicopter, it comes back under the brush where the spray couldn’t get it and then spreads. Need to keep at it. Got strips killed with the helicopter. [redacted] says spraying in May gets the best kill with Plateau. Then reseed (no-till) using range drills.

We have tried everything. One land owner used a county range drill to reseed in some areas and a helicopter in other areas—will be able to see differences in seeding with the airplane. Some people think seeding with an airplane is just like throwing it away. The real key is storm timing. [redacted] got the best results with seeding because seeded last April then the rain came in. He just hadn’t been able to get it done before. Luck with weather is probably key to spraying or seeding actions. We can’t use short-term forecasts. Scheduling an airplane or helicopter must been done six weeks ahead of time. We can’t just plan to spray before a storm happens. In general you need to target a rainy month for the treatments.

What would happen if we should seed on top of the snow? If the seed stays cold, it won’t germinate until next spring and has moisture. We tried seeding really late in the year about November. Don’t know if it worked. South-facing slopes warm up in January so seed germinates there and then a frost. They should be seeding in the spring. We haven’t checked this spring. We need a spray that won’t kill other grass. Plateau kills winter and
early spring annuals like cheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass, medusahead, and jointed goatgrass.

Chemical companies are just pulling stuff they already have off the shelf and saying “try this.” They are probably working on products, but not specific research on medusahead. A big area in the West has medusahead, but there is probably not enough money in it yet (to justify commercial investment in the chemical research). The university has done research, but we haven’t seen the results. used whatever stuff the chemical companies were giving him.

6. Question: Are there any types of weed control that you have tried that have NOT worked?

Grazing—annuals (should be) grazed down and then won’t go to seed, but this didn’t work with Medusa. Animals just wouldn’t eat it. We tried to graze it down so it doesn’t come back. This sort of worked on goat grass, but not Medusahead.

Everything has worked a little bit, but there is not a cure-all. No cut-and-dry “this will work.” Doing nothing doesn’t work either. You can’t ignore it. We would have a bigger mess if people weren’t working on it. We have ignored it until 4-5 years ago.

People have to know that they have it (Medusahead) on their land. showed people what the plant looked like. Medusahead really didn’t become a problem until 5 years ago. People still often don’t know what it is and aren’t concerned about it. It was first really seen in the spring of 2008. We saw an infestation up to your knees, just a solid matt, on a field tour. had been trying to do something; burning, spraying, and re-seeding. It became an unbelievable problem. We also looked at test plots. has a patch that is above your knees. Left unchecked, that stuff just goes nuts.

7. Question: It is our understanding that you have been actively involved in the WPA program in Paradise. Are you all members of the steering committee? What is your role?

We have been part of the steering committee—some members of this group have been on the steering committee, and some have not. One person thinks he is still on the steering committee, but we haven’t had a meeting for a while. Do we even know who is on the steering committee? and are some members. There isn’t a time commitment. Time is volunteered for the committee; there is not a set commitment.

8. Question: How does the steering committee work?

The coordinator used to be . The committee hasn’t really functioned for the last six months or a year. We used to meet 2-3 times each year. The committee has slowed down . The committee was main task; he was the PR
9. Question: What is the steering committee supposed to do?

The steering committee should get input from local people and give feedback to agency folks with the idea that we share what has happened. We are leaning on agencies a lot to help with this; everything from spraying (themselves) to furnishing sprays to helping us line things up. We've leaned on them more the last few years than we did the first year. They’ve helped a lot.

We don’t have the input from the producers that we did the first year or two, especially with the Medusahead. There would be 20-25 people attending meetings earlier.

You can only stay fired up for so long. We worked really hard for the first few years, but as we started doing spraying, etc., we kind of lost our (momentum). A person plans to work on the steering committee for 3 years.

Nobody was there to take over from the original people who had worked for the first 3 years. The committee needs to be (re-energized); now we need more people to get involved. The next group of committee members hasn’t come in yet.

The agencies have tried to keep things going. It is hard to recruit new committee members if we do not know them personally.

10. Question: If Medusahead is so frightening, why aren’t there lots of people working on it?

There are no super results and it’s expensive, so are we going to commit to 3 to 5 years on a program when we may not get real good response and it will cost a bunch of money?

What we have done was get landowners with big properties involved at first (they had thousands of acres each). We did a good job of mapping weeds on the land of the major landowners. We had the core of major land owners at first.

The first properties we sprayed probably represented 50,000 acres. It’s not all over, however, just in spots. The owners of the land represented thousands of acres.

Someone with 2 acres can’t spray by air—-the helicopter pilots refuse to try spraying small parcels because it’s too easy to damage small gardens, flowers, and trees. The helicopter can’t go down near someone’s flower garden; it will kill everything and splatter the windows.

