Russian Thistle (Tumbleweed) in Volusia County

Russian Thistle Facts

- Scientific name - Salsola kali, Salsola australis, Salsola iberica, Salsola tragus
- Native to Russia and western Siberia
- Arrived in U.S. in 1873 in South Dakota
- Found on disturbed sites
- Bushy summer annual
- Woody at maturity

Identification

- Seedlings – leaves look like pine needles
- Stems 8-36 inches at maturity
- Stems maybe reddish to purplish
- At maturity, leaves are short and sharply pointed
- Plant oval to round at maturity
- Individual plants can be 18 inches to 6 feet in diameter

Invasive Characteristics

- Fall, winter plant breaks off at soil layer
- Wind and water roll plant along beach
- A large plant may spread 200,000 seed on the beach
- Drought and salt tolerant
- Very low nutrient requirement
- Thorns prevent predation of plant material
- Seed can develop taproot in 12 hours
- Germination in late winter and early spring

History on Volusia County Beaches

- Jennifer Winters, Volusia County Environmental Management, noted the plant in fall 2011
- Summer 2012, found on most area beaches
- Makes up 80-100% of beach vegetation in some heavily infested areas

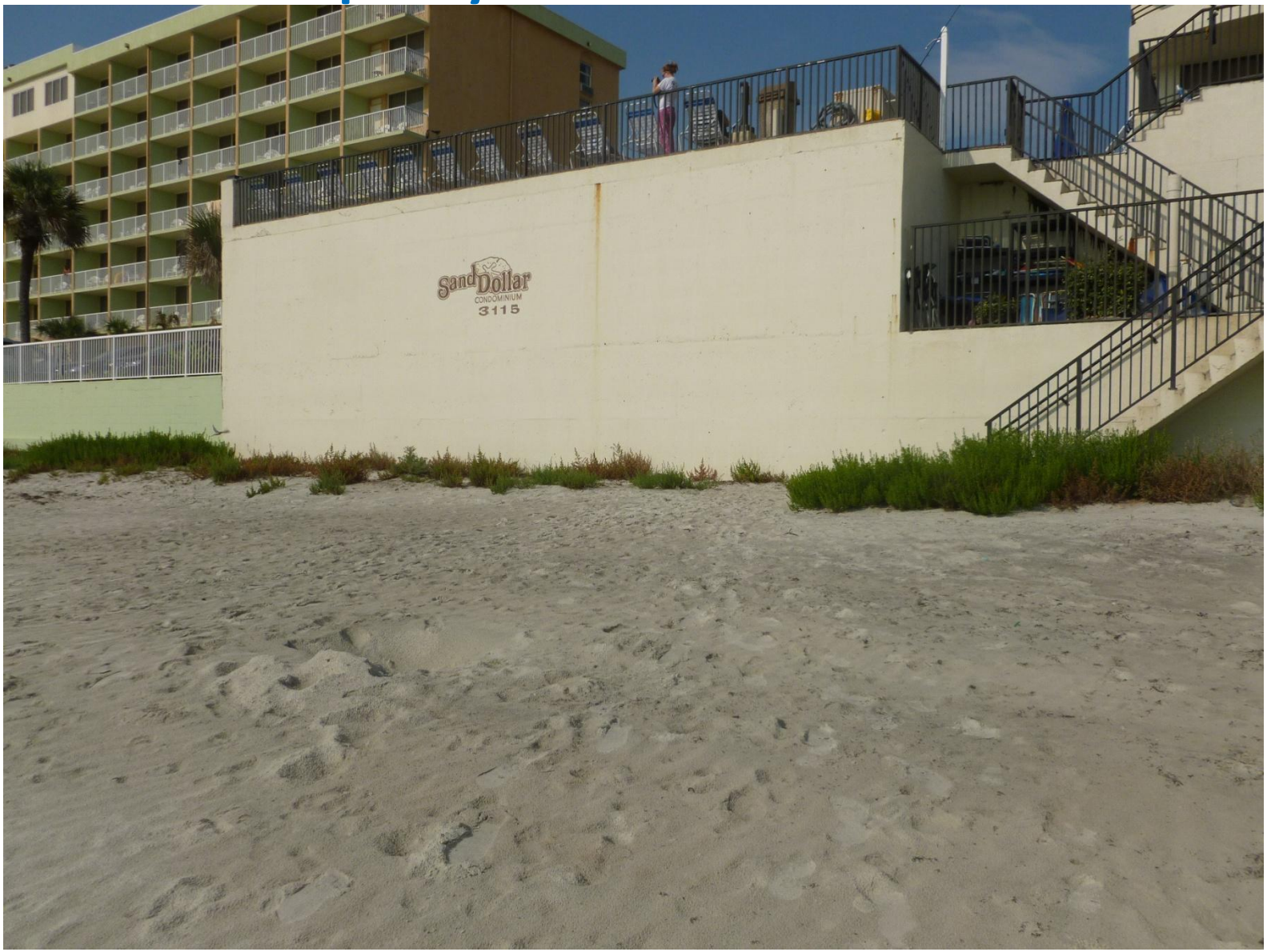
Why Should We Be Concerned?

