

NWCA Times NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026



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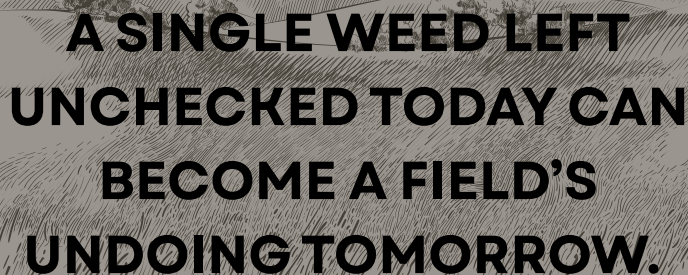
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Board of Directors

President - Scott Erthum
Vice President - Bryan Schardt
Past President - Vacant
Sec/Treas - Brent Meyer
Exec. Director - Rob Schultz
Region I - Mike Reed
Region II - Kurtis Mizner
Region III - Mark Borchers
Region IV - Jeremy Brandt
Region V - Dan Wordekemper
Region VI - Todd Herndon



**A SINGLE WEED LEFT
UNCHECKED TODAY CAN
BECOME A FIELD'S
UNDOING TOMORROW.**



**Without hard
work, nothing
grows but weeds.**

Gordon B. Hinckley

A Message from the President

Greetings and welcome from Rock County. The last time I wrote I was employed in Brown County, but I made the switch 15 miles down the highway and now have a full-time job. Life is constantly changing and we can either resist the change or go with it. Either way, we must always persevere in it. It's been true in my life, and it seems to be true in our Association.

As we look ahead to the 2026 growing season, we are seeing quite a few new faces in the association. There have been some retirements, resignations, and even a death. There are still some positions that still need to be filled as well. This could be a challenge for the year. Another challenge we have been facing is finding a secure funding source for our grant work. It seems like we see the light at the end of the tunnel and the tunnel collapses. It has been frustrating for many of us.

I do believe that the association can be a big player in both of our "situations". It wasn't very long ago that I was that new weed superintendent that was just trying to survive the first year. I was surrounded by three experienced weed superintendents who helped me get through that first year. All three of them have retired but they taught me everything I know and taught me that the association is something that can help any new weed superintendent. Quite a few of us may have a new weed superintendent in an adjacent county. I implore you to reach out to these new people, invite them to area and weed management meetings, and just check in with them during the growing season. This job can be stressful, but we can help with that stress.

I also have faith our legislative committee has been doing the good work and keeping in contact with the senators to figure out our funding options. We have good people that serve on that committee, and I thank them for their service. I know it's frustrating to watch our forward progress slip away. I am hopeful there will soon be some clarity on this.

I am choosing to embrace change and hoping for a better future. I encourage you to embrace change and help those new souls around you. The Nebraska Weed Control Association is one unit made up of many members. It functions better when we function better. I ask you to help and do your part in helping those members around you.

Lets have a great 2026!
Sincerely, Scott J. Erthum



"Life is constantly changing and we can either resist the change or go with it"

Nebraska Weed Control Association Highlights Weed Management at Nebraska Ag Expo 2025

The Nebraska Weed Control Association (NWCA) participated in the 2025 Nebraska Ag Expo, held December 9–11 at the Sandhills Global Event Center in Lincoln. NWCA representatives were available to provide education and outreach to landowners, producers, and agricultural professionals from across the state and region.

Throughout the three-day event, NWCA focused on increasing awareness of the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act, landowner responsibilities, and the importance of early detection and management of invasive and noxious weeds. Attendees had the opportunity to visit directly with county weed superintendents and staff to discuss identification, treatment options, and cooperative approaches to weed control.

The 9.2-acre Nebraska Ag Expo, the second-largest indoor ag show in the U.S., featured nearly 760 exhibitors from 27 states and six Canadian provinces showcasing the latest in precision agriculture, equipment, livestock production, and autonomous technologies. Established in 2007 and renamed in 2020, the Expo remains a top venue for education, innovation, and outreach.

