



2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT SUMMARY



Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is considered one of the most invasive plant species in the world and is now found on all seven continents. While management of gorse is occurring in many areas on Oregon's south coast, long-lived infestations continue to present the risk of spread. In addition to being a significant fire hazard, gorse rapidly invades land, impacting farming, grazing, and other land use activities.

The Gorse Action Group (GAG) is a coalition of dedicated partners working to minimize the economic and environmental impacts of gorse across a regional scale. The Gorse Action Group's highest priority is to stop the spread of gorse with specific objectives to prevent new infestations, control source populations, and build capacity for coordinated efforts. Below is an overview of the Gorse Action Group's accomplishments in 2023.

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

PREVENTION OF NEW INFESTATIONS

Activities spanned working with diverse partners and landowners across the region to survey and treat public and private properties. Additionally, partners implemented best management practices on outlier and early detection / rapid response (EDRR) sites in order to reduce the spread of gorse. Specific activities of the partners include:

- Coos Watershed Association surveyed 200 acres across 28 sites and 11 landowners, including 3 residential sites, 3 small private timberland, 1 pasture, 4 industrial timberland, 1 Federal property, and the rest on Whiskey Run Mountain Bike Trails, split between different trail complexes. Approximately 5,000 gorse seedlings were pulled during the Pedal and Pull event.
- Coquille Watershed Association treated 38 gross acres across 10 sites and 8 landowners, resulting in approximately 100 individual gorse plants pulled. This includes surveying 10 miles of the Coos Bay Railroad and treating all gorse found around the Coaledo area, as well as on multiple privately-owned agricultural lands. Additionally, 37 landowners were involved in project development over 330 acres, primarily within the Coaledo area.
- Curry Watersheds Partnership treated 201 sites across 86 landowners, resulting in over 560 gross acres treated. This work is the bedrock of their control strategy and they have been treating and monitoring some sites for several years. In 2023, 122 sites were found to have no new sprouts!
- The Oregon Department of Agriculture released Gorse thrips (*Sericothrips staphylinus*) on U.S. Forest Service land, Oregon State Parks, Coos County Parks, and a private farming operation, totaling 13 acres. One site in Curry County was used as a gorse plant collection area and a U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS technician dug up 100-200 gorse saplings.
- The Oregon Department of Transportation pulled and removed gorse between mile post 275 & 277.5, totalling approximately 2 miles. Road side spot spraying was also completed during Fall 2023.
- City of Bandon is partially finished with gorse removal in District 3 and Districts 1 and 2 are in suppression phases. Most of the compliance is voluntary with reminders, but there are a few areas going into punitive phases of fines by enforcement.
- South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve pulled 104 seedlings across 2 sites, totaling 0.02 acres.



INFESTED AGRICULTURAL LANDS (TOP). COQUILLE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION SURVEYED 10 MILES OF THE COOS BAY RAILROAD FOR GORSE (BOTTOM). CREDIT: IVY RANDALL, COQUILLE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIC CONTROL OF CORE POPULATIONS

Activities spanned conducting on-the-ground treatment in core infestation areas. These source populations contribute to fuels loading and wildfire hazard risk, which impact the local community and environment. Expansion of new and innovative capacities for gorse treatment also continues to be a priority. Specific activities of the partners include:

- Curry Watersheds Partnership treated 62 core infestation sites across 31 landowners, totalling over 1,024 gross acres treated. These sites were treated through several wildfire risk and fuels reductions funded projects and are strategic to reducing wildfire risk within the area around Port Orford, particularly the northern edge of the core containment area in Elk River and the City of Port Orford's adjacent Drinking Water Source Area in Hubbard Creek. 6 sites located within the core containment at the southern end of the Sixes-Port Orford Core Containment were found to have no new sprouts, thus there was no need for treatment in 2023!
- The Oregon Department of Agriculture released gorse thrips at three sites across three landowners, totalling 7 acres. Two of the sites were in Bandon and one was in Port Orford.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service conducted spray treatment at one site for one landowner following mechanical removal, totalling 13.3 acres. Work in this area will continue for another two years. Additionally, two forest management plans to remove gorse for 85.6 acres in the core infested area were completed.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service conducted treatments at 2 sites totalling 24 acres. This includes follow-up treatments at Coquille Point headland and treatments of small isolated patches within Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge uplands and in high elevation areas of tidal marsh on the Coquille River.
- The City of Bandon conducted initial mechanical treatments of mature gorse at 21 major sites/landownerships across 94 acres, in addition to numerous other small homeowner projects.

