



**Natural Features and Wetland Report for the
Grandview Reserve Project
in El Paso County, Colorado**

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Prepared for:

4 Site Investments
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3.5 Weeds

3.5.1 Regulatory Background

The Colorado Department of Agriculture maintains a list of noxious weed species (CDA, 2020a) and works with counties to manage noxious weeds. Weed management on Site must follow County requirements, including the “El Paso County Noxious Weeds and Control Methods” report (El Paso County, 2015b).

There are four CDA categories of noxious weeds:

- List A: Rare noxious that are designated for eradication statewide.
- List B: Discretely distributed noxious weeds that must be eradicated, contained, or suppressed, depending on their location, to stop their continued spread.
- List C. These species are well-established in Colorado. Species management plans are designed to support the efforts of local governing bodies to facilitate more effective integrated weed management. The goal of such plans is not to stop the continued spread of these species, but to provide additional education, research, and biological control resources to jurisdictions that choose to require management of List C species.
- Watch List Species are those may pose a potential threat to the agricultural productivity and environmental values. The Watch List is intended to serve advisory and educational purposes only. Its purpose is to encourage the identification and reporting of these species to the Commissioner in order to assist in determining which species should be designated as noxious weeds.

3.5.2 Noxious Weed Survey Results

Weed species on the Site were very limited, sporadic and dispersed; and as such, no large patches were identified or mapped by ecos.

No noxious weed species on the Colorado Department of Agriculture List A or the Watch List (CDA, 2020a) were observed on the Site.

Three List B noxious weed species (CDA, 2020a) were observed on the Site:

- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*);
- Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)
- yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*).

One List C noxious weed species (CDA, 2020a) were observed on Site:

- common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*).

3.5.3 Noxious Weed Management Plan

All of the List B species on the Site are designated for suppression (CDA, 2018a). The Colorado Noxious Weed Act defines suppression as “*reducing the vigor of noxious weed populations within an infested region, decreasing the propensity of noxious weed species*

to spread to surrounding lands, and mitigating the negative effects of noxious weed populations on infested lands.” Suppression efforts may employ a wide variety of integrated management techniques. Per the El Paso County Noxious Weed and Control Methods document (El Paso County, 2018a): *“The most effective way to control noxious weeds is through Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM incorporates weed biology, environmental information, and available management techniques to create a management plan that prevents unacceptable damage from pests, such as weeds, and poses the least risk to people and the environment. IPM is a combination of treatment options that, when used together, provide optimum control for noxious weeds; however, IPM does not necessarily imply that multiple control techniques have to be used or that chemical control options should be avoided.*

- *Prevention: The most effective, economical, and ecologically sound management technique. The spread of noxious weeds can be prevented by cleaning equipment, vehicles, clothing, and shoes before moving to weed free areas; using weed-free sand, soil, and gravel; and using certified weed free seed and feed.*
- *Cultural: Promoting and maintaining healthy native or other desirable vegetation. Methods include proper grazing management (prevention of overgrazing), re-vegetating or re-seeding, fertilizing, and irrigation.*
- *Biological: The use of an organism such as insects, diseases, and grazing animals to control noxious weeds; useful for large, heavily infested areas. Not an effective method when eradication is the objective but can be used to reduce the impact and dominance of noxious weeds.*
- *Mechanical: Manual or mechanical means to remove, kill, injure, or alter growing conditions of unwanted plants. Methods include mowing, hand pulling, tilling, mulching, cutting, and clipping seed heads.*
- *Chemical: The use of herbicides to suppress or kill noxious weeds by disrupting biochemical processes unique to plants.”*

The following information provides general measures to prevent introducing new weeds and spreading existing weeds during construction:

Prior to Construction:

1. Create a native habitat restoration and weed control plan for the Open Space areas. Since there is such dense knapweed mixed with other weeds along the Creek, total re-vegetation of some areas may be necessary. One option in the weediest areas would be to remove the top three to six inches of topsoil and replace it with topsoil from the non-weedy short grass prairie north of the Creek that will be developed. If topsoil can be transferred directly, or is only briefly stockpiled, then re-seeding may not be needed. Planning topsoil management ahead of construction may decrease costs for weed control, restoration, and grading.

2. Biological control is a low cost and non-invasive way to begin controlling weeds. Optimum results take 3-5 years. Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Request-A-Bug program at 970-464-7916 to reserve insects, determine the species/quantity needed, and discuss release schedules (CDA, 2020b). At a minimum, species should be introduced to control the knapweed. Biological control may also be available for yellow toadflax, musk thistle, and Canada thistle; with the dense patches of yellow toadflax in the northwest corner of the Site being the highest priority of these three.
3. Reduce grazing overall. Eliminate cattle grazing in knapweed-infested areas, unless using grazing for weed control. Cattle will eat young knapweed prior to bolting but avoid it once the plant matures and develops spines. Thus, targeted grazing can reduce knapweed, but prolonged heavy grazing increases it. Cattle grazing in areas of diffuse knapweed twice in spring may decrease seed by 50%. If cattle are being used for weed control, grazing should consist of two, 10-day intervals in the spring when diffuse knapweed is bolting and about 6 to 12 inches tall (see CSU, 2013). Grazing may reduce the efficacy of biological control.
4. Develop a mowing program to control weeds. This will be most effective for the large areas of common mullein, but may also be used for Canada thistle, musk thistle, and cheatgrass. Mowing in the knapweed areas may reduce the efficacy of biological control for this species.