NWCA's presence at the Expo provided a valuable opportunity to connect with landowners and producers. Many visitors expressed interest in learning more about county weed control programs, noxious weed identification, and cost-effective management strategies, particularly for aggressive species such as phragmites and other



NE Ag Expo 2025

By Brent Meyer

invasive plants impacting Nebraska landscapes.

NWCA appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Nebraska Ag Expo and thanks all who stopped by the booth to learn more about statewide weed management efforts. Continued collaboration between landowners, county weed authorities, and agricultural partners remains critical to controlling the spread of noxious and invasive weeds across Nebraska.

NEBRASKA WEED CONTROL ASSOCIATION 79TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ROB SCHULTZ

The Nebraska Weed Control Association held their 79th Annual Conference and Trade Show at the Norfolk Lodge & Suites/Divots Conference Center on February 2-4, 2026. Guest speakers included: Doug Guess with Lancaster County GIS Dept gave an update on a mapping program, Todd Boller gave an update on NAISMA, Craig Romary with the NDA Environmental Programs gave an overview on Environmental Resource Considerations, Evan Flamme with MIPS presented on a mapping program with MIPS, Erik Prenosil with NDWEE gave an overview of their surface water sampling programs, Dan Finn with CorrectSpray showed everyone some new drone technology and mapping, Josh Short with the North Dakota Weed Control Association gave an overview of their North Dakota Weed Control program, Kaitlynn Quincy with SePro showed us some solutions for controlling aquatic species, Scott Erthum gave an update on Nebraska's biocontrol programs, and we heard from various vendors about new chemicals and technology coming out.

The Wednesday Lucheon/Business Meeting was held and it was voted to have the 2028 NWCA Annual Conference in Norfolk, Nebraska. Bryan Schardt, Thayer County Weed Superintendent, was elected Vice President of the Nebraska Weed Control Association.

The banquet and awards ceremony was held on Tuesday evening. The following individuals were recognized for their outstanding service:

Region 1 – Max Birkel
Region 2 – Scott Erthum
Region 3 – Margaret Valladao

Region 4 – Mitch Dzingle
Region 5 – Dan Wordekemper
Region 6 – Michael Schrader

Board member and Superintendent Years of Service Awards were given out, the higher longevity award winners are as follows: board members receiving 10 year awards were: Jerad Sorson -Otoe County. Board members receiving 15 year awards were: Dan Shipman-Webster County, Kathy Hirschman-Howard County, Andrew Ditter-Nance County, Thomas Nutt-Phelps County, Matt Gregg-Phelps County. Board members receiving 25 year awards were: Ray Kniefel-Dixon County, Francis Hannon-Hall County.

Superintendent Years of Service Awards were as follows: 10 year awards to Mark Borchers-Platte County, Dan Wordekemper-Dawes County, Bret Stubbs-Buffalo County, Rebecca Borgman-Gage County, Steve Banks-Knox County, Brent Meyer-Lancaster County, Todd Herndon-Lincoln County, Nick Elledge-Nuckolls County. 15 year award went to: Tim Burgeson-Harlan County.

Outstanding Rookie Superintendent of the Year Award: Melissa Grover, Sheridan County

Outstanding Weed Superintendent of the Year: Mike Reed, Douglas County

NEBRASKA WEED CONTROL ASSOCIATION 79TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

Special Recognition Awards:

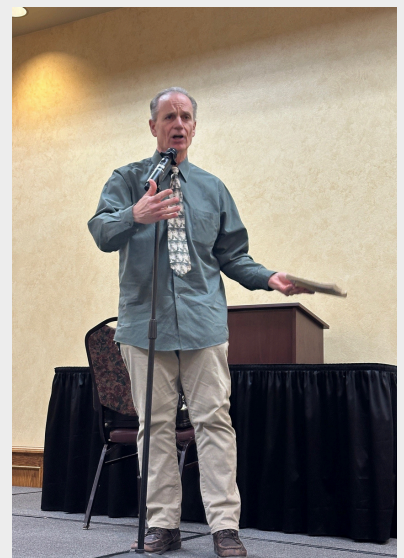
- Rich Tesar for his work on invasive species in the state of Nebraska
- Scott Erthum for his work on the biocontrol program in the state.