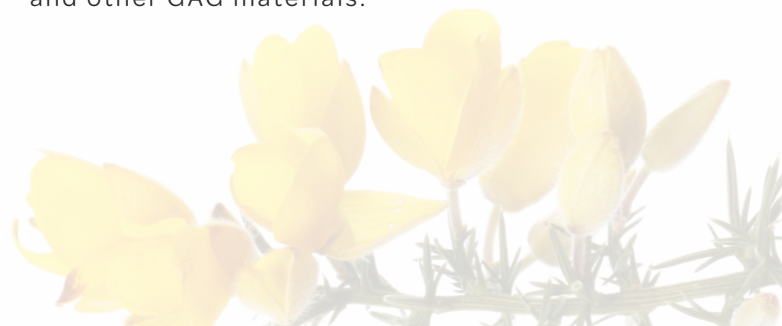


STUART HAINEY (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, APHIS-PPQ) RELEASING GORSE THRIPS (*SERICOTHRIPS STAPHYLINUS*) ON A U.S. FOREST SERVICE INFESTATION ALONG HIGHWAY 101. CREDIT: JOEL PRICE, ODA

PUBLIC OUTREACH & COORDINATED EFFORTS

Activities spanned educating the public and facilitating partnerships and information sharing between Gorse Action Group partner organizations in order to increase awareness and provide new opportunities to collaborate. Specific activities of the partners include:

- A U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service refuge intern gave a presentation to approximately 10 people at the Bandon Library about invasive plant ecology, management, and restoration.
- South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve hosted Second Saturday Stewards, which had 10 participants.
- Oregon Department of Agriculture gave presentations at the Oregon Vegetation Management Association conference in Seaside, OR (200 attendees), the Oregon State Weed Board in Salem, OR (20 attendees), the Washington / Oregon Bureau of Land Management Invasive Species Meeting online (16 attendees), and the Western Weed Biocontrol Working Group meeting online (50 attendees).
- Windward Gardens, LLC held a drone and rappelling demonstration for approximately 50 people in October 2023 and a Winter Education Series for continuing education for 30 people in December 2023. A class to prepare applicators for the pesticide category licensing test also took place.
- Coquille Watershed Association attended the Powers Fishing Derby in May 2023 (150 attendees), Coos County Fair (600 attendees), and the Myrtle Point Harvest Festival (200 attendees).
- Curry Soil & Water Conservation District partnered with the City of Port Orford and the Port Orford Watershed Council to present to the public the 'Wildfire Hazard Reduction Plan for Port Orford's Drinking Water Source Area: Gorse Infestation Management' that was put together by Curry Soil & Water Conservation District. This was a companion planning effort as the City with Springboard Forestry completed a Forest Management Plan to guide forestry practices in order to steward the City-owned forest parcels with the Drinking Water Source Areas.
- City of Bandon held a neighborhood coordination meeting for the 2970 Beach Loop Drive project area in May 2023, which was attended by 18 property owners. During this meeting, Liza Ehle and Jason Kral discussed the importance of coordinating abatement activities between abutting parcels. There was a lot of homeowner concern about the potential for bluff slope destabilization after gorse removal which was addressed through the discussion of best management practices (BMPs).
- The Coos Watershed Association hosted the Annual Gorse Pedal and Pull in October 2023, which is a hybrid mountain bike / gorse pulling competition centered on clearing gorse from the Whiskey Run Trail System. 16 people participated, donating 40 hours of time to pull gorse seedlings and 4 local bike shops donated prizes to incentivize pulling, with the grand prize being an art bike from Front Street Community Bike Works. An afterparty was held with a keg donated from 7 Devils Brewing Co., music donated by local musicians, and pizza provided with GAG funding. Additionally, Coos Watershed Association staff attended the GAG booth at Bandon's Cranberry Festival.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service hosted a Local Work Group Meeting focused on the topic of gorse. 7 out of the 20 participants in attendance had a gorse-related concern. In preparation for this meeting, 300 flyers were mailed out to Coos County landowners and a meeting notice was posted in Curry and Coos County newspapers. They also had a booth at the Coos County Fair to hand out materials for the Gorse Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) and other GAG materials.





