

Surge of the Spurge *By Bryan Welding*

Made possible by a generous grant from the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), In 2017 El Paso County initiated a noxious weed mapping and control project entitled; "Happy Parks! Happy People!". The primary focus of this undertaking was to map and apply various control techniques to noxious weed infestations found throughout El Paso County parks, trails, and open spaces. One of the more "sweat-intensive" eradication efforts involved the hand-pulling and bagging of an expansive population of myrtle spurge *Euphorbia myrsinites* alongside a trail in Ute Pass. This is the tale of the encounter:



Weed Warriors



"For several years a plundering scourge of myrtle spurge has tenaciously encamped amongst prickly pear cactus and yucca barricades, blanketing a decomposed-granite hillside that most mountain goats of sound mind would give wide berth to. In the year 2016 El Paso County Environmental Technicians Tina Travis and Bryan Welding, assisted by the steely-nerved Patty York of the CDA's Early Detection and Rapid Response Team, deftly braved the thorns, brambles, prickles, stickers, and skin-melting latex of the spurge. The usurpers paid dearly that year as more than 15 bags of their wounded and dying were drug from the field of battle. It became painfully evident the following year that the

enemy would not relinquish its stronghold without further conflict! With dogged determination and an armory of personal protective clothing, beleaguered by the merciless sun, the courageous Weed Warriors lay siege to the unrelenting myrtle spurge horde yet again in the summer of 2017. Though the skirmish was not without its share of bloodshed, blistering, and itchy eyes; by days end our Champions of the Natural Eco-System reigned victorious! As the dust settled, the resulting body count was staggering. In total, 3 burgeoning sacks containing the carcasses of the fallen spurge invaders were dispatched to the nearest landfill. Sadly, the Drums of War are never silenced for long and even now the ravenous spurge is regrouping its forces for another invasive surge. However, rest assured, the ever-vigilant employees of El Paso County are well prepared to re-engage the enemy this forthcoming weed season!"