A small landowner (often) doesn’t know what Medusahead looks like; doesn’t want a weedy property, but really doesn’t know what the weeds are. The message is that we don’t really know how to kill it anyway, and it is going to cost a lot of money—and we do
not have the right equipment. What do you gain? Some people don’t understand why others are concerned. This is why we need more ramrodding to keep the steering committee going.

Different types of people live in the area. They have 3 acres and work in town. Some aren’t agriculture people so they don’t understand land management. They move here to be away from everything else and don’t understand the problems that we have. They don’t care if a weed takes over my little hill. They are not farmers. They don’t have animals and they are not making a living from the land.

They don’t understand, and it is hard to explain that they need to control weeds so they don’t invade land where people have to make a living from agriculture. There’s a whole different philosophy and they don’t have the background in agriculture.

Probably it is not that they don’t care, it’s just not a concern. It is hard to control your weeds when your neighbors don’t do anything on their sides of the fence. You can’t control weeds that way; there are little patches all over. Larger areas are continually reseeded because of that problem.

Some people give up on weed control because of cost. You spend a lot of money, but you are not making any progress. There isn’t a real return like you get with fertilizer; you see the increase come back. You know it has to be done, but it is hard because you don’t see a return on your investment.

We have a really good support from Cache County. [Blank] has been super to help. Other agencies have helped, but they are limited because they can only do some things. [Blank] has been able to help us with the spray—he’s just been super. If he wasn’t involved, we would have done a lot less.

When we have tried to talk to subdivision people (ranchette owners) about controlling Dyer’s Woad, they say “it is so pretty.” They don’t understand the problem. How do you go to those people and say you’ve got to spray 5 acres? Especially those who don’t like to use spray. We have got a lot of people who just refuse to spray on their ground. The Weed Board has discussed how landowners big or small should control their weeds. There are ordinances to do so.

Ordinances are not enforced. People should take care of weeds or be ticketed. Never seen or heard anyone get a ticket or even someone coming to the door that has authority to say “hey you’ve got a weed problem, you need to take care of it; if you don’t, the county will take care of it for you and add it to your taxes.” It can be done, but authorities won’t do it.

We asked [Blank] about that and he said legally it is almost impossible to go spray someone’s ground, even though there are laws that say we can. He said you just couldn’t do it. [Blank] will go talk to people. We have tried that.
Dyer’s Woad is an example. We fought for a long time; we got some results, but it didn’t go away. Now it is getting some sort of smut or rust. That’s what it is going to take with Medusahead, and probably with thistle and everything else.

11. Question: Do you feel the WPA program has been a net benefit to you as a landowner?

Most felt good about the benefits of the WPA. If we hadn’t banded together, it would have been much worse. It was good to get us together as a group and focused on the problems. I’m sure there will be another weed in a few years and we will band together and go after that one just like we did for Dyer’s Woad. We don’t see as much Dyer’s Woad as we used to see. Leafy Spurge was getting to be a problem, but they have been really good about getting (this species) reduced. There has also been some good bio-control; there is an insect that will eat Leafy Spurge.

The WPA is a good thing to have. We can all learn from each other’s experiences of what we are trying to do. We’ve been educated by others.

12. Question: Do you plan to stay involved with the WPA? How does that work?

We would like to stay involved, but we need stronger leadership. Does the WPA still exist? There needs to be clarity on what the priorities of the coordinator should be. We are not sure if someone has told coordinators that “your job is to get people together;” maybe it really isn’t their job—it is not clear to us. We still need to get together regularly. We need someone to help us do that again.

There is the Little Bear Conservation Alliance which is a grass roots group of us out here that are actually getting along and working together. The one thing that everyone is in agreement on is fighting weeds. That could be the next step for the WPA; to just kind of join together with the alliance. There is another meeting the first May; you are welcome to join. There are committee chairs and a board of directors. We have invited the NRCS and will have presentations. We will be talking about conservation easements this time along with some other items. We talk about weeds a lot. The group was formed to include broader issues such as the road through [Redacted] Covers a lot of landowner issues, not just weeds; that they get together on. They’ve said here are some problems how are we going to go about solving them. Weeds have kind of held it together. There could be a good mix.

[Redacted] was going to school so the coordinator job was part-time. [Redacted] has been part-time. The conservation district paid [Redacted]; he was hired as an intern. They also had some money put in from the state department of agriculture, at least for [Redacted].

There are some questions about how the WPA got started. There is a kind of a nexus of people including [Redacted]. The WPA is part of the ARS. Other forms of grass roots organizations have formed to fill a gap. That’s what you really want. Maybe that’s attractive because it’s filling a few more needs rather than just weeds.
It is felt that the WPA kind of fell apart when [redacted] left the area. [redacted] and [redacted] left at the same time. The area covered by the WPA was from Bruce’s area to the South. Similar to the area covered by Little Bear Conservation District. [redacted] was secretary for the WPA. [redacted] really kept things going. [redacted] and others were started. There was a test plot up on [redacted] property.

