GORSE ACTION GROUP

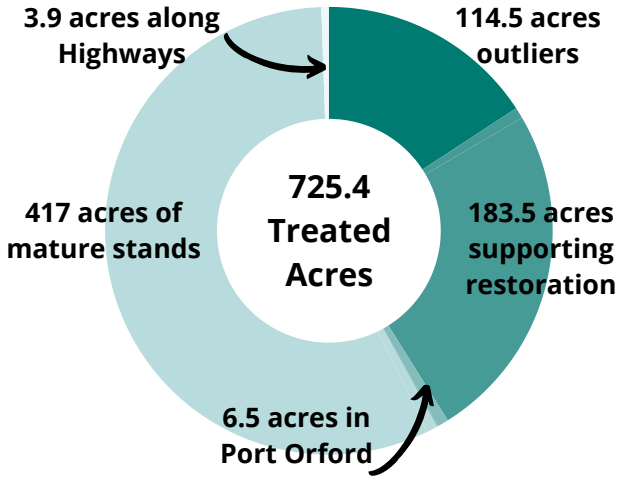
2021 Fire Risk Reduction Efforts

In collaboration with Gorse Action Group partners, the Curry Soil and Water Conservation District tackled invasive gorse to reduce wildfire risk to local communities in Curry County.

Funding Summary

Funding for 2021 fire risk reduction efforts was provided by the Legislative Emergency Board (E-Board) through the Oregon Department of Forestry totaling $314,373. This funding leveraged an additional $9,741 in-kind match resources including personnel hours from partner agencies, landowner contributions and supporting contractual payments. Multiple partners provided capacity support to accomplish the results of this collaborative effort to tackle invasive gorse through a variety of management strategies.

Acreage of Gorse Treated



A dedicated effort to strategically manage gorse

Large Stands

Outliers

Travel Corridors

GORSE ACTION GROUP

The Gorse Action Group (GAG) is a coalition of dedicated individuals who have used various methods to combat this aggressive weed and prevent it from taking a hold along the Oregon coast. GAG partners have found success through strategic planning efforts that have leveraged funds and maximized efforts with limited resources.

What you will find in this report

This report showcases 2021 fire risk reduction efforts. This is only one project of many that partners are implementing every year to address the threat of invasive gorse to Oregon's South coast.

Contents

What is Gorse?

Gorse (Ulex europaeus) is a highly invasive weed that has spread to all seven continents. It is dangerous to the environment and the economy as it continues to broaden its range.

These plants are covered in sharp, stiff spines that make stands of gorse nearly impenetrable to humans and livestock.

Seeds

Gorse seeds are incredibly resilient and remain viable in the soil for over 30 years!

Where did Gorse come from?

Gorse was introduced to the Oregon coast in 1873 by Lord Bennett where it quickly spread across the landscape. Numerous fires broke out in the early 1900's that were attributed to the abundance of gorse as well as the spread through fire induced seed germination and killing of native vegetation .

Why controlling Gorse is so important:

- Safety - Environment - Economy

DANGERS OF GORSE

Due to the high oil content in the plant, gorse is extremely flammable and therefore spreads fire more quickly. The rate of spread of this flammable oil can cause damage to property and natural areas.

Gorse is extremely adaptable to harsh environmental conditions and will outcompete native plant species.

Gorse can become a financial burden to landowners and may reduce property values. Furthermore it will impact working lands and will cause pasture loss.

Reaching New Heights in Gorse Control

Containing gorse is complex as there is no one strategy that will work to control all gorse infestations or prevent the spread of new plants. Multiple perspectives are needed to tackle this problem. The Gorse Action Group, alongside Curry SWCD and Curry Watersheds Partnership, has been working with partners in the Brookings area since 2011 to treat gorse around the community. There are over 1,000 feet of roadside that is nearly fully covered in gorse. Travel corridors are a high priority for multiple reasons including high potential for spread, fire risk, and the encounters with tourists who are often not aware of the risks of gorse.

In 2019, Curry SWCD, ODOT, and State Parks collaborated to use ODOT contracted rock scalers to control gorse on steep slopes at MP354 Hwy 101 (Rainbow Rock) and nearby at Harris Butte in Harris Beach SP. Both sites are seed source areas near heavy traffic corridors and gorse control has been occurring on the more manageable areas nearby for several years. This effort was considered a demo to test steep slope techniques. Only a portion of the Hwy 101 cliff was treated in 2019.

This E-board funding came just at the right time and allowed us to work with the interim ODOT TMM, the Park Manager, and the scaling contractor, Triptych, to revamp the technical approach and finish the removal work. Partnering across agencies can be tricky especially when two of the three individuals originally involved in 2019 were no longer in their positions. Having secured this funding made it easier for everyone to commit, have the needed conversations, and bring the additional support needed to accomplish the work.

