

Gorse Action Group
Conference Call
Monday, January 9, 2017

Attending:

Alexis Brickner – Coos Watershed Association
Jim Seeley – Wild Rivers Coast Alliance
Marie Simonds – Wild Rivers Coast Alliance
Jeanne Standley – Bureau of Land Management
Will Bailey – Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board
Mike Murphy – Coos County Emergency Services
Carri Pirosko – ODA
Robert Franson – CFP
Don Kendall – Curry County
Darcy Grahek – Go Native Nursery
Brad Raffle – Conservation Capital, LLC
Sherri Laier – OPRD
Erin Minster – Curry SWCD
Norma Kline – OSU Extension
John Bragg – South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

Transition Time

Alexis announced that she is leaving her position at the Coos Watershed Association and therefore, the GAG. She is very sorry to leave the group at such an important time, it is a bittersweet transition. CoosWA will be hiring a replacement immediately with the intent to keep the coordinator position within the CoosWA position. However, Alexis did point out that it is easily a full time job and the group should continue to discuss transitioning to a full time coordinator. There is funding in the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for continued work through 2017.

Jim suggested looking into contract work like the Oregon Invasive Species Council. The group will also discuss internally how to continue.

Oregon Solutions

Jim, Marie, and Alexis have been working Heidi McGowan, of Oregon Solutions, since August to request that the gorse be designated a statewide problem. In December, Alexis received a letter from Governor Brown stating that the project was designated an Oregon Solutions project! Jim, Marie, and Alexis are working with Heidi on the next steps including putting together a committee and scheduling an initial meeting. Jim remain as a convener as Alexis steps out of the role. Jim is working with Steve Greenwood of Oregon Solutions for another co-convener.

Conservation Capital, LLC

Brad Raffle of Conservation Capital contacted Alexis in December about a potential partnership. The group tries to bring private capital, sometimes mixing it with public capital, to solve environmental and economic problems with a positive return on an

investment. Help pursue and investment and facilitate a project. They have worked with juniper and water supply issues. Brad heard about gorse from Jim and Marie and the environmental and economic challenges that it presents. In a nutshell, the process involves the U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development who looks for economic projects that promote sustainable development. The Council is interested in expanding into the PNW, maybe with gorse. There is a grant process to create a preliminary business plan. The main question would be, is there a way to target the gorse problem by targeting land that could be elevated in value by gorse removal. Also look into new and innovative uses for gorse itself – “materials market place”. Brad also has experience in affordable housing and looking into that potential with gorse projects.

Jim stated that a previous Oregon Solutions project dealt with juniper on the dry side of the state and gorse is very problematic, as is juniper so it is a good model to follow. Jim also said that Brad’s experience with affordable housing would be very relevant, in particular with the donut hole.

John Bragg stated that working with CC could be a very innovative way for solving the gorse problem.

Brad will pass along a more tailored description of what a partnership might look like for the group to review.

Jeanne thinks finding an economic solution for gorse would be great but difficult. It would be good to look into the costs of the business plan, as well.

Marie stated that this could really help with a large, overarching plan for gorse and using the mapping information to determine different land uses and gorse control potential. In a sense, this is similar to what we are already doing but with a slight twist.

Jim reiterated that the donut hole is a really a problem and great fire risk. There has been a lot of discussion about getting to work in the donut hole and having affordable housing as a solution.

Darcy mentioned that a few years ago when talking with rotary club, there are a lot of real estate agents interested in controlling gorse and maybe looking into how it devalues land.

Demonstration Project Update

Eric Mruz (USFWS) and Alexis are working with contractors Rick Berello and Liza Ehle to complete the project. The Shutter Creek inmate crew is also working under Liza’s supervision. It is currently underway. Will stated that they are going full speed ahead as of this morning and are just below the 8th Street look out. There has been no erosion yet but it is still a major concern of the landowners on the bluff. This project will be an excellent demonstration and model for future projects, particularly for concerns regarding erosion.

Pacific View Living Center is still on the table but no progress has been made. Brenda Meade from the Coquille Tribe signed the letter that was sent to the governor.

Fire resistant plant demonstration garden

The garden was installed on December 14, 2016 at the Bandon Youth Community Center. Education materials still need to be completed. Alexis asked Darcy if this is something her group would be willing to take on. This would include pamphlets and an interpretive sign. Darcy said that seemed like a great idea.

Darcy received a grant from the Oregon Arts Commission called the Art Builds Community program and they are focuses on how gorse reduces habitat, especially for pollinators. The students will do a pollinator themed art show on the Bandon Boardwalk and murals will be installed in Bandon. The whole point of the project is to raise awareness with a strong education and outreach component. Darcy has also submitted a grant to WRCA for 2 internships and a staff member. Alexis mentioned talking with the Coos County Noxious Weed Advisory Board for additional funding for outreach.

Outreach/Gorse Blossom Festival

Alexis presented at ODA's Interagency Noxious Weed Symposium in early December 2016. The presentation was well received and she made contact with Chrissy Morgan of the Douglas SWCD in Roseburg. Chrissy has some gorse control data and is interested in joining the group. She mentioned that the coastal representative would be Rhonda Black of the Umpqua SWCD but Rhonda is just one person with limited resources. Alexis has reached out to Chrissy since the meeting but hasn't heard back.

Currently, GAG has committed to a public meeting on Wednesday, February 15 in the evening to introduce the GAG to the festival. The GBF has also reserved a booth for the group to have education and outreach material on gorse.

We will need to get additional outreach materials for the Gorse Blossom Festival in mid-February. This includes the Homeowner's Guide, some printed historical fire photos, a list of resources for gorse control, the general informational pamphlet, and possible some fire resistant plant education materials.

Will mentioned an idea that Liza Ehle had: create a specific resource sheet on herbicides, resources, contractors, technical assistance, etc to hand out with the homeowner's guide. Will and Alexis will work with Liza on this.

Jim suggested an attention getter, such as a TV with fire burning above the booth and then historical photos of gorse fires. A projector was suggested.

As for the presentation, Marie suggested an overview, what's been done, and what's happening moving forward, particularly with the donut hole.

Jim and Marie will work on getting historic photos of gorse fires blown up for display.

Erin mentioned a movie called The Night Bandon Burned. This would be a great time show this movie. The library may have a copy or the historical society. Finally, it was suggested that a list of city and county ordinances be provided for landowners. We will storm the Gorse Blossom Festival with education and outreach!

BLM RAC Grant Opportunity

Alexis is working with Dustin Williams (Curry SWCD), Matt Swanson (South Coast Watershed Council), Sherri Laier (OPRD), and Kip Wright, Jeanne Standley, and Stephanie Messerle of the BLM to develop a gorse control and education project based around New River. The group is meeting on Tuesday, January 17 to outline the idea.

Don Kendall – David Brock Smith, former Curry County commissioner now state legislator, has some interest in discussing gorse because he's interested in sudden oak death.

Next Meeting – Scheduled in February before the festival.

Thank you!!!!!!