13. Question: What are the characteristics of someone like [redacted] who can get an organization like this rolling?

[redacted] had connections. He worked at the [redacted] so he had connections with all types of groups at the university, the NRCS, etc. [redacted] had knowledge and knew who to call to find things out. He involved the Cache County Weed Dept. and kept them involved. [redacted] knew how to apply for different types of help. He could write up grants, etc. He had a lot of skills that the rest of us didn’t have. The young guys [redacted]; how are they going to pick up the stick for some of this? The WPA depended a lot on [redacted] for information about who to talk to, such as [redacted] or a natural resources group. [redacted] knew how to get several different government agencies together. That was probably part of his job.

14. Question: What ideas do you have concerning how to get more Paradise landowners involved in community weed control issues? Any ideas?

Need to get cops. Enforce ordinances.

Need to educate people—we have the university right here in our valley, and it could be a starting place to help educate people. We need to get the university to help teach about weed control; maybe help get grants; show ways to fight weeds; provide some tools and chemicals. We had a lot of newspaper articles for a time. So many articles were published that the newspaper editors wouldn’t take any more. The news was saturated with info on Medusahead. There is a need to make people aware of the problem; not sure the best way to start. Hard to go around to everyone’s doorstep and say you have a problem. Not sure if any agency would have to be involved.

Need to map and show people that they have a weed problem, even if it is small acreage or an absentee landowner. The problem still needs to be taken care of. You have to have the right approach—not “you’re bad,” nor “you’ve got a problem.” Rather, we should use “we” the community has a problem and need your help.” There has to be community buy-in.

The local person may not know what they have (in terms of weeds). We could send out an informational brochure with pictures and resources available. [redacted] or a county recorder might be able to give us a list of people for a mass mailing. People are willing to talk to students. Could use university resources—use students to become teachers, some sort of service/learning. Make it part of a class. Try to tap into that
resource. [redacted] lived in the area, knew everybody, and talked to a lot of people. He did
tell people some college students were coming to map weeds.

There are always people who don’t care. Need to get permission from landowner before
doing anything. Show an interest in the individual and show the person you care. We
have a problem all together; help us to make life better for everyone. Say how you are
going to make life better. Fortunately, Medusahead doesn’t have pretty yellow flowers.

Give incentives. For example to a landowner, “see the thatch over there; your house will
burn down if there is a wildfire. So get the thatch cleared out.”

Unless you know you have a problem, why would you go to some weed meeting? You
need to know there’s a problem to want to solve it. This is really an Extension problem to
get people involved.

END OF DISCUSSION
Focus Group 3—Landowners Formerly Active in Organized Weed Control

May 22, 2012

1. Question: As a landowner, which weeds are of the most concern to you, and why?

The consensus is that Medusahead is the biggest problem. This is because nothing will entirely get rid of it. Morning Glory has been another problem, but we can take care of it. Some people have dug up Medusahead and planted grain or something, but it continues to grow along fence lines. It would take a full-time worker to treat Medusahead, and it is hard to pay for control when you are a part-time (hobby) farmer. Cost, terrain, and time required for control are prohibitive. It is easy to see from a helicopter how badly Medusahead has spread through the area, especially where it isn’t being worked. There’s a monster in the making, but we are not sure how to deal with it.

One person has noticed that cows will eat Medusahead in the late fall when it gets moistened, and then it didn’t spread so much. Another person has also wondered if his cows aren’t eating it. They will eat the residue. Burning works, but it is scary to burn in the fall (because it might escape). Spraying has helped. The challenge has been to get something else to grow behind it (Medusahead). You can kill it (Medusahead) easily, but then it’s the first thing to grow back. It is hard to graze it before seed-set in the spring because there are other, more palatable forages available then.

2. Question: Do you believe it is possible to control the spread of weeds on your property?

We can’t stop them altogether, but we can control weeds. If you don’t work at it, it gets really bad. There will always be some weeds. You kind of have to decide which one (weed) you hate the most. You need enough time and money. There isn’t a cultural practice (grazing, cultivation, etc.) to control Medusa that works.

3. Question: What are the most common weed-control methods you have used on your property?

Spraying is most common. It takes a lot of learning because of timing and using the correct amount. In a bare-ground treatment, you can sterilize it (the ground) and you probably won’t even see the puncture weeds if you get enough herbicide on there. Weeds grow on the top of the soil and they don’t need very much cover. After germination the seeds don’t need any nutrients, they are already growing and just explode. After that you can spray and exert some kind of control, but Medusahead is so widespread it’s hard to control completely. Even though farmers
are trying to control it, it still comes in from other areas just like Dyer’s Woad. They dug the (Ruby) pipeline and said they’d get on the weed control. The pipeline excavation turned over the soil and seeds are exploding. Seeds are good for 4-5 years, no matter how much you spray. Need to get everyone involved with equipment, GPS, helicopters, whatever you are going to do – can’t control weeds just as a normal farmer. Spraying has been the most common approach.

