



DEVELOPMENT

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## LIFE CHURCH AT BENT GRASS MEADOWS: NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

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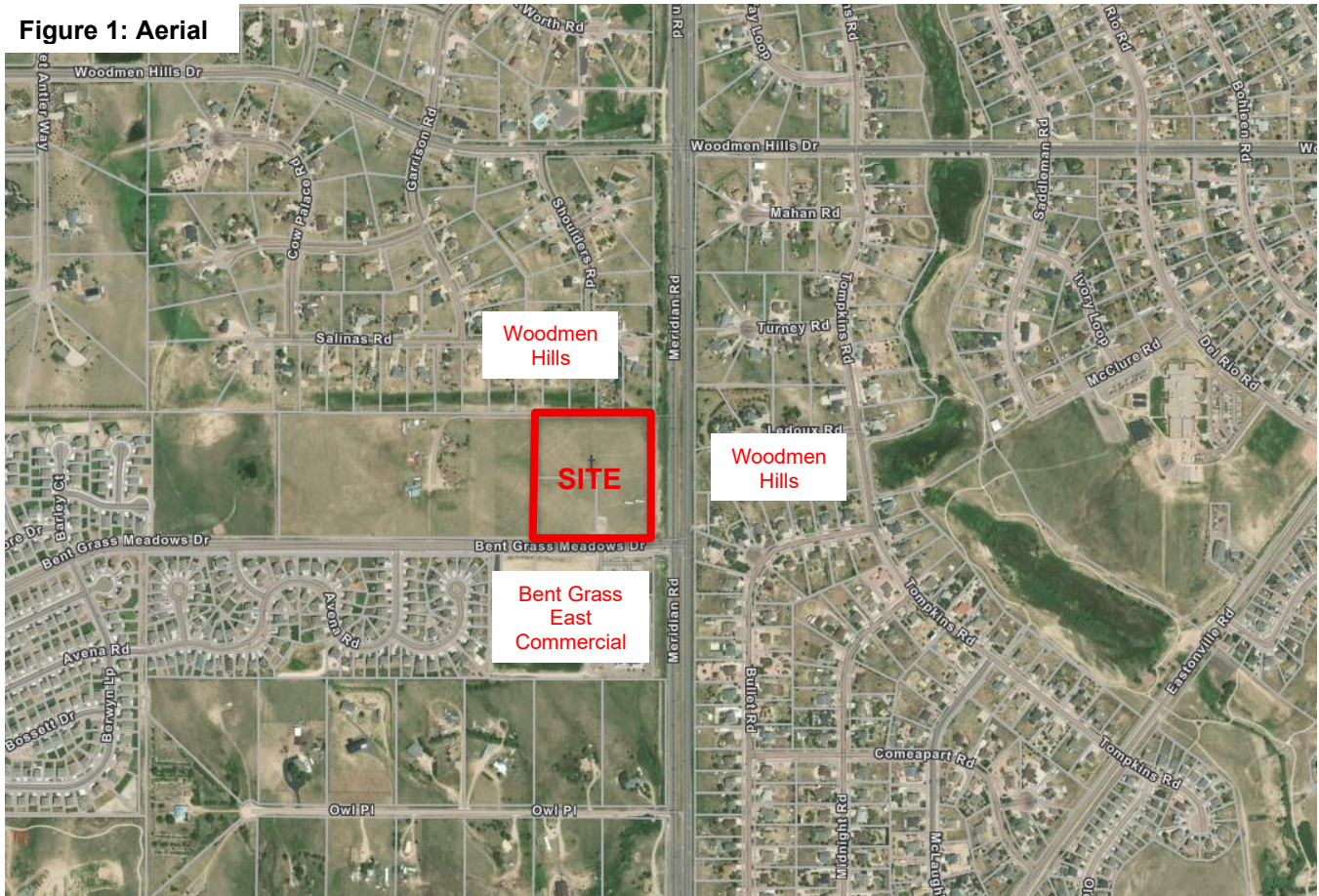
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### **SITE LOCATION**

The site is located west of Meridian Road an Urban Principal Arterial and north of Bent Grass Meadows Drive an Urban Minor Collector, reference Figure 1 Aerial. The residential Woodmen Hills neighborhood is north of the site and across Meridian Road. To the west is an 18-acre residential property containing a manufactured home and outbuildings. South across Bent Grass Meadows Drive sits the Bent Grass East commercial center.

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Figure 1: Aerial



Per the Natural Features Report prepared by Bristlecone Ecology, the site is located within the Foothill Grasslands ecoregion in Colorado (Chapman et al. 2006). The Foothill Grasslands Ecoregion is composed of a mixture of tall and mid-grasses and isolated pine woodlands (Chapman et al. 2006). Dominant species in the ecoregion include little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), needle-and thread (*Hesperostipa comata*), slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), and yellow Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) (Chapman et al. 2006).



