

Putting the Local Into Locally-led Conservation

Lava SWCD Farmer Tackles Russian Knapweed

One of the passions of New Mexico's soil and water conservation districts is the control of noxious weeds. And, control of Russian knapweed is a particular passion for Alfred Saavedra of the Lava Soil & Water Conservation District.

Russian knapweed is a deep-rooted long lived perennial. It forms dense colonies in cultivated fields, orchards, pastures, and roadsides – and some stands have existed for 75 years. It has been a particular problem for the San Rafael area, so when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approached the Lava Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) about taking action all ears perked up.

Andy Iskra, with BLM, had expertise in noxious weed control and was seeking to gain the Lava SWCD's help when he contacted the SWCD board. BLM was making an effort to control noxious weeds on the BLM land, but would only have their tracts re-infested if there was not also action on the privately owned tracts in the area.

BLM came to the right place. Soil and water conservation districts are the locally control entities that represent their neighboring private landowners.

Alfred Saavedra was one of the private landowners who had a problem with Russian knapweed. It infested his alfalfa fields – so he took action and secured a private applicator's license so he could treat his land while BLM anted into the project a surplus four-wheeler with a tank.

As happens in so many cases, when the neighbors



saw what Saavedra was doing they sought to have this noxious weed tackled on their property too. And, Saavedra pursued his growing interest in the Lava Soil & Water Conservation District by running for and winning a seat on their Board of Supervisors. So the noxious weeds of the Lava Soil & Water Conservation District not only had a program to control them, they had created a champion who would lead the way on many conservation issues.

The noxious weed programs of the soil and water conservation districts are a great complement to the conservation work of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS and the soil and water conservation districts work hand-in-hand in a partnership that builds on each of their strengths, and brings more and better conservation to the land.

For more information about the Lava Soil & Water Conservation District's noxious weed success story contact Cynthia Spidle at (505)287-4045.