The NWCA Spring Training will be at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Kearney on April 1-2, 2026 with the New Superintendent Training being held on March 31st . The 2026 NWCA Fall Training will be held in Kearney on August 5-6, 2026 with a new superintendent training being held on August 4th. NACO Conference will be held in Kearney on December 16th and 17th .

Dates to mark down on your calendar: 2027 NWCA Annual Conference – Norfolk – February 2-4, 2027. NWCA Annual Conference in 2028 will be held in Norfolk on February 8-10, 2028.

The NWCA and NDA continue to have a display booth at the Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days. A big “Thank You” goes out to those who signed up and helped work the booth last year. It is a great place to talk to people from Nebraska and across the United States about noxious and invasive weeds. If you are interested in helping out this year, please let me know and I will get you scheduled in.

Here at the NWCA Home Office in Grand Island, there is an assortment of educational materials: brochures, weed watch magazines, thistle guides, and weed ID guides. Please stop by or get a hold of me if you are in need of anything. If you are in need of Weed Free Forage Hay Tags, let me know and I will mail some out to you. If you have any questions about the NWCA feel free to get ahold of me at any time. The office phone number is 308.385.5097. Thank you and Stay Safe!



Words from....

Region Directors

REGION 1 - MAX BIRKEL
REGION 2 - KURTIS MIZNER
REGION 3 - MARK BORCHERS
REGION 4 - JEREMY BRANDT
REGION 5 - DAN
WORDEKEMPER
REGION 6 - TODD HERNDON

Region 1- Mike Reed - Director

First off, I want to thank Max Birkel for his service to Region I and the NWCA. His award for Region I Superintendent of the year is well deserved. He represents what I believe to be some of the best attributes of being a Noxious Weed Control Superintendent: he's dedicated to his profession, and takes it seriously, while also being dedicated to connecting with others throughout his region. Max would come to New Superintendent training, which is coming up again this spring, and talk about the importance of communication to your County Board. You never know who's paying attention or who is listening. Last week, my wife sent me a text. She runs the Nebraska Diaper Bank in Omaha and had one of my County Administrators (Purchasing Division) come through and introduce himself and spoke highly of how I conducted myself at the Commissioners meetings. I never knew that this person had taken notice of my (usually about five minutes) time up there. Make your time count, whatever time you're given with your Board.

A couple dates for Region I in March. On March 5 at 10 AM, **Southeast Weed Management Area** is hosting a public landowner meeting focusing on *Sericea lespedeza*:

Meeting Location: Fair Center building
135 Plum St.
Syracuse, NE 68446

NACO is hosting the Southeast Region I meeting the following Thursday March 12th at Southeast Community College Career Academy, 8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE.

Region 2 - Kurtis Mizner - Director

We in Region 2 are enjoying an easy winter but thinking forward to the upcoming growing season. We have been awarded a NET grant that will allow us to do some spraying on our rivers and sponsor a test plot in Custer County looking at Quinstar on leafy spurge. We have some new faces in the Region 2 area. We have a new weed superintendent in Garfield county and Jeremy Straka is taking on Wheeler county as well as Greeley. Scott moved to Rock county and that leaves Brown County open yet as well as Boyd county. Hopefully these get filled soon and we can get back to doing what we do best.

Hello from Region 3 - Mark Borchers - Director

Ready for Spring yet?! It's right around the corner and some of these mild, warm days are making it feel as though it's already here.

Great seeing everyone at Conference and congratulations to all the award winners! Congratulations also to our new Vice-President Bryan Schardt! Spring Training is coming up soon, which is also the chance to renew applicator licenses, so we should have a decent sized gathering.

Lot of focus lately has been on the State Legislature and other grants available for Weed Management Areas. Region 3 is part of 4 WMA's, Northeast, Middle Missouri, Lower Platte and Platte Valley. We are thankful for the State Senators who keep this matter alive in the Legislature!

