

Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Director, Greg Ibach announced the statewide designation of non-native phragmites as a noxious weed April 15, 2008. The statewide designation, which took effect immediately, is an expansion of a temporary designation issued in 2007 for phragmites within the Republican River basin.

Ibach said the statewide designation is necessary to help county weed control officials work with landowners to address areas of high infestation and to prevent further spread of this invasive species. Phragmites is primarily found along Nebraska's rivers, streams, floodplains and lakeshores.

"In order to be good stewards of the land, we need to protect our river systems from invasive riparian, non-native plants," Ibach said. "The designation is an important tool for weed control officials who are working on projects to control phragmites."

Ibach has the authority to issue temporary designations under the Noxious Weed Control Act. The temporary designation will expire in February 2009, and Ibach said he anticipates moving ahead with the formal process to add phragmites to the permanent noxious weed list before that time.

According to Mitch Coffin, NDA noxious weed program manager, phragmites can quickly form a monoculture and displace native riparian plants, grasses and forbs. Once phragmites matures, it sends out rhizomes searching for water; these rhizomes can stretch as much as 30 feet in search of water. Phragmites can grow to 20 feet tall.

Chase County Weed Supt. Randy Bartlett said phragmites have not been found anywhere in Chase County at this time, but landowners need to be on the lookout for it.

The major noxious weeds that have been found in Chase County include Musk Thistle and Canada Thistle, he said. Saltcedar has also been found, much of which Bartlett has removed.

If a noxious weed is found in the county and assistance is needed, Bartlett can be contacted at 882-7520.

According to the Nebraska Noxious Weed Control Act, it is the duty of each person who owns or controls land to effectively control noxious weeds on their property.