During construction staging:

1. Fence off all the open space areas to prevent vehicles from driving through them and spreading knapweed, etc. to new areas (Note: fencing will also prevent unpermitted wetland impacts and likely be required by the stormwater management plan).
2. Designate a minimal number of vehicle crossings of the Open Space areas. Construct crossings with weed free soil so that noxious weed seeds are not tracked into new areas.

During construction:

1. Prior to any grading of the non-weedy areas on the slopes north of the Creek, salvage the top six inches of topsoil so that it can be used to construct vehicle crossings and for re-vegetation of natural areas. If possible, immediately move soil to re-vegetation areas. If soil must be stockpiled, minimize the time in order to maintain native seed viability. Excess topsoil may be used for development areas.
2. Do not move weedy soil to new areas within the Site or import weedy soil from other Sites.
3. Control weeds within staging areas and along construction access roads on an ongoing basis.

4. Noxious weeds are most likely to become established in areas where the native vegetation and soil have been disturbed by construction. Thus, maintaining and then quickly re-establishing desirable vegetation post-construction will minimize weed infestations. Desirable vegetation may consist of native plant communities or landscaped areas.

The Site development plan should include measures to prevent introducing new weeds and spreading existing weeds during construction (including prevention measures above). Following construction, the Homeowner’s Association (HOA) will be responsible for weed control. Weed management recommendations for the species observed on the Site are summarized in Table 2. Refer to the El Paso County “Noxious Weed and Control Methods” booklet for additional detail (El Paso County, 2018a).

TABLE 2 – NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT SUMMARY		
Species	Occurrence	Management^{1,2,3}
LIST B⁴		
Canada thistle <i>(Cirsium arvense)</i>	Uncommon and dispersed.	Mowing combined with herbicide treatment. Mow every 10 to 21 days during the growing season to prevent seeding. Spot treatment with herbicide will likely be needed in open space areas.
Scotch thistle <i>(Onopordum acanthium)</i>	Uncommon and dispersed.	No known biological control agents effective against Scotch thistle. Any physical method that severs the root below the soil surface prior to seed production will kill the plant. Properly dispose of flowering cut plants, as seeds can mature and become viable. Spot treatment with herbicide will likely be needed in open space areas.
Yellow toadflax <i>(Linaria vulgaris)</i>	Uncommon and dispersed.	Difficult to control; control when infestations are small. Biological control is available and recommended, particularly in the northwest corner where this species is most abundant. Spot treatment with herbicide will likely be needed in open space areas.
LIST C		

TABLE 2 – NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT SUMMARY		
Species	Occurrence	Management ^{1,2,3}
Common mullein (<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>)	Uncommon and dispersed.	Reduce grazing to increase density of other vegetation. Mow in the bolting to early flowering stage to reduce seed production. Use herbicide to kill existing rosettes. Hand-pulling is effective, but likely not feasible for such large areas. Establish other vegetation and minimize disturbance to prevent existing seeds from sprouting in bare soil.

¹Refer to the El Paso County “Noxious Weed and Control Methods” booklet for additional detail (El Paso County, 2018a).

²When using herbicides, always read and follow the product label to ensure proper use and application.

³If near water or wetlands, only use herbicides and formulations approved for use near water.

⁴All of the List B species on the Site are designated for suppression (Colorado Code of regulations, 2018).

3.6 Wildfire Hazard

The stated purpose and intent of the 2018 El Paso County Development Standards” for “Fire Protection and Wildfire Mitigation” is to ensure that proposed development is reviewed for wildfire risks and adequate fire protection. No permit or approval associated with development, construction or occupancy shall be approved or issued until the provisions of these standards are satisfied.

The El Paso County Wildfire Hazard Map is based on the existing vegetation and classifies the grassland areas that comprise the Site as “Low Hazard – Non Forested”. [Note: the Vegetation Map required to be referenced in the current Land Development Code is not available, therefore we used the most current map (Figure 7).] “Wildland areas” include land shown as “High Hazard – Forested” or areas identified as such in the “Wildland Fire Risk and Hazard Mitigation Plan.” Since the Site does not include forested (high hazard) areas, it is not subject to the wildland areas requirements and does not requires the preparation of a Wildland Fire and Hazard Mitigation Plan.