

Declaration of Cooperation

Oregon Solutions Gorse Project

Purpose

The establishment of gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is a substantial statewide issue that affects many different communities across Oregon and will require a collective commitment to address. In response, the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project team partners have created this Declaration of Cooperation (DOC) to bring organizations, agencies, and individuals together to work towards the shared goal of controlling and managing gorse in the Oregon Coast region and preventing the spread of gorse beyond its current extent.

The purpose of this DOC is to identify solutions to address the issue at hand and acknowledge the Oregon Solutions Project Team's commitments to work together on this complex issue. It recognizes and honors how our diverse group of partners are aligning their available resources and actions in order to collaboratively and holistically work towards shared solutions. In order to create an agreement in which all partners are invested, partners should be provided an annual opportunity to edit commitments based on budget cycles and new developments. Additional partners and commitments can be formally added to this commitment at that time.

Background

Noxious weeds are non-native plants that have been legally declared a menace to public welfare by the Oregon State Weed Board and a top priority for weed control programs¹. Gorse is a noxious weed found mainly along the coast of Oregon. It is highly invasive, extremely flammable, and forms monocultures that are rich in flammable oils and fine fuels, posing a serious fire risk to coastal communities. Gorse is persistent and one of the most difficult weeds to manage in the world. The shrubby evergreen plants are heavily armored, form dense thickets and generally are 3-10 feet tall. Additionally, the seed can survive many decades in the soil², making control time consuming, expensive, and particularly difficult on steep coastal bluffs.

Gorse was responsible for the burning of the entire city of Bandon in 1936 and notable subsequent fires in 1980, 1999, 2007, and 2015. In addition to widespread coverage of gorse on the Southern Oregon coast, dense gorse thickets currently cover approximately 60% of a 250-acre area of largely undeveloped land surrounded by urban residential development inside the City of Bandon's Urban Growth Boundary, posing a significant fire threat. This area is referred to as the Donut Hole and is a top priority for annexation in the City's comprehensive plan. The Donut Hole is divided among many private owners and much of it is platted with small undeveloped subdivision lots which could go a long way towards meeting the area's short and long-term workforce housing needs if the area's gorse, annexation, and public facilities issues can be addressed through a master planning process.

In addition to the fire threat, gorse rapidly invades land, impacting farming and grazing as well as timberlands. Gorse has already caused some south coast local farms to discontinue or sharply curtail their agricultural operations, and its impacts will continue until effective solutions are found.

Governor Brown designated the mitigation of gorse as an Oregon Solutions Project in December 2016 following a request from community leaders in the Southern Oregon Coast region and the Gorse Action Group (GAG). The GAG is a collaborative group of over 20 federal, state, and county agencies as well as local non-profit organizations, seeking to assess the extent of gorse and to create and implement a strategic plan for control on the southern Oregon coast. The GAG was developed as a subgroup of the Curry Wildfire Preparation Team and became a focused initiative. The GAG is an example of diverse groups pooling resources and working toward a common solution. The mission of the GAG is to: restore natural and ecological values to the land; increase economic and recreational values in the region; and increase public safety by reducing wildfire risk.

The GAG's achievements include education and outreach and an aerial photography and mapping project that documents in high-resolution detail the existing percent cover of gorse and outlines its predicted spread. It has also initiated or joined in several demonstration projects, obtaining funding to return lands to workable and usable condition. The GAG continues to seek funding and other forms of public and private support to further its mission. The Oregon Solutions Gorse Project Team and future partners signing this DOC will be referred to as 'the Gorse Action Group'.

Oregon Solutions

Governor Brown's designation of the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project is a major milestone in the effort to address a persistent noxious threat. Co-convened by Representative Caddy McKeown, Representative District 9, and Jim Seeley, Executive Director of Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, the project team began holding regular meetings in March of 2017. Four subcommittees have provided expertise and recommendations from scientists, communication and engagement specialists, the public, and Donut Hole property owners and stakeholders.