Medusahead doesn’t compete real well against an aggressive wildland seed mix (assortment of native plants). Some seed will compete it out. Medusahead won’t compete well, for example, against Scotch Thistle. One person had success over-seeding 4-5 years ago, and the new cover is competing against Medusa. Disturbed soil is the worst problem in our experience. We need to find a competitive plant to compete against Medusahead.

4. Question: Do you have examples of weed control that worked really well?

Competition from aggressive native plants can work well for Medusahead. Burning and then re-seeding was successful on [redacted]. Was very successful—you can see it even now. Can’t burn everything, but they used an intense heat generated from behind a tractor on property up the South Fork road during late summer or early fall. One person had been on a tour when they were doing the work. They [redacted] have done a lot of work. We have heard [redacted] treatment worked, but they had to have burned early because of fire control. There has been a lot of success because you can see where people aren’t doing anything and it (Medusahead) is worse. Spraying from helicopter has really worked; we don’t see as much (Medusahead) as we used to.

The combination of repeat spraying followed by over-seeding with competitive plants has given some good results, but also some bad results. The bad results include soil sterilization and increased bare ground. Medusahead can be killed if you dig it up. The understanding that Medusahead seed will stay viable in the soil for a long time.

5. Question: What will happen if you don’t try to control Medusahead?

A person can spot Medusahead when flying; there’s a difference in color even now, but especially in the fall. It is coming from Idaho; probably since its worse up there. Spray from helicopters can help quite a bit. Some pieces of property have been sprayed so heavy that even the soil has been sterilized. The sites have been reseeded three times in the last 15 years. The only thing that grows there now is Medusa. Have had some real bad things happen and some real good things happen. Have to plant something before Medusahead becomes the dominant plant. You can plow a field and it never takes control. It never really took control in the pasture; it didn’t cover itself like they say it does in my pasture. Seeds stay viable in the soil a long time because of the silica (content). In order to destroy it (Medusa), it has to be sprouted when you spray or almost sprouted. Medusa seed stays viable in the soil much longer than anything else.
6. **Question**: Are there any methods that you have tried over the years that failed?

Disturbing the soil makes the Medusahead problem worse. You can’t treat rangeland like an agricultural field or a hay field. You can’t water in something else you want to grow. You shouldn’t disturb rangeland soil. You can see the pipeline because the first thing that grew back was Dyer’s Woad the whole length of it. We really try to steer away from a lot of soil disruption.

7. **Question**: Have you considered using livestock grazing to control Medusahead on your land?

Some members of the group have wondered if cattle will eat it. People say cattle won’t eat it. If the plants are spread out then the thatch isn’t a problem. One person has seen cows eat even tall Medusa. They have heard of goats clearing out Medusahead, but it takes a couple of years. Goats will eat anything. Some have seen cows eating Medusa in the fall when it first snowed. The group wondered if the high silica content affects livestock eating it. Sheep will control Dyer’s Woad. If sheep will control it, people like the should have any problems. Horses won’t eat Medusahead. Some of the group members had no experience using grazing to control weeds.

8. **Question**: When and for how long were you actively involved in the WPA (with ) and why did you become less active? Were you involved at the beginning or were you on the sidelines watching? Tell us a little about how you connected with the WPA and if you are still closely involved.

It started in the mid-1990s with the FSA and Natural Resources (SCS or NRCS?) paid money to spray (some with helicopters) weeds early on. We quit grazing that land for about three years; they paid me to quit grazing so I cut the herd down. That got a few more people interested. bought the place above me after that, and he had a weed problem. I talked to him quite a bit about it, and he was able to get more people interested (in weed control). One participant hasn’t done as much the last few years since was doing it. was doing a good (better) job so this person hasn’t done as much and followed lead.

A fire got away when burning Medusahead—the fire went clear over to Mantua; probably 8 years ago. That got more interest so people knew what the stuff (Medusa) was. Can’t believe how thick it is. The place where the fire started was as nice as a dry farm, you could get a tractor right to it. This farm was taken back over by Medusa. We haven’t been able to use controlled burns since the big fire got away. Don’t want risk of burning someone’s house down.

There was a big stir early on for about 10-12 years (1995-2007), gained a lot of momentum (for the WPA) mostly over Medusahead. It (the WPA) has kind of lost momentum since. We’ve been spending a lot of money and not getting very far. The NRCS has done a cost-share for weed control which really helps, but we are still spending a lot of (our) money on (what still is) an experiment. This all needs some new ideas. Maybe some new eyes will see something new. We
may be slipping backwards. We need to get everyone involved to avoid failure; that was part of the initial big push.

There needs to be a greater push to get weed control promoted. The momentum moves up and down. The type of treatment depends on the amount of thatch present. Burning is good if there is too much thatch, because you have to get that off. They (government) have clamped down on burning permits since it is so dry this year. We will have to try grazing or spray this year.