- Displacing native vegetation
- Some people exhibit skin rashes and allergic reactions when exposed to Russian thistle
- Thorns are very hazardous to children and adults
- Turtle hatchlings could become entangled
- Potential spread to agricultural and natural areas

Controls

- Currently, no biological control
- Hand excavating isolated very small plants
- Postemergent herbicides labeled for beaches/natural areas

Pre-sprayed Russian Thistle



Pre-sprayed Russian Thistle

Post - Sprayed

Selective Herbicide Application

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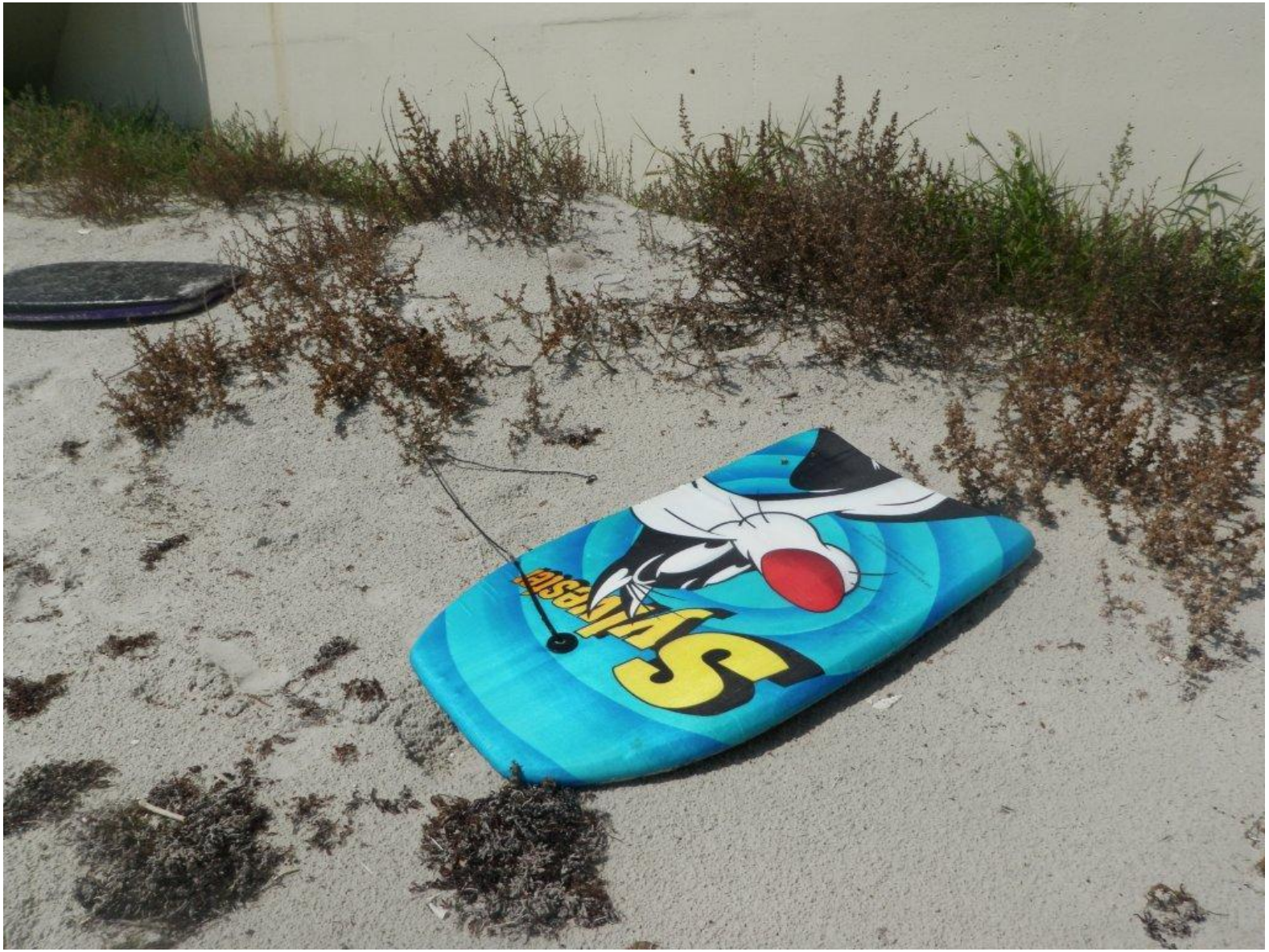
Hand Removal

Hazardous Plant



Distribution