The Oregon Solutions Collaborative Process

1. Begins with a problem or opportunity defined by the community.
 - *Gorse is an Oregon "B" noxious weed found mainly along the coast of Oregon. Gorse is highly invasive, extremely flammable, and able to colonize a wide variety of habitats. This flammable plant poses a serious risk to coastal communities in southern Oregon, as well as native flora and fauna.*
2. Is chaired by a community convener identified by Governor Brown.
 - *Conveners include Representative McKeown and Mr. Seeley.*
3. Uses a collaborative process involving a team of federal, state, and local governments; businesses, landowners, and nonprofit organizations.
 - *Heidi McGowan provides professional facilitation services for the Gorse Project.*
4. Works toward an integrated solution that leverages the resources of the team.
5. Results in a signed Declaration of Cooperation.

The Oregon Solutions Gorse Project committed to “working agreements” for how they conduct their business with one another. As partners of the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project, we agreed to approach problems with creativity and open minds, and acknowledge that each member has a unique perspective and worthy contributions to make.

Project Team

When the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project was first established, there were 30 participants invited to the table. It was soon recognized that in order for the project to be successful, the project team needed to be more inclusive and more participants were invited as gaps were identified. Currently, there are four action teams (aka subcommittees) that work together to help lead and coordinate efforts, ensuring that the collaborative vision is realized through the action of partners working on diverse projects with varying geographic scope. The Project Team has identified additional partners who need to be involved for overall project success including Bonneville Power Administration, Power Utility Districts, and other counties or jurisdictions that are managing gorse, to name a few. The Project Team will continue to recruit additional partners to sign on to this DOC as they move beyond the Oregon Solutions project as the expanded Gorse Action Group.

Project Team Solutions

The project teams collaboratively identified eight overarching solutions that encompass key strategies and necessary actions to address gorse issues at varying scales of control, containment, detection and prevention. These solutions are not intended to serve as an action plan, but rather the guiding framework for the group’s collaborative efforts.

Below are the eight solutions with a brief summary of the associated strategies, *listed in no particular order*:

On-the-Ground Gorse Management and Best Practices

The key strategies and commitments identified for On-the-Ground Gorse Management and Best Management Practices Solutions include:

- Supporting gorse removal projects;
- Updating existing herbicide cost-share programs;
- Controlling gorse along private roads railways, trails, waterways, and other corridors of long-distance transport of weeds and in areas of high risk and points of entry, including campgrounds, power lines, airports, and areas of major disturbance;
- Facilitating and assessing the compliance of decontamination of machinery used in gorse removal and logging and fire equipment;
- Developing a wash station in Bandon as a model for the state;
- Conducting Firewise assessments & removing vegetation/fuel from buffer around homes; and
- Establishing Firewise Communities in the region.

Education, Training, and Technical Support

The key strategies and commitments identified for Education, Training, and Technical Support Solutions include:

- Creating in-person and web-based training modules & resources;
- Supporting Weed Day events;
- Conducting gorse management demonstrations;
- Providing summer internship opportunities focused on gorse management;
- Offering landowner technical assistance;
- Developing equipment rental programs;
- Training contractors and utility workers in best management practices for gorse; and
- Establishing workforce training opportunities.

Communications & Outreach

The key strategies and commitments identified for Communications & Outreach Solutions include:

- Developing diverse engagement strategies for impacted stakeholders and the general public;
- Streamlining communications including branding and materials;
- Developing informational materials for the public;
- Hosting a Donut Hole community meeting;
- Providing information through various media platforms;
- Reviewing incoming information from community-based scientists;
- Conducting fire hazard mitigation outreach; and
- Developing case studies.

Mapping & Reporting

The key strategies and commitments identified for Mapping & Reporting Solutions include:

- Creating maps at various scales to prioritize projects and responses and to use as a communication tool;
- Collecting data where data gaps exist;
- Organizing sketch mapping flights for consistent map data over time;
- Identifying outlier gorse populations;
- Identifying gorse populations in close proximity to vectoring (roadways, power lines, waterways, etc);
- Adopting a shared strategy and communication about detection of populations and response;
- Streamlining methods for sharing and collecting data about gorse locations and management; and
- Using smartphone applications to collect data.