9. **Question: What do you think the percentage of landowners involved in the WPA has been? What is your best guess?**

We have so many new landowners now, we don’t know everyone. We use to know everyone around us for 100 miles. There are a lot of new residents now. People with 10 acres or less are not involved; or just a very few. (Involvement) seems pretty linear with the amount of property (more land, higher likelihood of involvement). Landowners who make a living from their property (50% of income at least from grazing) have a high percentage who are more involved—probably 90% of these people.

When neighbors don’t control weeds it spreads over into (neighbor’s) fields. I noticed that [name of neighbor], (who are my neighbors), have done some digging with a ripper. Maybe they are trying to help (on weed control) now.

10. **Question: Do you feel the WPA (Medusahead) program has had a net benefit to you as a landowner?**

Some were a bit confused about the “WPA” label. Most felt it (organizing) has been a great benefit. An organized group gets more people involved, and we are better off. It is cheaper to treat more acres with more people. There’s a definite monetary figure you can put on the benefit of working together.

Need the younger generation to get more involved. Land gets split up. Kids don’t listen about the importance of weed control even though they have been told. Will talk to kids more and try to get them more involved. Younger generation is too busy and hobby farmers aren’t making a living from their property. Property values might decrease unless you sell out to a subdivision. Concrete will get rid of it (Medusahead).

Younger people don’t grasp the concept of how big a detriment weeds are. The average age of farmers is now 58 years old. Younger people are really just helping dad and not really trying to make a living. If you don’t like farming you’d be crazy to hang around. Not enough money in it and it costs too much. Kids are getting a job (in town) so they can survive better. Now, especially with high equipment costs, you got to love it (farming) to stay in it. Younger people are getting high paying jobs with just 8-hour days and only 5 days a week.
11. Question: Do you plan to continue on as you are, or do you have plans to step aside from the WPA in the future? What about continuity?

Members of the group were trying to get their (middle-aged) “kids” involved and help them become more responsible. Some of the group members are planning to transfer property to their kids who are interested. Most plan to continue to support the WPA program. We have to continue as long as we are capable. Another spark (or new participants) will increase WPA activity. We would like to continue and increase enthusiasm. Once you see how bad Medusahead can become—from NRCS pictures out of Washington or Oregon—if someone realizes the potential for problems—it can get sometimes 3-4 feet tall—then folks would deal with it. Another person had seen how nasty it had become on a neighbors’ property—then they thought it was June grass at first. Increased educational efforts to show the (scope of) the potential problem would help. People don’t have any idea how (bad) Medusa can be. Education is not emphasized enough in weed control.

12. Question: Do you use the internet much? Would a good website help?

Could use the internet—some people use it, some don’t. There doesn’t seem to be a lot of good information easily available. The internet is a good tool to educate the younger kids.

13. Question: Are there things the WPA could be doing better?

Meetings like tonight where you sent us something in the mail and called us (are helpful). There could be something put in the newspaper and the internet to advertise WPA issues to get more people involved. One of the reasons one person is involved (in the WPA) is that he has 120 acres—which isn’t a lot—but he is involved (in weed control) so that he won’t hurt his neighbors. If he isn’t involved and let’s his place go to hell, it will hurt everybody else. People often don’t have the time or equipment for weed control, but that still is no excuse.

One person hadn’t heard that organized weed control was ever referred to as “WPA.” Other meetings talked about Medusahead problems in particular, not necessarily the “WPA.” The WPA probably has been funded for 5-6 years by the USDA/ARS and Paradise is one of several WPA sites in the region.

There is a need to thank people who have put in funding through the years—ARS and NRCS, also State of Utah and federal wildlife agencies.

The origin and purpose of the WPA needs more clarification.

The group was wondering if mapping efforts include taking pictures. It is mapped where they spray, but no photos to see effects.
It would be interesting to see an outside evaluator (of the weed control process) to assess the situation and see where we are at. We have tried a bunch of things, tried to get everybody involved. We would like to know more about what has been successful elsewhere, what other ongoing studies are there?

Need to consolidate rancher experiences and get research results publicized back to the community. It would be nice to find out what has been working here and elsewhere. There are some USU researchers who are working with folks in Oregon. What has been done that is successful? Both landowners and government have spent a lot of money, and we have had fair success, overall.

14. Question: What ideas do you have to get more Paradise landowners involved that have not been involved? What would you do?

Need something to show people. Make a list of everyone who has Medusahead. If we knew who had it, we would help them. The NRCS literature shows how bad it (Medusahead) could be; it shows we have been doing a pretty good job (in controlling it). We don’t have anything near as bad as NRCS has shown in other states.

We’ve been doing a good job because we have been battling it. Education goes a long way. If you are not involved with NRCS people you don’t know where to find information. People can go get maps, but they just don’t know who to contact. NRCS (NRCS) can show you on your own property exactly where Medusa is with NRCS maps. Some didn’t know it was mapped. If I knew who people were with weed problems, I might be more encouraging to them; I don’t know who they are for sure.