Hope to see everyone at spring training in the first week of April! And I hope you all have a safe and successful spring season!

Region 4 - Jeremy Brandt - Director

Wow, how time is flying by. Christmas was here, then our state reports were due and we just finished our February annual conference. Its hard to believe that spring is just over the next couple hills on this journey, and the weather currently is sure making it feel more like spring than winter.

I wish I could say that our region, like everyone else is business as usual, but unfortunately, tragedy struck our small group. We lost our dear friend and fellow weed superintendent Eric Walston from Adams Co. Our sincerest condolences go out to his wife Jessica and their children.

As mentioned above, we just had our annual conference at Norfolk and what a great time was had by all. We had great food, fellowship, and hopefully everyone walked away learning at least one new piece of information.

Our region is very proud as we had 2 great weed superintendents get recognized for their hard work and dedication to our state and our industry. Mitch Dzingle of Sherman Co. was honored as our Region IV Outstanding Superintendent of the Year and Chad Borowiak of Nance Co was awarded the Region 2 State Inspector Award for all the hard work he has done. Also, congratulations to our very own Thayer County Weed Superintendent Bryan Schardt on becoming the Vice President of the NWCA at the annual conference. We are here to help you Bryan on your journey.

We also learned that our very own Chad Borowiak is a closet Magician and comedy illusionist...He was quite the Houdini performing with our entertainer Gayle at convention.

Well as always, like I said spring is around the corner so we all had better get back to doing some pre spring surveys and preparing our equipment for the busy year that lies ahead for us all.

Hello from Region 5 - Dan Wordekemper - Director

Enjoying the mild winter, like everybody else, but we sure do need the moisture.

Last week we had our annual NWCA conference in Norfolk, it was well attended with lots of good speakers. At our banquet a number of awards were given out to some very deserving people. Our very own Melissa Grover, from Sheridan county received the rookie of the year award. Melissa has only been a weed superintendent for a couple of years, but has jumped in with both feet. She is the Region 5 alternate director, vice president of the PWCA, she is in charge of public relations for the NWCA, a grant writer for the PWMA, newsletter editor, and recently became the co chair of the NASIMA weed free forage committee. We need more people like Melissa to step up and become active NWCA members.

In other Region 5 news Brent Fletcher's company has taken Kimball counties weed superintendent position, and his daughter will be the superintendent.

Its about time to start making plans for the upcoming growing season, and getting your spray equipment ready.

Our Spring training is April 1-2, with new superintendent training on March 31. This training will be held in Kearney, and it will be the recertification for our spray licenses, so I recommend everybody going, or you will have to recertify on your own.

For decades, Nebraska landowners and weed superintendents have kept their eyes peeled for the telltale "Purple Bloom" of the musk thistle that was the clear enemy, a declared noxious weed that demanded constant vigilance. But while our collective focus was fixed on the thistle a "velvet" invader was silently making its move.

Common Mullein has shifted from a roadside curiosity to a dominant force along the I-80 corridor. What was once seen in scattered patches is now outpacing the musk thistle in prevalence, creeping from gravelly railroad right of ways to the heart of our most productive lands.

Mullein is a master of Disturbed sites It thrives in dry sandy or gravelly soils however its expansion hasn't stopped at the shoulder of the road.

Mulleins deep taproot allows it to access moisture far below the reach of native prairie grasses during dry spells common to the Platte River valley. Mullen stays green and robust while desirable forage goes dormant and a single Mullen plant can produce up to 180,000 seeds. These seeds aren't just numerous. They are durable, capable of lying dormant in the soil for decades, waiting for a footprint or flood to trigger germination. Unlike some weeds that livestock might occasionally nibble on Mulleins woolly felt like leaves are unpalatable to cattle. Every acre of Mullen is an acre of lost grazing value.

As the Platte Rivers fluctuates, the exposed dry channels provide the perfect Sandy seed bed for Mullen to establish. It has infested the hay meadows of the valley where it threatens the very winter feed that sustains our local ranching economy. Once established in the valley, the seeds move South into the rugged loess canyons where their steep terrain makes mechanical control nearly impossible as it grows on near vertical walls.