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### **NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND**

To limit the expansion of noxious weeds across the United States the Federal Noxious Weed Act (7 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.; 88 Stat. 2148) was enacted in 1975. The state of Colorado passed the Colorado Noxious Weed Act (“Act”; C.R.S. 35-5.5-103) in 1990. Noxious weeds specific to Colorado are identified in this Act and defined as any non-native plant that:

- aggressively invades or is detrimental to economic crops or native plant communities;
- is poisonous to livestock;
- is a carrier of detrimental insects, diseases, or parasites;
- the direct or indirect effect of the presence of this plant is detrimental to the environmentally sound management of natural or agricultural ecosystems.

In 2002 an amendment to the Act required counties to establish individual management plans. El Paso County’s Noxious Weed Management Plan was last updated in 2022 and identifies county-level noxious weed management practices to preserve the economic and environmental value of El Paso County lands (EPC 2022). Disturbance during construction activities such as clearing, grading and excavation create opportunities for noxious weed establishment ahead of the reestablishment of native vegetation in cleared areas. This scenario is one of the major reasons the El Paso County Noxious Weed Management Plan requires integrated management plans for any activities requiring dirt moving activities within El Paso County (EPC 2022).

Three levels of priority for control are identified in the Act for noxious weeds throughout Colorado. These levels are outlined in the following paragraph. The State of Colorado maintains a “watch list” of noxious weeds that occur in proximity to State borders and/or those species with a distribution that is not yet understood.

List A noxious weeds are those species targeted for eradication. List A noxious weed populations are typically isolated in nature or rare throughout much of the State (Colorado Revised Statutes 35-5.5-103). Eradication and reporting of List A populations is required by law (Colorado Department of Agriculture [CDA] 2006). List B species are discretely distributed throughout the State and must be eradicated, contained, or suppressed (Colorado Revised Statutes 35-5.5-103). El Paso County’s Noxious Weed Management Plan requires control of all List B noxious weed populations (EPC 2022). List C noxious weed populations are widespread and well established. El Paso County requires control of List C species through education of the public and/or chemical control (EPC 2022).



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**SURVEY/INVENTORY**

In preparation of the Natural Features Report, Bristlecone Ecology conducted site reconnaissance and inventory of plant communities on site in September 2024. In their site reconnaissance they found vegetation on the site was not dominated by typical Foothill Grasslands vegetation and was rather dominated primarily by weedy uplands with a low diversity of species, mostly in the Asteraceae family. Dominant species throughout the site included, hairy false goldenaster (*Heterotheca villosa*), white sagebrush (*Artemisia ludoviciana*), annual ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*), and Tahoka daisy (*Machaeranthera tanacetifolia*). The northeast corner of the site was dominated heavily by curlycup gumweed (*Grindelia squarrosa*). Other species found on site included smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), fringed sagebrush (*Artemisia frigida*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), ten-petal blazingstar (*Mentzelia decapitala*), prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia polyacantha*), and common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). Weeds common throughout the site included common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), prickly Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*).

At the time of this management plan, no trees or shrub species are present on site. Diversity is low for this ecoregion, and the structure of the vegetation throughout the site is poorly developed. Noxious weeds were prevalent at the site during the site visit by Bristlecone Ecology and were found in high densities throughout the property. The most prominent noxious weed species observed included musk thistle, a List B species in El Paso County, and common mullein, a List C species in El Paso County. Prickly Russian thistle, a nuisance plant not listed on the official noxious weed list, was also found throughout the site.

During Bristlecone Ecology's survey, noxious weed infestations were mapped and noxious weed populations inventoried. Noxious weeds are present on the Project site in several areas and are mapped in Appendix C: Vegetation Map of the Natural Features report included with this application (SF25\_\_\_\_\_). Common mullein was abundant and well-established throughout the site. A few musk thistle individuals were also observed within the center third of the site, but no large populations were present. Musk thistle is a List B Noxious Weed while common mullein is a List C species. The most common nuisance weed observed was Russian thistle, which was seen in small concentrations in the center of the western side of the site. Russian thistle is not a listed noxious weed in Colorado but could be treated during treatment for the other weeds.

### **MANAGEMENT GOALS**

During construction the contractor, and post-construction the property owner, will employ integrated management methods to include the following:

- surveys to inventory and map established noxious weed populations;
- contract a licensed herbicide applicator to seasonally survey and spray for noxious weeds throughout the site as necessary;
- sharing of data with El Paso County to aid in county level inventory;
- physical, biological, and or chemical treatment of all identified noxious weed populations;
- and periodic post-construction treatment as needed, implemented by the landowner or other responsible entity.

### **CONTROL METHODS**

Management methods carried out on site and identified within this Plan will comply with Chapter 6: General Development Standards of the El Paso County Land Development Code (EPC 2017b), the El Paso County Noxious Weed Management Plan (EPC 2022) and the Act (Colorado Revised Statutes 35-5.5-103).

#### Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) List B

- Control populations of Musk Thistle by preventing current plants from producing seeds to add to the seed repository on site.
  - Sever the Musk thistle root below the soil surface by mechanical or physical methods such as mowing or chopping, to kill the plant. This is most effective when the plants are at full bloom. The flowering plants must be properly disposed of once cut as the seeds can still mature and reach viability after the plant is cut down.
  - Apply herbicides effective on Musk thistle. Herbicides are best applied in spring when plants are rapidly growing.

#### Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) List C

- Control populations of Common Mullein by preventing current plants from producing seeds to add to the seed repository on site.
  - Prior to flowering and seed production, pull or dig out by hand. Collect and dispose of plants in a manner that avoid scattering the seeds.
  - Apply herbicides effective on Common Mullein. Herbicides are best applied in spring and fall when plants are at the rosette stage prior to bolting.

The Colorado Weed Management Association (CWMA) prohibits the use of biological control methods on species targeted for eradication, so they are not included in this Plan. (CWMA 2015)



### **TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES**

Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) List B will receive herbicide treatments in spring.

Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) List C will receive herbicide treatments in spring and fall.

### **MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Management of noxious weeds during construction will include prevention and treatment protocols through surveillance separate from and prior to primary chemical treatment. Surveillance and treatment will occur prior to any ground disturbing activity.

Surveys of the noxious weeds will be conducted by a qualified ecologist and collect data to include but not limited to:

- List C populations – species and general coordinates of population
- List A & B populations – species, coordinates for approximate center of each identified population, and the approximate radius of infestation

A map of the identified noxious weed populations on site will be shared with El Paso County.

List A and B species: El Paso County will be formally notified if any List A species are identified. Treatments of identified noxious weeds will be determined by the species, ranking, location and intensity of the population. Eradication and reporting of List A populations is required by law (Colorado Department of Agriculture CDA 2006).

Positive identification of any List A species will be confirmed through El Paso County's Environmental Division. Upon positive identification, the List A species will be physically removed to eliminate the mechanism for establishing a seedbank.

Any populations of List A or B species on site will receive chemical treatment in compliance with El Paso County Noxious Weeds and Control Methods. Herbicides will be selected for the time of year and the life cycle of the plant and be applied concurrently with initial ground disturbing activities. Herbicide applicators to treat noxious weed populations only with El Paso County recommended chemicals (EPC 2022a).



D E V E L O P M E N T

During ground disturbing activities on site contractors will be required to use clean equipment and treat List A and B noxious weed populations to prevent spread. To manage List A and B species during construction, treatments should be conducted strategically in areas anticipating disturbance and/or immediately following initial ground disturbance activities. To prevent cross contamination between sites, any heavy equipment should be washed off site before mobilization on site.

List C species: List C noxious weeds are established and can be resistant to herbicides, therefore instead of treatment, avoidance during ground disturbance activities is recommended. This avoidance will reduce the likelihood of the list C seeds spreading.

Any topsoil for landscape areas should be from native, on-site topsoil and treated for noxious weeds. This soil will be protected from erosion and the establishment of noxious weeds by adhering to the Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified in the Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control (GESC) Plan included with the final plat application (SF25\_\_\_\_\_).

Following construction, the property owner as the responsible entity will treat all noxious weeds on site to manage the ecological health of the landscape. This will include protocols and treatments focused on maintenance. Any landscape areas should receive seasonal noxious weed treatment and maintenance. Noxious weed management will continue after construction and treatment will likely be required for persistent populations on the property's periphery. It will be the responsibility of the land owner to identify and treat noxious weeds on the property.



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**REFERENCES**

CDA (Colorado Department of Agriculture). 2006. 8 CCR 1206-2 – Rules Pertaining to the Administration and Enforcement of the Colorado Noxious Weed Act.

CDA. 2016. Musk Thistle Identification and Management.

CDA. 2009. Common Mullein Identification and Management.

Colorado State University Extension. S. Bokan, K. Crumbaker, and G. Beck. 2012. Identification and Management of Kochia and Russian Thistle – 6.314. <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/identification-and-management-of-kochia-and-russian-thistle-6-314/>

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EPC. (El Paso County). 2022. El Paso County Noxious Weed Management Plan. <https://assets-communityservices.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/Environmental-Division-Picture/Noxious-Weeds/Weed-Management-Plan-December-2022.pdf>

EPC. 2018a. El Paso County Noxious Weeds and Control Methods. <https://assets-communityservices.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/Environmental-Division-Picture/Noxious-Weeds/Noxious-Weed-Control-Book.pdf>

EPC. 2018b. El Paso County Land Development Code. <https://planningdevelopment.elpasoco.com/land-development-code/>

State of Colorado. 2003. Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 35 Agriculture, Article 5.5 Colorado Noxious Weed Act.



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## Colorado State Noxious Weed List