They (landowners) probably don’t even know they have Medusahead. Maps might even be on Google Earth. A lot of landowners might not even know what NRCS is. Group members could call neighbors if they knew they had a problem. Need publicity, communication, and a technical fix. Putting something on the (Paradise) Post Office bulletin board might increase public awareness of noxious weeds. You need to know you have a problem; describe the weed and the problem.

END OF DISCUSSION
November 28, 2012

Focus Group 4: Resident Landowners with less than 20 acres

1. Question: As a landowner, which weeds concern you the most?

Canadian thistle because it is hard to get rid of, they get in lawn and you can’t walk on the lawn. They are almost getting ahead of woad. Bunch of thistles in the valley. One person can keep up with it unlike woad.

Dyer’s woad because it is so difficult to eradicate. You work really hard to get rid of it and get up the next day and it is back.

Burdock because mowing spreads it.

Lamb’s tongue (probably hounds tongue or perhaps lambs quarter). Not sure where it came from but has been told that it is really bad for cows.

White top out in Avon.

Little Buttercup plant (not sure of name) which grows in areas with high water table, grows in boggy ground and gets into pastures. Cows will eat around it. Try to control it around fence lines but none of the neighbors do so it keeps creeping in. It will take over pastures.

Noxious rye (medusahead)

Hat shade along state roads (night shade?)

Cockleburrs have gotten worse in last three years

Chinese clover it is small with a little black berry on it. It has literally taken over the yard. Has gathered grass up and it still keeps spreading.

Invasive vine with green berry (might be nightshade). There’s a lot up the canyon. It is toxic, an atropine. There is another one with purple berries that is probably a nightshade.

They both look alike with different colored berries.

Don’t see much ragweed anymore, but there used to be a lot of it.
2. Question: Do you believe it is possible to control the spread of weeds on your property?

Yes, especially if everyone works together, it has to be a group effort. Seeds come through the water. Really need to have neighbors control weeds. Can’t get rid of Burdock, need more cooperation from neighbors. Can’t really control weeds until neighbors clean their weeds up. The individual can control regardless of how the seeds got there and work with neighbors. A person with small acreage needs a cooperative effort from neighbors and upstream. Most weeds spread locally. Can be a 24/7 job for one person.

3. Question: What types of weed control methods have you used on your land?

Chemical with hand pump, lawn mower, Roundup, cut alfalfa early to control woad although we have to sacrifice a little hay to do that, dig out by hand, “Scott’s plus 2”, plant lawn or pasture grasses to choke out weeds and spray a little. Sprays are bothering people. One person has a neighbor who suffers, it really bothers his chest, when they come out and spray (for mosquitos also) so she tries not to spray. Sprays can cause allergies. Choking weed out works the best.

4. Question: Which of these methods worked best for you?

Spraying straight down on plant works well with Dyer’s woad before it is in blossom. Will kill it for that year even if it does come back. Mostly digging with shovel then hauling off to the dump. Round up and taking a brush and paint roundup right on the vine. Have to watch some areas with light alkaline soils, if ground is plowed or broken and grass is killed, only weeds come back. As long as grass is there, there is limited weed growth but when ground is broken then it is weeds.

5. Question: Are there methods that have not worked?

Staring it down, cussing at weeds. Have to use a combination of things with thistles, one try doesn’t work. Tried to cut it down then spray rest with roundup. Thistle tends to grow underground because if you kill one plant, you get three somewhere else. Tried pulling them out by roots but come back next year.
6. Question: have you tried grazing?

No because NRCS people feel it is cropland and cropland cannot be grazed and still have greenbelt status. That needs to be changed in this county. Part of one person’s property is steep on a hillside so they graze it pretty light usually in the fall or early spring. Don’t know if it controls the weeds or spreads them.

Animals don’t eat a lot of the weeds, they just graze around the plants. Goats will eat some of the weeds but cows won’t. Even goats and sheep won’t eat some weeds. There will be little islands of weeds some of it is thistle.

Good management should control most weeds on rangelands.

Need contiguous management, overgrazing causes good plants to go away and the bad ones come in. Then they move to the valley along streams. They might need more animals to eat the weeds.

7. Question: Does the acronym WPA mean anything to you?

(no answers except 1930s program or wildlife something or another) Paradise WPA — explained a short history. One person was even on the county planning commission and never heard of it.

8. Question: What would motivate you to participate in the WPA program?

Would need evidence of a positive outcome; hard to get up for an exercise in futility.

War on Woad was working really good; was a good effort, we almost had it gone, then everyone just quit and it came from Box Elder. Then came a lack of interest.

Farming community encouraged everyone to participate. If you see woad, get it regardless of where it was. There wasn’t even a payoff at first.

