



Wild Iris Ridge Oak Savanna & Upland Prairie Enhancement

Project Background

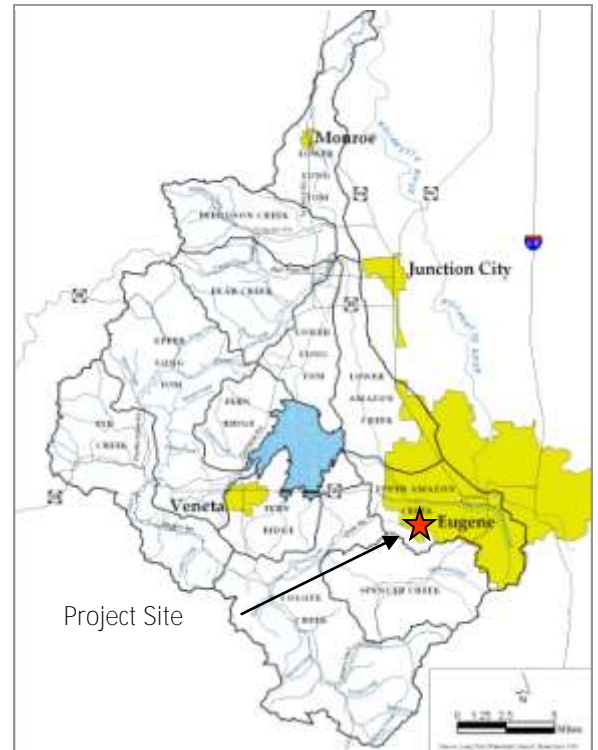
Wild Iris Ridge, a 200-acre site located along the South Hills ridgeline, was purchased by the City of Eugene for habitat preservation and community open space. Wild Iris Ridge contains a patchwork of oak woodlands, oak savanna, and upland prairie habitat that was common throughout much of the Willamette Valley prior to Euro-American settlement. Today, less than 2% of oak savanna and 1% of upland prairie—essential habitat for as many as 200 species—remains in the valley.



Before the project: Dense, closed-canopy forest crowded oaks, reducing crown spread and decreasing habitat quality.



After the project: Conifers and other woody vegetation was thinned from around oaks to allow more space between trees and encourage crown spreading.



The May 10 (9:00 a.m.) project tour will focus on the third phase of a three-phase project to enhance these rare but important habitat types. During the first and second phases, we removed invasive species such as Scotch broom, blackberry, and false brome on 85 acres. Afterwards, we seeded the area with a mix of native grasses and forbs. We also improved oak habitat structure by thinning trees and other woody vegetation. Like many areas in the valley, the oak savanna had transitioned to a closed-canopy forest from lack of fire and encroachment from Douglas-fir, Ponderosa Pine, and other trees.

For phase three, the Council removed invasive plant re-growth on the initial 85 acres to ensure continued success of native prairie vegetation. We treated invasive plants on 27 additional acres of the site and seeded the area with more native grasses and forbs. We also removed slash piles left over from a logging operation by a former landowner. This phase also thinned encroaching trees and shrubs, particularly Ponderosa pine, from 38 acres of former oak savanna and woodland that had become closed-canopy forest.



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Restoration Techniques for Phase 3

- ◆ Mowed blackberry with a Bobcat on flat or gently sloped ground on parts of the treatment area.
- ◆ Spot spraying of Scotch broom, blackberry, thistle, and false brome.
- ◆ Removed slash piles from site with an excavator. The bare ground left behind was smoothed and seeded with native grasses and wildflowers.
- ◆ Thinned Ponderosa pines and other woody vegetation using a skid steer with a masticating head.
- ◆ Soil exposed from the pine removal was reseeded with native prairie grasses and forbs.
- ◆ Removed 1,000 feet of barbed wire fence to allow wildlife easier access to and from the site.

Environmental & Economic Benefits

- ◆ Removal of invasive non-native plants will increase the biodiversity and cover of native prairie grasses and forbs.
- ◆ Thinning of faster-growing woody trees such as pine and Douglas fir, as well as younger oaks, creates open space that allows native prairie and savanna plant species to grow.
- ◆ Thinning also allows mature oaks to expand their crowns and produce more acorns, which provide food for native wildlife.
- ◆ As native prairie and savanna plants return, the site will provide habitat for insects, birds, and mammals dependent on prairie and savanna habitat.
- ◆ Contractors were used from the surrounding area, which supports the local economy.



Before the project: Scotch broom thickets had invaded open areas, crowding out native prairie species.



After the project: After treating the invasive Scotch broom, the area was seeded with native grasses, wildflowers, and forbs.

Project Funding & Partners

Phase 3 Project Cost: \$124,057

Funding:

OWEB:	\$ 90,847
In-Kind Match:	\$ 33,570

- Partners
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)
 - City of Eugene

The Long Tom Watershed Council thanks our partners and funders!