Sandy River Gorge, The Nature Conservancy

YEAR 6

by Shelley Matthews

southeast of Oxbow Park, from Oxbow Park to Dodge Park, between Lusted and Gordon Creek roads.

BEFORE

English ivy encroaches on stumps and tree trunks

AFTER

Old growth forest thrives in absence of invasive weeds

This habitat restoration project encompassed a 6.5 mile stretch of the Sandy River within the Wild and Scenic Waterway boundaries between Oxbow Park and Dodge Park. This is the last undeveloped western Oregon river near a metropolitan area. Within this stretch is habitat for diverse terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Black bear, cougar, elk, and deer live on the wooded terraces, while native steelhead and river otter frequent the river. Of greatest importance within this preserve is the low elevation old-growth forest and the rare amphibian species that live in the habitat provided by the preserve.

The project site was located on land owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and state and federal governments. A ten-person Americorp team led 300 volunteers in the restoration of native habitat on the Cornwell tract. They removed Scotch broom, English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, and Japanese knotweed; installed erosion barriers, drains, water bars, and two sets of steps; dug a trench; improved formal trails; and closed trails that negatively impacted sensitive habitat.

At the beginning and end of the project, TNC and the Americorps team hosted picnics for private landowners in the vicinity of the Sandy River Gorge. These picnics provided an opportunity for local citizens to meet the crew leaders, watch demonstrations of Scotch broom removal, learn about other land management activities taking place in the gorge, and to discuss individual matters of interest.

Benefits

- Removed substantial populations of invasive Scotch broom and returned large forests and meadows back to their native habitat condition.
- Preserved old-growth and second-growth forest, as well as habitat for the slender salamander, native steelhead, Chinook salmon, and many other species.
- Expanded community outreach and initiated public education on appropriate land use strategies and stewardship ethics.
- Drew many of the landholders along the Sandy River Scenic corridor into a partnership that lead to a collective management strategy to enhance and restore fish and wildlife habitat and to educate the public on the use and protection/conservation of the watershed.
- The cooperative partnership between the different organizations serves as a model for ecosystem-based restoration in the future.
- The restoration grant leveraged a subsequent grant through the Lower Columbia River Estuary Program to complete an initial invertebrate inventory in the Sandy River Gorge and construct informational kiosks at Dodge Park and the entrance to TNC's Diack Tract of the Sandy River Preserve.

Budget

Total Proposed – $60,709
Total Actual – $65,000 (estimated)
Metro/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant award – $14,000
Grant Dollars Spent - $14,000

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn't

- Allow three to five years to control noxious weed species such as Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, and Japanese knotweed.
- Japanese knotweed propagates more from the root segments than from seed. Therefore, it needs to be removed in a manner that denies nutrients to the roots without disturbing the root structure. Knotweed stems were removed from root rhizomes four times during a 16-week period. The last removal occurred during the flowering stage of the knotweed's life cycle. The timing of the last stem removal was important to deny the greatest amount of nutrients to the root system. Any exposed root material was removed from the site and burned. Other vegetation was piled in the sun to decompose. This process must be continued for two to three years to kill the root clump.
- Scotch broom was removed effectively with pulaskis, Weed Wrenches, handsaws, and loppers. Removed plants were placed in full sun in many small to medium sized piles, which allowed biomass to decompose more rapidly; piles were not evident one year later.

Partners

Cascade Education Corps
C.R.U.E.
Environmental Middle School
ESD Re-Entry Program
Gresham High School
I Have a Dream Foundation
McGloughlin Junior High
Milwaukie Junior High
Multnomah Youth Cooperative
Mt. Hood Community College
National Civilian Community Corps
New Trials
Northwest Service Academy: Americorps
Oregon Episcopal School
Portland Public School Truancy Diversion Project
Progress Home
Reynolds High School
Taproot
The Nature Conservancy
Washington Summer Youth Program
Youth Volunteer Corps

Contact

Eddie Huckins, Portland Area Preserve Manager, and Lupine Jones, Volunteer Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy, (503) 230-1221

Timeline and Tasks

Diack Tract	
April 1997	Removed English ivy from 25 trees; closed Beaver Dam trail; cleared trail and rerouted section around landslide on Anne's trail
Cornwell Tract	
April-July 1997	Cleared 32 acres of Scotch broom
May-July 1997	Removed Japanese knotweed from 25'X 25' section
July 1997	Removed Himalayan blackberry from riverbank
June-July 1997	Set-up photo point monitoring system
Oxbow Regional Park	
April-May 1997	Removed Scotch Broom from picnic and camping areas
Dodge Park	
June 1997	Removed all Scotch Broom in park
BLM/Partridge Tract	
May 1997	Closed 150 feet of trail
May-July 1997	Removed 550 Scotch broom plants in clear-cut area; Maintained trail by installing 9 drains, one 30 foot trench, 5 water bars and two sets of steps. Also improved tread to encourage drainage.