If there were some good communication, people would get involved. Nobody heard about it, no one sees it, nothing comes out in paper or USU’s information system.

Question on what was worst weed. mentioned medusahead.

Some mentioned a dislike for aerial spraying because it gets away into yards and kills good things and some people have breathing problems. A few years ago the spray for dyer’s woad killed the chokecherry and everything else. Wind blows the spray around.

One person had heard of medusahead in newspaper but didn’t know what it was. Need info to help with weeds. There were articles on woad a few years ago and they
introduced a rust to get rid of it. The rust worked for a while, but not any more. There was also a release of bugs in an area. Wish box elder bugs would eat the weeds.

Would like to have a day (weed fair) or something in the community where people could bring in weeds and get them identified. Then you could learn about them and get education. This would be best in the community; no one wants to go into Logan. This would build awareness of problem.

[redacted] will identify weeds.

Periodic reminders sent out about weeds (email, flier, personal contact) would help people see the problem.

County weed folks need to come out more and do follow up. Takes a long time to get them to come out, but then there is never any follow-up. Need to have the weed program emphasized. Get county council involved and advised to keep up interest and motivation. That would help in many ways through the planning commission, and then to the weed control. This would help get the ball rolling.

9. Question: In terms of natural resource management, do you see weed control as the biggest problem?

No, not really (sounded almost unanimous).

Flooding causes big problems. They let the river run dry in the fall and shrubs grow in river bed, then the river spreads out when it is running. This ends up distributing more weeds.

Need communication, more info, a weed fair.

A community committee at Trout & Berry days would be the best time. Could communicate about weed control and weed problems.

Could have examples of weeds for people who forget to bring their weeds in.

Have county weed crew available and geared up take care of weeds. They could take care of a problem when they see it. But the county may say it is too much of a financial burden. The county crew will charge you and they don't care what gets sprayed.
10. **Question:** What ideas do you have to get more landowners involved in Paradise WPA?

Through things like this, we can get a little more knowledge and then talk politely to our neighbors. Ask if they know what that plant is and what it can do.

(Do we know neighbors well enough to involve them?)

Contact HOAs (Home Owners Associations) to disseminate information. They communicate among themselves. This would be an excellent way to communicate with people.

(How many of you adults have smartphones? Not too many people have smart phones, but there is a weed app that people can communicate.)

Use kids and would involve them; maybe a weed game. Have to use social media these days to be effective. Don’t miss it because that is how information flows today.

Communicate with neighbors that have small plots. Can ask if they know about weeds or who came and sprayed.

But we are bordered by larger landowners we never communicate with and don’t know who they are. Small versus large landowners—they do not communicate.

Don’t see Rag weed much anymore.

A community booth would really get attention. Need agencies to communicate better. We never see Extension doing outreach. County could enforce rules to get people to take care of weeds. Booth at Trout and Berry Days would be very helpful.

The county has the authority to make landowners control weeds, but this seems not to happen. will identify weeds for you and then sell you something to get rid of them.

Radio show works well so something similar with weeds would be helpful. Could USU provide interns to do education and communication on weed control? People would really like to hear feedback.

One woman said that an agency told her husband years ago that small property owners were not a target of organized weed control efforts.

**THE END**

6
Focus Group #5, November 30, 2012

Resident landowners with larger properties (>20 acres) who probably have not been involved in organized weed control.

1. **Question:** As a landowner, which weeds concern you the most?

Dyers woad. Medusahead is the worst weed that starts in drier areas; leafy spurge occupies more productive areas; puncture vine is coming on strong and will be a big problem; purple loostrife, Mulesear dockweed; wyeathea; morning glory; Russian thistle (this is first year on one person’s property); Scotch thistle; a cactus-type weed

2. **Question:** Do you believe it is possible to control the spread of weeds on your property?

Medusahead has exploded and is right close to have gotten away from us. Dyer’s woad is the worst weed for several people, the county does help with it. Can’t get rid of one plant that has small yellow flower on it—the county couldn’t even get rid of it. Problems with encroachment from neighbors of several types of weeds.
3. **Question: What type of weed control methods have you used on your land?**

Mostly chemical, also digging with shovel and hoe. It takes a lot of regular, personal attention to keep weeds under control. Dyer’s woad can be controlled through management. For years put herbicide on it but now use animals to eat dyer’s woad; they will eat it when it is late blooming and before it has seeded. Once the seed head is out then animals just scatter the seed.

4. **Question: Which of these methods have worked best for you?**

Chemicals work really well, especially Roundup or 2,4-D. Shovel. A granule chemical from the county is really effective, but it kills everything. County will issue chemicals on request.