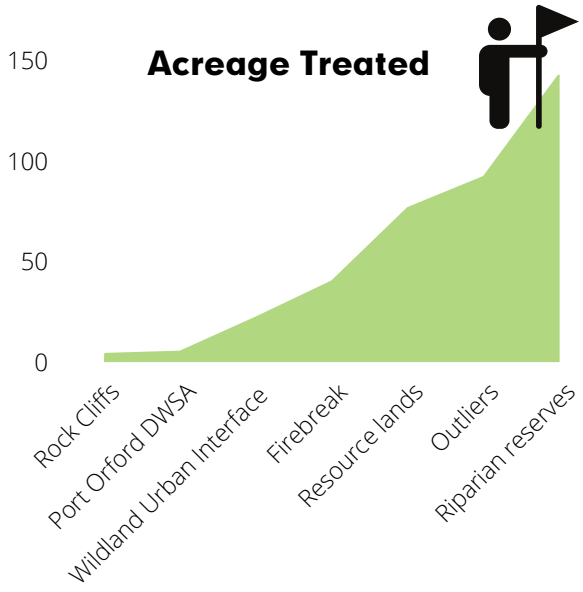
2021 Fire Risk Management Priorities

Prevention

1. Control Outlier Sites
2. Reduce Seeds in Travel Corridors

Control and Containment

1. Manage Gorse in Watershed Restoration Areas
2. Cut Gorse in Port Orford Drinking Water Source Area
3. Manage Mature Gorse to Reduce Wildfires and Recover Resource Lands
4. Seed Vector Control and Wildlife Risk



Fire Risk Reduction Strategies

Gorse Outliers — 114 Acres Treated

Outliers are sites that are beyond the containment boundary of core infestation.

- Individual plants or small clusters
- Large geographically isolated sites
- Quickly leads to large infestations if not controlled

Integrated Pest Management Tools:

- Ongoing monitoring of known sites
- Landowner EDRR Network
- Chemical: Backpack spray
- Cut-stump application
- RTV/ATV mounted spray

Travel Corridors — 3.9 Acres Treated

Gorse can often be found along rights of way which presents multiple challenges.

- Difficult access on steep banks
- Seed sources near heavy traffic
- Removing cut gorse piles

Tools

- Cut-stump application
- Backpack spray
- Rock scaler crew
- Intergovernmental Cooperation

Managing Mature Gorse — 416 Acres Treated

These large stands threaten wildlife, ranch, timberland and municipal water sources.

- Ignition points
- Seed banks
- Legacy burden

Tools:

- Mow/Mulch,
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Cut-stump application
- Grass seeding after mulching
- Replant natives trees

Fire Risk Reduction Strategies

Port Orford's Municipal Drinking Water Source Area 6.5 Acres Treated

Maintaining a firebreak in order to protect an urban area.

- Clean and clear drinking water
- Sedimentation
- Reducing vegetative cover in watershed

Tools:

- Mow/Mulch
- Hand cutting to release existing plantings
- Grass seeding after mulching
- Replant natives trees to shade gorse

Watershed Restoration Projects 183 Acres Treated

Restoration of native riparian forest in the lower watershed by controlling gorse.

- Floodplain connectivity
- Maintain established habitat
- Foraging space for wildlife

Tools:

- Mow/Mulch
- Backpack spray
- Cut-stump application
- RTV/ATV/Truck mounted spray
- Replant natives

Gorse Management is a Long-term Collaborative Effort

GAG partners continue to work towards controlling this dangerous invasive species and to address the increased threats of fire from gorse in the south coast region. This is a collaborative effort, we could not have done this without the active partners and expertise of the GAG to act quickly to fundraise and make significant progress in a short amount of time. We were able to prevent the spread of gorse and reduce wildfire hazards within the wildland-urban interface surrounding the coastal towns of Langlois, Port Orford, and Brookings. Additionally, GAG partners have been able to ease the economic burden of gorse control for local landowners while supporting the local workforce in protecting productive pastureland, upland forests and native riparian forests.

FUTURE OF GORSE

- This culmination of efforts resulted in successful removal of gorse and community collaboration
- Additional efforts have focused around outreach & education, and monitoring for new Gorse

Requirements moving forward:

- Continued Highway Maintenance program
- Continued adjustment of land management practices

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND OUR PARTNERS

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Partner organizations providing in-kind match:Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, City of Port Orford, Port Orford Watershed Council, Wild Rivers Coast Alliance and Landowners

THANK YOU CONTRACTORS

Swanson Ecological Services, Triptych, Willamette Valley Forestry, Windward Gardens, Hildebrand Ranches, Jensen's Tree Service, Bear Creek Ranch LLC, Marsh Excavating, WB Logging and Construction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND LINKS TO FULL RESOURCES VISIT: GORSEACTIONGROUP.ORG