

GORSE ACTION GROUP

DECLARATION OF COOPERATION

Winter 2015

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Gorse Action Group (GAG) is to increase the effectiveness of land management agencies, non-profit organizations, and the public responding to the Oregon Class B Noxious Weed gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties. The primary goal is to improve regional ecology, public safety, and fire defense using economically viable solutions to control gorse. The GAG seeks to work with public and private landowners to control gorse and return lands to workable conditions.

Goals and Objectives

The Gorse Action Group will work together to:

- Quantify and locate the existing gorse problem through aerial mapping project
- Treat gorse-infested sites and return them to productive use
- Reduce fire risk and danger on the south coast
 - Ensure that gorse is included in fire modeling and danger analysis associated with assessing fire risk in the infestation area
- Develop communication channels and collaboration with public and private landowners and other supportive organizations
- Develop a management plan
 - Identify funding sources
 - Evaluate/institute ordinances and policies as needed
 - Pursue a funded group coordinator to focus on gorse
- Promote education efforts to reduce spread and promote effective control of gorse
 - Identify partners and groups who can help spread the word (e.g. Master Gardeners)
 - Conduct economic analysis for private landowners showing the value of making their lands useful

The Problem

Gorse (*Ulex europeaus*) is an Oregon State Class B Noxious weed found in abundance on the southern Oregon coast. Gorse was intentionally introduced into the southern Oregon coast in the late 1800's and is now rated one of the top 100 worst invasive species worldwide (World Conservation Union), and the #1 most invasive species on the south coast of Oregon (Oregon State Parks). The presence of gorse has negatively impacted the regional economy and, due to its flammable nature, has created a serious public safety concern. In 1936, gorse played a key role in the complete burning of the town of Bandon, OR which resulted in 10 fatalities (Oregon Historical Society).

Gorse plants grow and spread rapidly into dense stands, sometimes over 50 acres in size and 2 meters tall. These stands have reduced native plant diversity, altered wildlife habitat, increased fire risk, and rendered lands unusable. In 2014, the Oregon Department of Agriculture stated that gorse poses the 3rd greatest risk to personal income, should the infestation move into susceptible areas (Oregon Department of Agriculture 2014). The estimated susceptible infestation area is over 16.5 million acres, causing an impact of over \$205,000,000 to the economy. The need to begin large-scale, big impact projects is immediate and overdue in order to prevent further impacts to the economy of southern Oregon.

Gorse also threatens the habitat of several threatened and endangered plant species including Western lily, Wolf's evening primrose, and silvery phacelia. Gorse has been cited as a threat to these species by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The Oregon coast is also home to the federally listed coho salmon. Control of gorse and subsequent restoration efforts will improve overall health and function of ecosystem and may aid in recovery efforts for these species.

Controlling gorse will require a collaborative, long-term effort to combine knowledge and resources of local agencies and non-profits. The Gorse Action Group seeks to work together to assess the extent of gorse and create a strategic plan for control on the southern Oregon coast.

Organizational Structure

The Group will function as a means for facilitating the development of partnerships and promoting collaborative efforts for survey, assessment, control, and management of gorse. Members of the Group will continue to have full responsibility for and control over their individual program, responsibilities, and expenditures. A Coordinator will facilitate and document meetings, coordinate the writing and production of a strategic plan, research and write grants for projects, provide communication between group members, and be the point person for new members. Each year the Group will develop and/or revisit objectives, action items and steering committee composition. The steering committee will be composed of members who have signed this declaration and will direct and oversee the work of the coordinator and will help implement actions to pursue the goals of the group.

Participation

The Gorse Action Group shall be open to any person, organization, or agency that supports the purpose and goals of the group. Membership will be established by signing on to this declaration of cooperation and participating in meetings.