5. **Question: Are there any methods of weed control that you’ve tried that have not worked?**

Need to try everything. Need to find the best spray and timing of spray. August is a good time to spray for morning glory since it is building up the root system then. Fall is a good time for a root-killer chemical. Seeds last for 50 years on morning glory. One person has had it eradicated, only to have seeds sprout again and bring back problems. If you dig up seedlings when it has two leaves and get the root, then that will control it. If you don’t get root, it just keeps spreading. Have a lot of weed encroachment from BLM land. You can control a weed if you don’t let it go to seed or to bloom.

6. **Question: Have any of you tried to use grazing to control some of these weeds?**

Used horses and rotated them through the pastures. This seemed to help keep weeds down if they keep the grass down. The years when horses weren’t on there, weeds became a problem. Some thought a horse’s digestive system spread seeds. Other’s disagreed because larger seeds are chewed. Cattle have been used. Deseret Ranch sprays musk thistle with molasses and the cows eat it. Then animals are conditioned and don’t have to spray after they learn to eat it. Sheep can control Canadian thistle. Sheep cover up or eat a lot of stuff. Sheep will eat medusahead only once. The plants will create seeds after the animals leave.
7. Question: If grazing is an option, do you have enough animals?

Not enough animals to be effective. Other biological controls exist. Insects and rust will also control weeds. There is a rust that kills woad and this has been working for about 25 years. One person had brought some rust in from Idaho. It can be dried and spread out on other plants. USU and the county had done some work years ago. Some plants are resistant to it. Takes certain climate conditions for the rust to work; moist years seem the best for rust. There has been success using musk thistle beetle. We need to be careful with biological controls, but we have to try it if the weed starts to get away from you. The university is working with a biological control on leafy spurge and dalmation toadflax. It takes some time to work. County agents have had FFA kids help them move bugs around to save money; can then buy more bugs.

8. Question: Have you heard of the Paradise WPA?

Not many people have heard of it. Thought that it was when the county paid people to gather up dyer’s woad.

(explained that it was a Weed Prevention Area and gave information on the local history of the WPA).

One of the things the WPA has done is that the county would pay for a chemical if a landowner would pay for the spraying.

People need to be willing to manage their land and plant something competitive to keep weeds out. One person described how the medusahead plant and seed looked. Also described medusahead thatch and how it keeps other plants out. Research has been going on for a long time; it started in the 1950s and then stopped until the 1990s.

9. Question: What would motivate you to participate in the WPA program if they knocked on your door?

Education on the purpose of the WPA and what they do. One person asked what the committees do. They organize events and decide on funding allocations, develop a schedule, etc. There are some workshops and people on the committee went to these workshops.

10. Question: Where do you hear about weed problems? Where do you get information?

One person is concerned about weed patches and no enforcement of weed ordinances. Wondered what the weed laws were. Small acreages seem to be weed patches. Can’t keep weeds off since neighbors do nothing. A subdivision was started so land was disturbed,
but the development was not finished. The Green Canyon culvert brings in weeds. One person had a neighbor who disked his land; this spread Russian thistle seeds over to his place. Need some regulations or requirements of people who just don’t care to take care of their land.

You would get more interest if community outreach would reach out to people and get them involved.

Every year some living thing finds a niche; we just have to expect intermittent plagues like army worms a few years ago, this year the box elder bugs are a plague.

It is hard to enforce weeds and we don’t want to make enemies. Does the county have any sort of plan or system? We used to see a system, but not anymore. Don’t see any organization to what they do. It seems like a person calls the county weed control and they come out. Some say you often have to call twice.

Some people think weeds are beautiful. We need to involve young people so they learn about weeds, especially in high school through FFA.

11. Question: What ideas do you have to improve communication to get more Paradise landowners involved in the WPA program?

Have the county publish what assistance is offered through the newspaper, direct mailings, county & city meetings.

This meeting is the first contact one person had regarding weeds. We used to know who to call, but now we don’t.

Some people are opposed to just spraying even along roads where weeds spread the easiest. The organic people can’t have spraying. The organic people still have to control weeds.

12. Question: How many people have smartphones? (now there is a smartphone weed app.)

It would be nice to organize each neighborhood and get everyone to work together. If it doesn’t affect you, nobody cares to do it.

There is a website called “weed dating” where you make an appointment to go pull weeds together.

Government land is not managed how it should be. They need to manage land better; didn’t spray until too late this year. They spread quite a few weeds this year.
A lot of people don’t understand that when the soil is disturbed, weeds will come up.

Round up is another problem. Last year someone sprayed round up and killed everything. This year that spot is the puncture vine capital of Cache County.

Weed seeds lay dormant waiting to come up. Need some education somewhere because people need to understand a little more about weeds. A lot of people don’t think about land management. People don’t know what they have or that they should manage with an acre or two. Land use problems from practices done years ago are hard to overcome.

13. Question: Other ideas on how to reach out to communities more effectively?

A course could be taught to teach people how to manage small plots of land or make their property look better. A lot of people would like that. You could send out educational materials with the annual tax notices. Need different types of materials for different types of land sizes, land uses, land types, etc.

THE END