Research

The key strategies and commitments identified for Research Solutions include:

- Conducting a thorough literature review;
- Identifying research needs;
- Fostering academic relationships for research opportunities;
- Conducting cost-benefit analyses;
- Evaluating landscape resilience; and

- Supporting the use of biocontrol methods when possible.

Coordination & Networking

The key strategies and commitments identified for Coordination & Networking Solutions include:

- Supporting a diverse Coordinating Committee to maintain the coordination and direction of the GAG;
- Continuing to build out the partnership at varying scales including landowners and community members, regional stakeholders, and state leaders;
- Aligning existing conservation strategies;
- Coordinating with regional Cooperative Weed Management Areas;
- Tracking management outcomes;
- Developing parameters to inform prioritization and planning of projects between GAG partners and action teams; and
- Aligning and seeking out funding opportunities for projects at varying scales and sustainability of the GAG's collaborative efforts.

Demonstration Projects

A variety of demonstration projects are key to showcasing progress and achievements and testing the limits of what can be done. Some of the demonstration projects that have been identified include:

Gorse Management Sites

- Bullards Beach
- Coquille Point
- Harris Beach
- Cape Blanco State Airport

Donut Hole

The key strategies and commitments identified for Donut Hole Solutions include:

- Hosting community meetings;
- Obtaining Firewise Community status;
- Applying Title III funding to vegetation removal / fuel reduction projects in the Donut Hole;
- Initiating and supporting a collaborative city-county master planning process;
- Identifying and fulfilling permitting requirements for gorse removal; and
- Implementing gorse removal, restoration and development strategies within the Donut Hole.

This Declaration of Cooperation, while not a binding legal contract, is evidence to and a statement of the good faith and commitment of the undersigned parties to realize the collaborative vision of the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project. The undersigned parties to this Declaration of Cooperation have, through a collaborative process, agreed and pledged their cooperation to the actions described below. Individual contributions and objectives are described in detail in Attachment A and intended to be reviewed/edited on an annual basis.

Al Johnson (Individual) WRCA Steering Committee Member, Retired Land Use Attorney

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Bandon Dunes Golf Resort

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Bureau of Land Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

By-the-Sea Gardens, LLC

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

City of Bandon

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coos County Board of Commissioners

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coos County Noxious Weed Control District Advisory Board

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coos County Office of Emergency Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coos Forest Protective Association

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coos Watershed Association

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coquille Indian Tribe

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Coquille Watershed Association

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Curry County Board of Commissioners

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Curry County Office of Emergency Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Curry Soil & Water Conservation District

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Douglas County Soil & Water Conservation District

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Hedley Prince (Individual) - Donut Hole Property Owner

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Lane County Public Works

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

NeighborWorks Umpqua

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon Department of Transportation

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon Regional Solutions, Southern Oregon Region, Office of Governor Kate Brown

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon Natural Resources Conservation Service

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Oregon State University Extension Service

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

South Coast Watershed Council

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

State Representative, House District 9, Caddy McKeown

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

Wild Rivers Coast Alliance

Signed: _____

Date: _____

By (Print Name):

¹ODA. 2017. Noxious Weed Policy and Classification System 2017, Salem OR or [www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/About Weeds.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Pages/About%20Weeds.aspx)

²HR. L. Hill Landcare Research , P.O. Box 69, Lincoln, New Zealand ; Richard Hill & Associates , P.O. Box 4704, Christchurch, New Zealand E-mail: Hillr@crop.cri.nz , A. H. Gourlay Landcare Research , P.O. Box 69, Lincoln, New Zealand & R. J. BARKER.2000. Survival of *Ulex europaeus* seeds in the soil at three sites in New Zealand. P 235-244. Landcare Research , P.O. Box 69, Lincoln, New Zealand; Department of Mathematics and Statistics , University of Otago , P.O. Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand

Attachment A: Individual Commitments

In support of the Oregon Solutions Gorse Project, the following commit to the actions outlined below:

Al Johnson- WRCA Steering Committee Member, Retired Land Use Attorney

- Continue to help, on a volunteer basis, with master planning, workforce housing, and long-term gorse solutions for the Donut Hole

Bandon Dunes Golf Resort

- Continue to be available for knowledge sharing
- Serve as an on the ground example of a working landscape dealing with gorse control

Bureau of Land Management

- Control gorse on BLM lands
- Serve as a member of the GAG Science Team and continue participation in GAG
- Report infestations via EDDMaps or share data with ODA annually
- Report infestations found on other ownerships to landowners

By-the-Sea Gardens, LLC

- Be a local source for applicator and contractor trainings
- Explore the potential of establishing a gorse wash station in Bandon
- Continue to assist in the development of best practices and herbicide guidance documents
- Serve as outreach liaison for the forest industry
- Promote prevention practices amongst contractors, loggers, etc.

City of Bandon

- Continue to serve as a leading member of the GAG, Communications & Outreach subcommittee and other GAG sub-committees as needed.
- Commit to joint planning efforts, with Coos County and other regional stakeholders, to address concerns within the City's urban growth boundary and the greater Bandon area.
- Work as the liaison with the Bandon Rural Fire Protection District.
- Continue to develop and improve Best Management Practices for municipal activities.
- Become more of a resource and education source for private property owners within the City of Bandon.
- Continue to partner in the effort to control & eradicate gorse.

Coos County Board of Commissioners

Coos County Noxious Weed Control District Advisory Board

- Serve as leading member of the GAG Science Team
- Carry-out the responsibilities of the Coos County Noxious Weed Control District (ORS 569.360) as approved and directed by the Coos County Board of Commissioners
- Assist in the development of best practices and herbicide guidance documents
- Work with local farm supply stores to encourage vendors to carry products described in gorse management guidance documents
- Coordinate/administer countywide herbicide cost-share program as funds permit
- Promote prevention practices amongst agencies, contractors, loggers, ranchers, etc.

Coos County Office of Emergency Management

- Serve as a member of the GAG Science Team

Coos Forest Protective Association

- Work with landowners to encourage the use of best practices to reduce fire danger by eliminating gorse and buildup of tinder and debris
- Implement Best Management Practices in activities
- Report infestations via EDDMaps or share data with ODA annually

Coos Watershed Association

- Serve as a member of the GAG Coordinating Committee and Science, Communication and Outreach, Projects and Funding teams
- Host, manage, and populate the Gorse Action Group Website, a clearinghouse and repository for all things gorse
- Promote and manage EDDMapS West to report gorse infestations, particularly new sightings and outliers
- Serve as one of several coastal managers for Invasive Species Hotline gorse reports
- Engage interested parties, submit grants to fund, and co-lead the new South Coast Cooperative Weed Management Area, which will cover Coos and Curry counties
- Monitor and control outlier populations of gorse in the Coos Watershed.

Coquille Indian Tribe

- Provide database, mapping and GIS support services
- Continue to participate as member of the Gorse Action Group (GAG)

Coquille Watershed Association

- Serve on the Donut Hole team
- Act as liaison with SCWMA
- Identify and apply for funding to control and prevent the spread of gorse in the Coquille and neighboring watersheds

Curry County Board of Commissioners

Curry County Office of Emergency Management

- Serve as a member of the GAG

Curry Soil & Water Conservation District

- Continue to pursue grant funds to control outlier gorse populations and collaborate in larger control/restoration efforts in Curry County
- Continue to serve as a member of the Science Team, specifically the mapping subgroup
- Promote the GAG through the website including assisting with content updating and by distributing outreach materials

Douglas County Soil & Water Conservation District

- Engage with the GAG
- Apply for grants to control gorse populations in the Sutherlin area, the most inland (eastern) active population of gorse in Oregon
- Be a point person for the development of a coastal Quarry Certification Program

Hedley Prince (Individual) - Donut Hole Property Owner

- Host meetings with other Donut Hole property owners beginning on November 2nd, 2017
- Lead formation of organization to represent property owners is a high priority.
- Seek positive publicity for gorse removal and development in the Donut Hole
- Seek lower cost gorse removal methods

