



SUMMER 2017 BROOM ERADICATION UPDATE: **MAJOR PROGRESS MADE**

BACKGROUND

On May 9, 2017, District staff was directed by the SLV Water District Board to move forward with a plan to eradicate French Broom in the Olympia Watershed, within the sensitive Sandhills habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Responding to the urgent need to take eradication action before a super bloom-caused seed bank disperses, the Board directed staff to begin hand-cutting of mature plants (including the application of glyphosate directly to fresh cut stumps) combined with a 5-year cost/budget analysis of manual management of the broom, pursuit of a "take" permit from the US Fish & Wildlife service that would allow additional eradication strategies to be considering, and convening of a "blue ribbon" task force of outside ecosystem restoration experts to review the District's Broom Management Plan. In addition, use of Monsanto products was banned. Further, there would be no spraying of glyphosate, with application only to happen via a licensed, qualified expert who would use the "dab" method.

MAJOR PROGRESS

Immediately following direction from the Board, staff began the planning, scoping and recruiting for a contractor to conduct the effort. Sensitive habitat areas with mature broom plants, heavy with not-yet-viable seed, were identified and prioritized. Following an exhaustive effort to secure an expert broom eradication contractor who would be available to begin immediately, the District hired George McMenamin, a local environmental consultant, to conduct and monitor the eradication effort in the most environmentally responsible manner.

Mr. McMenamin and a licensed herbicide applicator completed the first phase of eradication work the week of June 26. No spraying took place. Per the District's Monsanto ban, a product called Rodeo (manufactured by Dow) was used. Rodeo contains 53.8% glyphosate. A total of 8 ounces of glyphosate was used. Use was limited to "dabbing" freshly cut French Broom stumps through use of a medium felt applicator. The cost of the work was not to exceed \$7,500.00.

Large areas of broom on the property that are further from the highly sensitive habitat still contain dense thickets of broom which will continue to spread into sensitive habitat areas if left unmanaged. Cost and budget analysis for future management of the broom is underway. When completed, a report will be presented to the Board. Work also continues on the effort to obtain a "take" permit from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The District's Environmental Committee is working in collaboration with District staff to organize the "blue ribbon" panel to review the District's approach to broom management.

Having completed the urgent effort to eradicate high-priority seed-bearing plants, District staff will be planning a second phase of eradication this year. Additional eradication efforts this year will not include the use glyphosate.

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).

More about the District's Watershed Management Plan: www.slvwd.com/watershed/FINAL-VERSION-pt2.pdf

Board of Directors' decision regarding French Broom eradication: <http://www.slvwd.com/agendas/OTHER/2017/5-part%20motion%20re%20broom%205.8.17.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.