

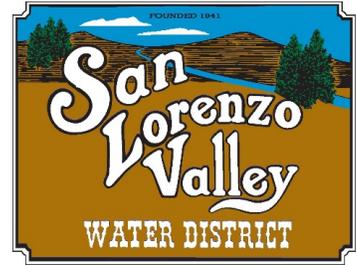
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Invasive French Broom Super Bloom Inspires Action By San Lorenzo Valley Water District Board

DISTRICT TAKES STAND TO PROTECT OLYMPIA WATERSHED IN SENSITIVE SANDHILLS HABITAT; US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE-APPROVED PLAN INCLUDES IMMEDIATE STEPS AND BANS USE OF MONSANTO PRODUCTS

BOULDER CREEK, CA – The San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD) today announced the Board of Directors approved a plan May 8 to protect rare and endangered species against the invasive French Broom in the Olympia Watershed (also referred to as “Wellfield”), which is within the sensitive Sandhills habitat and also contains some of the last vestiges of the highest quality sand habitat known as Open Sand Parkland.

“This year’s devastating storms were bad news for the Olympia Watershed because the historic rainfall caused a super bloom of the invasive French Broom plant,” said Brian Lee, SLVWD district manager. “In order to prevent a new, massive seed bank that will threaten native endangered species, we must move immediately to cut and treat the French Bloom utilizing standard practices for local public agencies, as approved by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.”

THE PLAN

1) Immediately use the “cut stump method” for eradication, as approved by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, in order to prevent establishment of the super bloom-generated seedbank.

- One-time application of herbicide to high-priority mature French Broom plants through the “cut stump method.” It is estimated that less than 4 gallons of diluted glyphosate herbicide will be applied to individual French Broom stumps in the highest priority zones within an estimated 40 acres. The approved method involves using a specialized sponge applicator tool, used by a certified pesticide expert. No spraying will take place.
- The herbicide will not be used within 48 hours of forecasted rainfall. The herbicide application will be strictly limited to the “trunk” of the French Broom only. The herbicide, which typically breaks down from sunlight within 48 hours, will not affect the District’s water source, located approximately 200 feet beneath the surface of the ground.
- Monsanto products are banned and the non-Monsanto glyphosate product the District selects will not include any other “additive” ingredients.

2) Continue working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to secure a “take permit,” which will enable the District to pursue additional eradication strategies such as direct pulling of plants in the future. It is anticipated that it will take approximately one year to secure the permit.

3) Establish a French Broom eradication task force.

- Science-focused task force will be asked to evaluate key issues related to watershed stewardship, species protection and use of herbicides.
- The task force would provide a report of recommendations for the Board of Directors within six months of being established.
- Task force members will not include current Directors.
- Details related to establishing the task force will be discussed at a future meeting of the Board.

“The SLV community has really stepped up to actively participate in the District’s discussions about how to address this issue and we’re better for it,” continued Lee. “We have a plan that enables the District to take immediate action, while also making it clear that we’re very much open to a long-term strategy that moves away from use of herbicide – and in the near-term bans the use of Monsanto products, including Roundup. Many in our community have expressed a desire to evolve beyond current standard practices and innovate new ways to manage the invasive French Broom. It’s time to redouble our efforts to consider new ideas for our long-term effort to protect the watershed. This plan provides the path to do that.”

COMMITMENT TO PROTECT WATERSHEDS

SLVWD’s interest in addressing the invasive French Broom in the Olympia Watershed is based on the District’s commitment to being good stewards of the watershed. Local watersheds, including lands directly managed by SLVWD as well as others, represent a critical component of the water system that supplies SLVWD’s customers. Per the District’s adopted Watershed Management Plan, which has been in place since 2010:

Primary Goal: Manage District watershed lands to protect and enhance ecosystem health and water quality, while managing District water sources to provide a reliable water supply in perpetuity; (In all management cases, the primary goal must be met first, even if an intended action is focused on a secondary goal).

For more about the District’s Watershed Management Plan, visit www.slvwd.com/watershed/FINAL-VERSION-pt2.pdf.

ABOUT THE THREATENED HABITAT

Open Sand Parkland habitat, including SLVWD-owned land in the Olympia Watershed, is home to many rare, threatened and endangered species that exist only in the Santa Cruz Mountains. This land has been identified by experts and the US Fish & Wildlife Service as critical for persistence of biodiversity. The species that occur in the Open Sand Parkland habitat, which has been reduce to only 57 acres in the world, are being threatened by habitat loss due to human activities such as urban development, sand quarrying, recreation, fire exclusion and invasive species, including the fast-spreading invasive French Broom. Human activities that impact sandhills habitat directly and indirectly threaten the persistence of biodiversity at the community (or ecosystem), species, population, and genetic levels.

The property had been slated for development in 1977, which would have created an impermeable surface, reducing aquifer recharge. SLVWD recognized the property’s importance for water supply and acquired the land. Since then, wells on the property have been critical for providing water to the residents in the San Lorenzo Valley during summer months when surface water flows are insufficient to serve the community. In the 1990s many of the species on the site were listed as threatened and endangered, and a recovery plan was published by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

A few years later the District began working toward a long-term management plan. After years of collaborating with restoration ecologists, sandhills experts and members of the public, the District proposed an invasive species management plan to manage invasive species, and protect the fragile and rare habitat that exists on the site.

ABOUT THE SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

The San Lorenzo Valley Water District is located in the mountains of northern Santa Cruz County. The district serves more than 7,800 metered connections. Established in 1941, the district supplies water to the communities of Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Brookdale, Felton, Lompico, Mañana Woods, Scotts Valley and Zayante. For more information, visit www.slvwd.com or www.facebook.com/slvwaterdistrict.

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