

Taking Control of the Range

The Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service is conducting a knapweed-range rehabilitation project. The project is located on upper Willow creek road, two miles east of Willow creek dam.

The purpose of the project is to demonstrate that rangeland which has been decimated by an invasion of annual grasses and broadleaved weeds can be brought back to a level close to the naturally occurring plant community.

This transformation of poor into good quality range is being done in steps. The first step was to spray the project with Tordon 22K. This chemical will remain active for two to three years in the soil and control all broadleaved weeds in the plot during that time. The next two steps were done simultaneously. The project was fenced with New Zealand electric fence to keep the cattle out and allow the grass to grow and a strip was fertilized up the middle to see if that would help when the plot was burned.

During the spring and summer no grazing was allowed in the project and a good crop of annual grasses came up and dominated the site. The next step was to burn the area. The technique of backfiring was used with excellent results. The fertilized strip burned best of all proving that fertilization helped. The plot was harrowed to allow any annual grass seeds present a chance to germinate and grow allowing a



more thorough kill when the area was sprayed later in the fall.

The project was sprayed in the fall with Roundup. The major forage components at that time were Bulbous bluegrass and filaree. The spray did a good job of controlling these species.

Seven plots were broadcast seeded in November with seven different species of grasses. These were Critana thickspike wheatgrass, Luna pubescent wheatgrass, Covar sheep fescue, Siberian wheatgrass, Rosana wheatgrass, Sherman big bluegrass, and Piute Orchardgrass. Immediately following seeding the project was covered with snow.

Before we plant the remainder of the plots they will be sprayed with

Roundup and the same seven grass species will again be planted as a comparison between spring and fall seeding effects on establishment. The project will continue to be rested from grazing until July 1987 to allow the grasses time to establish.

The project has proceeded smoothly to date and, although it is too early for any final conclusions, this series of treatments appears to have great promise as a method for taking control of the range from knapweed.

If you have any questions concerning this project please feel free to call the SCS at 676-5021 or the SWCD at 676-5452.

Morrow SWCD grant

Morrow County was one of 15 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Oregon to receive grant money from the State Department of Agriculture. The grant monies will be used by these districts to enhance soil and water conservation within the state.

Our local district will be using this \$2,000 as added resources towards a watershed restoration project on upper Willow Creek. The total project costs are estimated at \$12,500. Other supporting agencies include the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), Morrow County Weed District and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW).

The project area on upper Willow Creek consists of approximately 2,000 acres of rangeland and 100 acres of riparian habitat. The native plant community is dominated by Idaho fescue, Bluebunch wheatgrass and Cusick bluegrass. Sandburg's bluegrass and a variety of perennial forbs also occur. For several years the range condition has deteriorated and invader species present are diffuse and spotted knapweed, bull thistle, wave leafed thistle, snake

weed and annual grasses. Due to the invader plants the forage production of the native grasses have been very poor. The result has been livestock and big game reductions. Approximately 65 to 75 percent of the range is in fair to poor condition and all of the riparian zones are severely degraded.

The project will be a complete resource management program with major emphasis towards improving water quality and quantity, reduce erosion and improve wildlife habitat. The project will utilize fencing of riparian zones to aid in re-establishment of a productive riparian habitat. It is recommended that all riparian fences be permanent and exclude all livestock. Shrubs, willows and other riparian vegetation will be planted as needed.

Spring development will be constructed or cleaned out to supply good water for wildlife and livestock. A herbicide spray program will be utilized to eliminate unwanted vegetation in competition with native grasses. Reseeding areas depleted of native vegetation will be implemented where necessary.

You are probably asking yourself,

how will I benefit from such a project? The benefits gained from this project will be many. The main two, and probably the most important associated with conservation are erosion control and water quality-quantity. By re-establishing a good riparian zone and getting a good stand of perennial grasses established, erosion will sharply be reduced and the water table will rise. Water quality-quantity is very important to sustain the living community. All living creatures benefit through the management of our natural resources. Fish and wildlife numbers would increase and create a healthier community. Recreation in this area will increase due to the abundance of animals.

This is you Soil and Water Conservation District working for you to ensure that our natural resources are here to stay.

News Brief

Drills Available

Scott Madison will have drills available for grass seeding under the new conservation reserve program.

Call 676-9814 for more information.

Conservation Reserve Program

Farmers and ranchers interested in the conservation reserve program need to contact Bob Adelman SCS office. Sign-up is March 3-14. The SCS office number is 676-5021.

Employment: Morrow County Weed District is accepting applications for summer work. Must be at least 16 years old and have a valid drivers license. For more details contact Jim VanWinkle, Weed Supervisor at the new Pettyjohn Building or call 676-5452. Applications will be accepted until May 23, 1986.

Knapweed

A cooperative program aimed at controlling knapweed in Morrow County has been initiated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Funding for the cooperative program became available through the legislatively approved Deer Enhancement and Rehabilitation (DEAR) program. The program was designed to assist with the rehabilitation of deer winter ranges located on private land in Eastern Oregon.

To qualify for participation in the program in Morrow County, a land-

owner must be located in an area identified as deer winter range and be a member of an active Weed Control Group or be a cooperator in the Heppner Regulated Hunting program. Coordination of landowner groups and implementation of spraying programs is being done by Jim VanWinkle, Manager of the Morrow County SWCD.

It is hoped that approximately 3,000 acres of knapweed infested rangeland can be treated annually. If this level of treatment is achieved, approximately \$10,000 would be spent from funds associated with the DEAR program.



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