PARTICIPANTS SHOWING OFF THEIR BAGS FILLED WITH GOOD, HARD WORK AT THE GORSE PEDAL AND PULL EVENT! CREDIT: ANDERS HANSEN, COOS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

CAPACITY BUILDING

Gorse Action Group partners work hard to obtain funds for implementation and capacity to tackle the complex issues created by gorse infestations. Funding secured by partners in 2023 include:

- Curry Watersheds Partnership secured 5 grants or opportunities totalling \$2,209,865. Funders include Oregon State Fire Marshal, Oregon State Weed Board, U.S. Forest Service, and Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation.
- Oregon Department of Agriculture received one grant for \$25,000.
- Coos Watershed Association received 2 grants totalling \$82,492.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was awarded \$34,700 from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Invasives Small Grant program from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regional Office. These funds were used to hire a 6-month seasonal technician, purchase supplies/chemical, and to contract treatments.
- Windward Gardens, LLC secured \$6000 from Wild Rivers Coast Alliance / Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation for holding the Fall 2023 drone and rappelling demonstration.



\$2,358,057

**IN GRANTS
SECURED BY
GAG PARTNERS
IN 2023**

THANK YOU

Our success would not be possible without the work of the volunteers and contractors that worked on behalf of Gorse Action Group partners. We want to thank all volunteers, big and small, that have dedicated time to gorse control. We also want to thank the following contractors for their efforts in 2023:



A big thank you also goes out to Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation (formerly Wild Rivers Coast Alliance) for their unwavering support to fund Gorse Action Group coordination and capacity efforts for our local watershed groups and partners. Their contribution helps fill critical gaps that would otherwise go unfunded.



PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

Starting in 2022, GAG Members, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Coos Watershed Association (CoosWA) partnered together to tackle long standing gorse patches on a tidal marsh island, infamously called "Gorse Island". This island is jointly owned by USFWS as part of Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge and a private landowner. Thanks to GAG funding, CoosWA was able to coordinate with the private landowner to contract the treatment of gorse on their property. After the initial contract work, CoosWA and USFWS staff were able to access the island via a USFWS boat and work cooperatively to treat gorse on the entire island. Great strides have been made in reducing the large areas of gorse in this unique coastal habitat. Follow-up treatments continued in 2023 and are planned for 2024.



COOS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION AND U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE STAFF ON GORSE ISLAND IN FALL 2023. CREDIT: CAILIN LEAHY, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

LOOKING AHEAD 2024 - 2025

Gorse remains a high priority and unrelenting threat in the state among other noxious weeds. Gorse Action Group partners continue their efforts to prevent new gorse infestations, control source populations, and build capacity. Specific forecasted activities include:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service had two participants sign up for the 2024 contracting cycle and there is interest in the 2025 sign-up as well.
- The Coos Watershed Association will be hosting the Weyerhaeuser Chainsaw Raffle, which is funded with Oregon State Weed Board grants. This raffle incentivizes Weyerhaeuser employees and subcontractors to send in weed locations of high priority species, such as gorse, to be confirmed and treated by Coos Watershed Association staff.
- South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve will continue to pull seedlings and keep an eye out for mature gorse plants.
- Oregon Department of Agriculture is looking into possibly conducting Oregon's first gorse thrips field collection from an established wild population for redistribution.
- Windward Gardens, LLC will be working on a gorse removal project on Sunset Cove in Bandon that involves permits, terrain, and ownership challenges. There will also be another year of continuing education for contractors and applicators, including a short training module about laws and issues they may encounter while doing gorse-specific work.
- Coquille Watershed Association will continue to work in Coaledo.
- The Oregon Department of Transportation will be plucking and mowing gorse south from Beach Loop Road in Bandon.
- The City of Bandon will be working on the sites in District 3 that require on-beach access to treat the bluffs. These sites have increased logistic, planning, and permitting hurdles that the City is invested in facilitating. Other equally challenging sites that are now at the stage of treatment implementation include Coast Guard Hill and Bandon State Airport initial mechanical treatments and Pacific View Assisted Living initial chemical treatments following earlier mechanical treatment.



LIZA (IN PURPLE) GIVING A TOUR OF A NATIVELY REVEGETATED CLIFF IN BANDON FOLLOWING GORSE TREATMENT.

Liza Ehle, resident gorse warrior for 40 years, had this to say about partners:

"Jason Kral for the City of Bandon is doing AMAZING WORK!!! This guy is a rock star!!! Erin and Alexa have been the souls of patience and performance and we thank them for their hard work. Please don't burn out, we are winning!!!!"