Recognizing that traditional one size fits all spraying isn't working. Lincoln County has stepped up its defenses. Because of its thick hairs many standard herbicides simply bead up and run off without penetrating the plant. The county's test plots are evaluating different combinations of surfactants and herbicides The goal is to identify products that provides high kill rates while remaining cost-effective for large-scale application in the varied terrain of the area.

Common mullein is no longer just a roadside weed. It is a direct threat to the ecological health of the Loess canyons and the economic stability of the Platte River valley. Well, we cannot stop working on musk thistle we must broaden our target, identifying and treating Mullein in its rosette stage is critical, once it bolts into that tall woody yellow spike it has already begun the process of seeding the next decades infestation.



Who's ready to go?

2026 NAISMA CONFERENCE



Early Bird Registration is now available! Save your Seat Today! The 2026 NAISMA Annual Conference is coming to Alexandria, Virginia, this fall. Join invasive species professionals from across North America for four days of learning, networking, and collaboration in the heart of the nation's capital region.

Alexandria offers the perfect setting for our annual gathering, rich in history, easily accessible, and just minutes from Washington, D.C. Whether you're a seasoned practitioner or new to the field, this conference will provide valuable insights, practical solutions, and opportunities to connect with colleagues working on the front lines of invasive species management.

Conference Details:

- **Location:** Alexandria, Virginia
- **Dates:** October 19th - 22nd
- **What to Expect:** Plenary sessions, workshops, field experiences, poster sessions, networking events, and more!

Stay tuned for the call for presentations and hotel information. This is *THE* can't-miss event for invasive species professionals in 2026!

NWCA Spring Training & Recertification - Kearney, NE

~Wednesday April 1, 2026~

- 8:15 Welcome, Announcements and Roll Call
8:30-9:15 Pesticides Properties and Selections, Curtis Smith, VanDiest Supply Co.
9:15-10:15 Ornamental & Turf Pest Control, Elizabeth Exstrom, UNL Extension Educator
10:15-10:30 BREAK
10:30-11:30 Equipment: Application Tech, Calibration/Calculation - Bradford Ramsdale
11:30-12:00 Nebraska Biological Control Program - USDA APHIS
12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00 Roll Call
1:15-2:15 Ag Plant Pest Control - David Boxler
2:15-3:15 Weed Identification, Cheryl Dunn-UNL
3:15-3:30 Break
3:30-4:15 Safety and Personal Protection, Tim Zuehlke, TZ Safety
4:15 Exam

~Thursday April 2, 2026~

- 7:50 Roll Call
8:00-9:00 Right of Way Pest Control, Trevor Johnson, NDA
9:00-10:00 Aquatic Pest Control, Kent Aden, Working Ecosystems
10:00-10:30 Break
10:30-11:15 Non Target Risk, Craig Romary, Nebraska Department of Ag.
11:15-11:45 Noxious Weed Infestation Data - Trevor Johnson - NDA
11:45-12:00 Weed Mapping Update - Jeremy Brandt
12:00 Lunch
12:55 Roll Call
1:00-1:25 Watchlist Weeds Update - Trevor Johnson - NDA
1:25-1:45 Overview of 10 & 15 Day Notices - Rob Schultz
1:45-2:00 Break
2:00-3:00 Pesticide Labels, Laws, and Regulations, Holly Hillebran, NDA Pesticide Program
3:00-3:30 Recertification
3:30 Exam

*NDA New Superintendent training March 31, 2026



Reminders

~NDA New Superintendent training - March 31, 2026 in Kearney

~ NWCA Spring training and recertification - April 1-2, 2026 in Kearney

~ General Notices in newspapers on or before May 1, 2026

~ NWCA New Superintendent training - August 3, 2026 in Kearney

~NWCA Fall training - August 4-5, 2026 in Kearney

~ NACO Conference December 16-18, 2026 in Kearney

Have a GREAT season!

