



OAK SAVANNA ENHANCEMENT AT BROWN'S

PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

A wide array of native plant and wildlife species depend on oak savanna habitat in the Willamette Valley, including many species of grassland birds. This project on the Brown property enhanced 24 acres of oak savanna habitat.

The Brown site on the western edge of the southern Eugene ridgeline connects an important corridor of upland oak and prairie restoration sites between Bailey Hill and Crow Roads, including sites with private landowners who have partnered with LTWC and lands restored by the BLM, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the City of Eugene, and The Nature Conservancy. This corridor of oak habitat is important to the dispersal of native insects, birds, prairie plant seeds, and other wildlife.

The Browns are interested in stewarding their land for native wildlife and managing it for oak habitat. They partnered with the Council in 2012 to thin Douglas fir that was encroaching on the oaks. Douglas fir grows much faster and can overtop and outcompete oaks. Thinning fir also benefited the landowner by reducing the amount of fuel available for wildfires. The Council also removed weeds such as blackberry, Scotch broom, thistle, and a small patch of false brome that had invaded the understory.

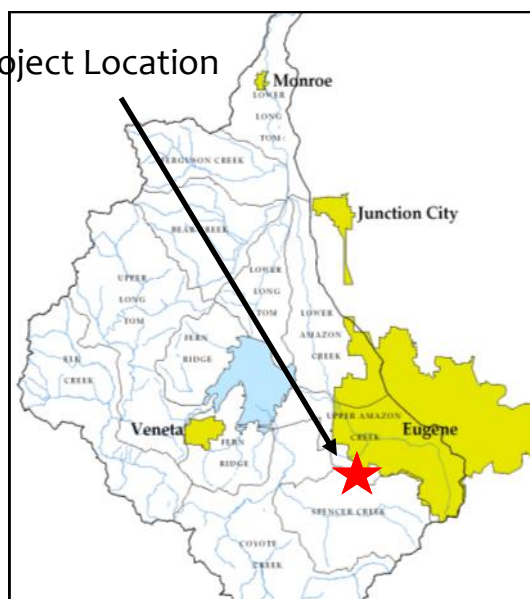


Before the Project: Young Douglas firs grow quickly and had encroached on existing oak trees, inhibiting acorn production and shading native grasses.



After thinning: Crowns of oak trees now have room to grow outward to expand acorn production, and native grasses have adequate sunlight.

Project Location



PROJECT FUNDING & PARTNERS

Total Project Cost: \$25,766

Landowners

Ted, Lindy & Cliff Brown - *provided all of the labor & equipment for thinning and contributed some labor for weed removal.*

Funders

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW)

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Before the project: Invasive weeds such as blackberry and thistle will be removed & native grasses that support a variety of insect and bird species will be planted.



After thinning: The property connects several nearby oak restoration projects, including three with LTWC.

RESTORATION TECHNIQUES

Restored Prairie on 11 acres

- Mechanically remove blackberry and larger Scotch broom
- Spray thistle and smaller Scotch broom plants with herbicide.
- Plant native grass & forb seed mix in early fall

Thinned 13 acres of Oak Savanna

- Thinned Douglas fir and smaller oaks to create a canopy cover of less than 25% per acre.
- The landowners used a chainsaw to thin trees, and a tractor and farm winch to move thinned trees to a landing.
- The landowners coordinated the transport of the Douglas fir trees off site.



ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Less than 2% of historic oak savanna habitat remains in the Willamette Valley. Restoration on private land is key to restoring and connecting remnants of these rare habitat types.
- Thinning allows mature oaks to expand their crowns and produce more acorns, which provide food for wildlife. More cavities are formed in oaks with larger crowns.
- This project focused on restoring habitat for the Oregon vesper sparrow (below right), which is a species of concern in the Willamette Valley. Many other wildlife species like the western gray squirrel, white-breasted nuthatch, and acorn woodpecker (below left) also use prairie and oaks for food, cover and nesting.
- Thinning the savanna increases light to the forest floor, increasing growth of native flowering plants and benefitting pollinators.



The Long Tom Watershed Council thanks our partners and funders!