

Oregon Work Crews Camp Out to Control Houndstongue



In the heart of Oregon resides one of many national forests we can thank President Teddy Roosevelt for preserving. Rich in scenery and recreational opportunities, Ochoco National Forest is home to a variety of wildlife and is considered a trophy bull elk area. When an invasive weed began crowding out native forage, federal officials became concerned.

Challenge:

In 1993, the Paulina Ranger District of Ochoco National Forest discovered small populations of houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), a biennial non-native plant species. The weeds were subsequently pulled. By 2000 the houndstongue population had exploded: occurrences were scattered across 20,000 acres of the 235,000-acre district, ranging in size from less than one-twentieth of an acre to 100 acres.

Houndstongue develops as a rosette the first year and becomes a flowering stalk the following year. With Velcro-like nutlets that cling to clothing and hair, houndstongue seeds can travel long distances by grabbing onto a moving object. These seeds can be carried for miles before being deposited, often at ground level, where they can start new, undetected populations.

The invasive weed also displaces native vegetation. Although most animals avoid the weed, the habitual creatures are forced to move out of their range area for forage.

Solution:

Paulina Ranger District officials attacked large population centers of houndstongue the old-fashioned way. Crews pulled, bagged and disposed of the weeds and their seeds. Rosettes were grubbed out of the ground with manual tools.



Youth played a major role in the manual control of houndstongue in the Ochoco National Forest.

The remoteness of the area surrounding Ochoco National Forest forced the work crews to camp for a few weeks at a time while they worked. Crews from Northwest Youth Corp and Grant County Oregon, consisting of disadvantaged and at-risk youth, teamed with others who were on a traveling adventure. District officials were impressed with the self-sufficiency of these young people.

In addition to federal government funds, the Rocky Mountain Elk foundation helped finance the crews. District officials also received a Blue Mountain Elk Initiative grant and secured Title II Resource Advisory Council money from Crook County, Oregon.

Result:

Now in its fifth year, the manual treatment has proven successful. In the large population centers chosen for treatment, houndstongue population density has been reduced and seed sources eradicated. In addition, native vegetation is returning. The District continues to manually tend to the areas that have been treated for the past five years.

Learn More:

Debra Mafera
(541) 477-6914
dmafera@fs.fed.us

NIWAW Information:

Gina Ramos, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
(202) 452-5084
gina_ramos@blm.gov

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.
National and Regional Weed Science Societies
(202) 408-5388
lee.vanwychen@weedscienceorgs.com

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