

# CONSERVATION Showcase

## Weeds Meet Their Match in Southeastern New Mexico

If dandelions sprouting in your backyard are a headache, think about the weed infestation problems for three entire counties in southeastern New Mexico. That is what the Cooperative Weed Management Area task forces for Chaves, Eddy, and Lea must do. And, yet, through locally-led efforts they have organized themselves and tapped into the strengths of their individual agencies to form an effective organization.

Malta-Star Thistle and African Rue were proving to be more powerful in some areas of Chaves, Eddy, and Lea counties, than the ability of the various organizations to individually defeat them. Yes, there were successes - but there were also instances of organizations having to stop treating these noxious weeds before the job was done because of funding shortfalls.

The Cooperative Weed Management Area task forces evolved with different counties progressing at different rates, and finally establishing countywide organizations that entered into memorandums of understanding that helped them eliminate many barriers to cooperative efforts. To bolster their identity, they all took the name of Cooperative Weed Management Area preceded by the name of their county.

The combined muscles have begun to tackle the problem more effectively and with expanding effort. Lea county commissioners anted in \$20,000 for their county, and similar contributions came in from elsewhere in all three counties. The Bureau of Land Management is a major participant, contributing not only funding but equipment and manpower. Oil and gas companies in the area have participated,



and the New Mexico Transportation Department has been heavily involved.

The multiple agencies participating in the task forces include the soil and water conservation districts, State Land Office, local road commissions, municipalities, National Park Service, New Mexico Fish and Game, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Lea County Cooperative Extension Service, in addition to the participants already mentioned.

The Sureste Resources Conservation & Development Council has offered important support in helping this cooperative conservation effort reach fruition.

Key to the success of these task forces is the fact that the evolution of the effort was locally-led. It is with local New Mexicans leading, that local solutions which best fit are realized.