

Herbaceous Weed Control (315)

Conservation Practice Information Sheet

315 OR-IS

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon

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Client: _____



Photo of targeted grazing using sheep
 (photo by Morgan Doran)

Description

Herbaceous Weed Control is used to control non-woody invasive, noxious, and prohibited plants on a site where they exceed the desired or expected amount. This practice is an important tool that can be used to improve wildlife habitat, prevent or reduce soil loss, improve forage, or reduce fire fuel loads.

Herbaceous weeds have increased in many areas of Oregon due to several factors. Historic grazing management schemes may have favored the introduction and expansion of weedy plants. Some plants have escaped from flower gardens and become invasive pests across the landscape. Other weeds were inadvertently introduced with desirable crop seeds.

If you are dealing with a site that has experienced a plant expansion or invasion, it will be important for you to recognize the factors that are primarily responsible. This knowledge will allow you to implement an appropriate weed control scheme for your specific site by treating the cause(s) as well as the effects, thus greatly improving your

chances for success and increasing the practice's lifespan.

Uses

Herbaceous Weed Control can be used to achieve a variety of objectives: creating a desired plant community, reducing soil movement or loss, improving animal habitat for livestock and/or wildlife, and reducing fuel loads in areas that are subject to fire.

Desired plant communities should be consistent with what the site is capable of producing as well as the climate dynamics and range and degree of natural disturbances (such as fire, drought, or grazing) for the area. Use the [Web Soil Survey](#) and on-site determinations by a soil scientist and/or range specialist to establish which ecological site is on the area of interest. Use the [Ecological Site Information System](#) to obtain a description of the specific ecological site present, including plant communities.

Weedy plants can out-compete desired grasses, flowering plants, and other species for sunlight, moisture, and/or nutrients. This competition can reduce the population of various plant species, causing a reduction of soil surface protection and in turn making the soil more vulnerable to movement or loss from the site. In this situation, you can use weed control to reduce the amount of highly competitive plants on the property and to allow the existing, desired vegetation to increase. It may be necessary to seed desired species if there are insufficient amounts in the current stand.

Herbaceous Weed Control can also be used to favor different groups of livestock and wildlife. Just as cows prefer grasses while domestic sheep and goats prefer flowering plants and shrubs, some wildlife, such as elk, prefer grasses while others, such as deer, prefer flowering plants and shrubs. Some wildlife

species need certain species of shrubs, such as sage grouse, sage sparrow, and others which depend on sagebrush. The appropriate application of Herbaceous Weed Control to a site can improve habitat for certain animal species while discouraging unwanted species. Note that you may need to consult with a wildlife biologist and/or range specialist to make sure that the desired animal's needs can be met using this practice without harming critical habitat for other local species.

Application of this practice in a mosaic pattern across the landscape can be used to

create a variety of conditions favorable to hiding cover, nesting sites, and foraging areas for a variety of animals.

Timing

Herbaceous Weed Control should be implemented when the target species is most vulnerable. For many weedy species in Oregon, this is during the plant's active growth period of spring or summer. However, be sure to avoid conflicts with local wildlife uses of the site. For example, avoid implementing this practice during nesting season.

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