Lane County Public Works

- Serve as a member of the GAG Science Team
- Promote further Lane County partnerships with GAG
- Assist in mapping and control of Lane County gorse populations

NeighborWorks Umpqua

- Commit to coordinate with Donut Hole Team on outreach
- Commit to provide technical assistance and advice in the development opportunities within the Donut Hole area with focus on providing workforce housing
- Continue as a member of the Donut Hole sub-committee, or “Action Team”
- Be available to act as fiscal agent for funding as appropriate
- Continue as a member of the Communications & Outreach Action Team
- Commit to facilitate a Community Impact Measurement Survey to current owners/occupants within the Donut Hole area

Oregon Department of Agriculture

ORS 569.185 outlines the authority of the Oregon Department of Agriculture for integrated noxious weed management activities.

- Continue to serve as a leading member of the GAG Science Team
- Serve as co-lead for database and mapping development
- Take a leadership role in gorse early detection rapid response (EDRR) efforts for outlier sites.
- Serve as one of several coastal managers for Invasive Species Hotline and EDDMapS gorse reports
- Continue to assist in the development of integrated BMP's and herbicide guidance documents promoting effective gorse control
- Support efforts to obtain release permits for future biological control agents and support research for potential new agents
- Develop case studies (e.g. Wahl, grazing study) to highlight the most effective gorse management options
- Continue to provide feedback in the development of GAG public outreach messaging materials

Oregon Department of Transportation

- Explore the potential of establishing commercial vehicle wash station in Bandon
- Develop a gorse treatment plan for road shoulders and rights of way along Highway 101 and other state maintained roadways.
- Use best practices for cleaning mowing equipment to help prevent the spread of gorse along roads and highways

Oregon Regional Solutions, Southern Oregon Region, Office of Governor Kate Brown

- Assist in identification of resources and funding for specific projects
- Assist with coordination and outreach to relevant State of Oregon agencies
- Play a role as convener on for project implementation

Oregon Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Serve as a member of the GAG Team
- Offer technical and financial assistance for gorse control to cooperating farmers and ranchers
- Work with GAG members and Agency partners in exploring a potential gorse Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS)
- Seek additional NRCS Program financial assistance (RCPP, Two Chiefs)

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

- Serve as a member of the GAG Science and Communications teams
- Serve as a co-lead in the development of a useful coastal map to help guide prioritized control
- Assist in the development of herbicide guidance documents for gorse
- Continue to control gorse infestations on State Parks lands utilizing OPRD priorities and guidelines
- Demonstrate successful control strategies, such as those used at Bullards Beach, Coquille Point, Harris Beach, Cape Blanco State Airport

Oregon State University Extension Service

- Serve as a member of the GAG Science Team
- Develop and promote coastal pesticide applicator trainings
- Assist landowners in the development of basic gorse management plans
- Promote updating the Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook to include GAG gorse control recommendations

South Coast Watershed Council

- Promote and coordinate projects that lead to the suppression and eradication of gorse within the Council's Service Area (New River south to the California border), particularly those projects that have a direct benefit to watershed health
- Promote the activities of the GAG through outreach and education
- Continue to serve as a member of the GAG's Funding and Coordination subcommittees

South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

- Continue to serve as a co-lead of the communications and outreach team
- Assist the project team to identify training needs and opportunities and develop training
- Co-lead the development of communication products.
- Conduct needs assessments and/or evaluate the effectiveness of products and services
- Provide a venue for training
- Assist with Pacific Northwest regional liaison

State Representative, House District 9, Caddy McKeown

- Support and promote the efforts of the Gorse Action Group within the Legislative body, including the Coastal Caucus and the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Serve as a leading member of the GAG
- Control gorse infestation on Refuge lands utilizing USFWS priorities and guidelines

Wild Rivers Coast Alliance

- Provided match funding and capacity funding to facilitate the Gorse project communication and management
- Continue support for convening, communication and gorse removal projects