

Jefferson County Noxious Weed Control Board

LAND CLASSIFICATION

What is the purpose of this public hearing?

There are two options for funding a weed board. One is out of the county's general fund; the other is through a property assessment. For several years the Jefferson County Noxious Weed Control Board has received a minimal amount from the general fund and we have run a scaled-down program, focusing on education and surveys. To comply with state law and to create an effective weed control program, we must expand our role to include control and enforcement. This will require additional revenue which the general fund cannot supply.

THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THIS HEARING IS TO CLASSIFY LANDS, not to propose an assessment.

How does an assessment work?

There are several steps in the assessment process. First, the weed board holds a public hearing to classify lands for assessment purposes. For the hearing, it is necessary to list lands per Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 17.10.240*, as well as any other land classifications the weed board determines will benefit from the noxious weed control program. Most counties determine a general benefit to all land classes and assess a uniform rate. The one exception is forest lands. The law requires that forest lands be assessed at one tenth the rate of other lands. Most counties exempt certain tax categories, such as building only parcels, boathouses and some government land.

After receiving and evaluating public comment, the board adopts a land classification system. The board then develops a recommended levy rate for each class and forwards this recommendation to the BOCC. The BOCC holds a public hearing on the assessment and after receiving public comment and evaluating the proposal the BOCC may either accept, reject or modify the proposal.

*The activated county noxious weed control board of each county shall annually submit a budget to the county legislative authority for the operating cost of the county's weed program for the ensuing fiscal year: PROVIDED, That if the board finds the budget approved by the legislative authority is insufficient for an effective county noxious weed control program it shall petition the county legislative authority to hold a hearing as provided in RCW [17.10.890](#). Control of weeds is a benefit to the lands within any such section. Funding for the budget is derived from any or all of the following: (a) The county legislative authority may, in lieu of a tax, levy an assessment against the land for this purpose. Prior to the levying of an assessment the county noxious weed control board shall hold a public hearing at which it will gather information to serve as a basis for classification and then classify the lands into suitable classifications, including but not limited to dry lands, range lands, irrigated lands, nonuse lands, forest lands, or federal lands. The board shall develop and forward to the county legislative authority, as a proposed level of assessment for each class, an amount as seems just. The assessment rate shall be either uniform per acre in its respective class or a flat rate per parcel rate plus a uniform rate per acre: PROVIDED, That if no benefits are found to accrue to a class of land, a zero assessment may be levied. The county legislative authority, upon receipt of the proposed levels of assessment from the board, after a hearing, shall accept or modify by resolution, or refer back to the board for its reconsideration all or any portion of the proposed levels of assessment. The amount of the assessment constitutes a lien against the property. The county legislative authority may by resolution or ordinance require that notice of the lien be sent to each owner of property for which the assessment has not been paid by the date it was due and that each lien created be collected by the treasurer in the same manner as delinquent real property tax, if within thirty days from the date the owner is sent notice of the lien, including the amount thereof, the lien remains unpaid and an appeal has not been made pursuant to RCW [17.10.180](#). Liens treated as delinquent taxes bear interest at the rate of twelve percent per annum and the interest accrues as of the date notice of the lien is sent to the owner: PROVIDED FURTHER, That any collections for the lien shall not be considered as tax; or (b) The county legislative authority may appropriate money from the county general fund necessary for the administration of the county noxious weed control program. In addition the county legislative authority may make emergency appropriations as it deems necessary for the implementation of this chapter.

What land classification does the board propose?

The board proposes four classes of land as follows:

NON-FORESTRY

This category includes all urban and rural land in the county that is not specifically exempted or classified in another category,

Rationale: Noxious weeds have been found on every kind of county land including backyard garden, undeveloped lots in urban settings, farms, pastures, forests and family homes in rural areas. For this reason the board proposes that all non-forest lands be classified together.

FORESTRY LANDS

This category includes all those lands that are designated forest land, or classified as open-space timber on the county tax rolls.

Rationale: This category is required by state law.

NON-ASSESSED LANDS

This category includes all federal lands, including tribal, National Park and National Forest Service.

Rationale: Jefferson County Noxious Weed Control Board does not have jurisdiction over federal land, only county, city and state.

MISCELLANEOUS—NON-CLASSIFIED LANDS

This category includes waterways and parcels such as boathouses which have no land attached to them. It may also include lands that are tax exempt according to code 9700, which includes churches and some state (DNR) lands, and certain Public Utilities.

Rationale: The weed board cannot assess some lands that are exempt under county rules. DNR lands are not listed on county tax rolls and require manual tax collection. Revenues collected would be subject to direct negotiation with DNR. The board may revisit this decision at a later date.

Note: The EXEMPT category is included when doing calculations, because lands exempt from county taxes are not exempt from an assessment.