



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON

REPORT

Item No.

REPORT TO: Reeve Vincent and Members of Council
PREPARED BY: Jeff Molenhuis
DATE: 05/06/2017
SUBJECT: Giant Hogweed Control in East Wawanosh Ward
ATTACHMENTS: Giant Hogweed Affected Areas Figure

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receive the June 5th Giant Hogweed Control in East Wawanosh Ward report for information.

AND THAT the funds necessary to address controlling this noxious weed in 2017 be approved from within the Roads – Traffic Operations and Roadside budget area.

AND THAT staff are further directed to investigate alternative funding or grant opportunities to continue to address this issue over the long term.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early May, a resident brought to the attention of Staff a location of invasive Giant Hogweed growth. Giant Hogweed is listed on the Schedule of Noxious Weeds under the Ontario Weeds Act, and therefore the Weed Inspector for our area has the authority to order control of this non-native plant to minimize interference with agriculture or horticulture.

Staff contacted the Huron County weed inspector to arrange a site visit, and conducted a walk along the most upstream area of the growth near Westfield Road along the Hallahan Drain. The purpose of the site visit was to determine the extent of the issue and discuss best approach to eliminate the infestation in the long term. While on site, the inspector noted that the issue has been present here for many years, but was brought to his attention late last year being when he was newly named the Weed Inspector for the County. He also noted it is one of the most serious Hogweed situations he's encountered, with the area extending from Westfield Road past Moncrieff Road to the Blyth Creek area. The infestation also is present within the roadside and ditch areas at Westfield Road and Moncrieff Road.

Referring to the attached figure, the area affected is quite an extensive length with densely patched areas. The problem will only get worse if not adequately addressed as this particular plant has a high seedling yield, and is located along a stream, which gives it a very viable opportunity to be carried downstream by the waterway. The proximity to the Blyth Creek is also of concern as this will only continue to advance the spread of this noxious weed. Previous years activities were not enough to address the issue, and a continued, multi-year program of spring and fall treatment is needed to eliminate this weed.

DISCUSSION

On site, a few particular issues were discussed. Of primary concern was the very short window of time available to start addressing this issue this year before the plants matured, seedlings started

and the issue spread further downstream. The weed inspector estimated a very short window before the end of May that would be ideal to address the issue. Otherwise, as the plant matures over the early part of the growing season, it is more difficult and labour intensive to address.

The issue of treatment was also discussed. Based on the extent and location of the issue, in-house resources are not considered adequate at this time to address the issue. As such, two service providers with appropriate pesticide licensing were contacted to discuss cost, timing and scope of treatment work for 2017. The cost estimate prior to work was in the range of \$5,000-\$15,000 for the spring and fall treatment.

Long term strategies to eliminate this infestation were also discussed on site. A multi-year approach with at least two seasonal treatments of spring and fall are anticipated to be required to eradicate the issue.

Finally, there's a need to clarify long term responsibility and identify possible funding sources for the long term. In accordance with the Weed Act, the Weed Inspector could issue orders whereby landowners would be responsible to pay for the cost. It is unclear as to why this approach wasn't taken in previous years when the infestation was brought to the attention of Township staff and the previous Weed Inspector for the County. Being a municipal drain, the Township may also consider assessing the affected property owners through the Drainage Act. Considering the urgency of this season, as well as the history of resident communication on the issue over the previous years, Staff did not feel it was appropriate to pursue these funding mechanisms for this particular treatment. Rather, it would be recommended to address this treatment through the Roads budget for Traffic Operations and Roadside Maintenance. Significant weed control such as this was not budgeted for in the Roads Operational budget; however, it is anticipated that the overall Roads Operational budget will be adequate to absorb this cost in 2017 as some material tenders have come in under budget so far this year.

The Huron County weed inspector made an effort to contact the Chief Weed Inspector for Ontario to discuss potential joint stewardship with landowners or provincial grant opportunities. At the time of this report, a response had not yet been received from the Weed Inspector.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

It was decided with Township and County staff that, considering the necessity and urgency to address this issue this season, an expedited Emergency Purchase was warranted in accordance with Section 2.7 of North Huron's Procurement Policy.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

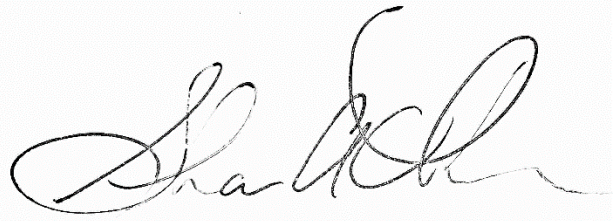
As noted, this will be a multi-year treatment approach. In future operational years, there will need to be specific budget allocated to this work. Determining the appropriate budgetary location and how grant opportunities and joint landowner stewardship is incorporated into the funding mechanism need to be determined prior to the 2018 budget season.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 2 our residents are engaged and well informed. Goal 3 the Township is healthy and safe. Goal 4 the administration is fiscally responsible and strives for operational excellence. Goal 5 our natural environment is valued and protected.



Jeff Molenhuis, Director of Public Works



Sharon Chambers, CAO