

Natural Working Lands Initiative

ODFW and ODA

Oregon Board of Agriculture

June 5, 2025



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Overview

- Introduction – Two parallel programs
- The Road to the Range
- The Threats We Face
- The Task at Hand
- Making tracks



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How'd we get here?

ODA Noxious Weed Program

- It's bigger than the thistles
- Interconnected invasion regimes
- Recognize large-scale context
- Adopt/develop/promote new management frameworks

Partner Engagement

- With the work and with us
- Technical Assistance & Consultations
 - It's more than just grass
- Financial Considerations

Stakeholder Priority

- Ranching Industry & Public User Groups
- We *are* the Dept. of Agriculture



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ODFW's Commitment to Rangeland Health



- Farm Bill Biologists
- Wildlife Habitat Conservation Management Program
- Natural and Working Lands Program
- Landscape Scale Restoration Projects
 - Wasco County
 - GNA juniper treatment projects
 - Experimenting with virtual fence for habitat protection

Rangeland in Oregon



- 18 Million Acres of Sagebrush Rangeland in Oregon
- Beef # 2 Agricultural commodity in Oregon
- \$1 Billion Annually
- Oregon's beef relies on public and private rangeland
- 1,300 grazing permits over 8.3 million acres of BLM Land



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Rangeland Resilience

Invasive Annual Grass is the “big picture”

5-year partnership with NRCS

- Hired first Rangeland Health Specialist in December 2024
 - Second to be hired 2025
- Technical Assistance
 - Practitioners & Landowners
- Strategic Planning
 - 20 yr goals, 10 yr actions
- Demand for TA and financial assistance is greater than ever



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Rangeland Benefits and Ecosystem Services



- Forage base for communities and economies
- Water storage and release
- Soil carbon sequestration
- Soil health
- Biodiversity basis for food web
- Wildlife habitat for over 350 species
- Wildfire resilience
- Recreation and hunting
- Anadromous fish habitat



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Threats to Oregon's Rangeland



- Exotic Invasive species
 - cheatgrass, Medusahead, ventenata
 - knapweed, thistle etc.
- Altered Fire Regimes
- Native Juniper Encroachment
- Soil Degradation
- Fragmentation



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The Problem with Annual Grasses

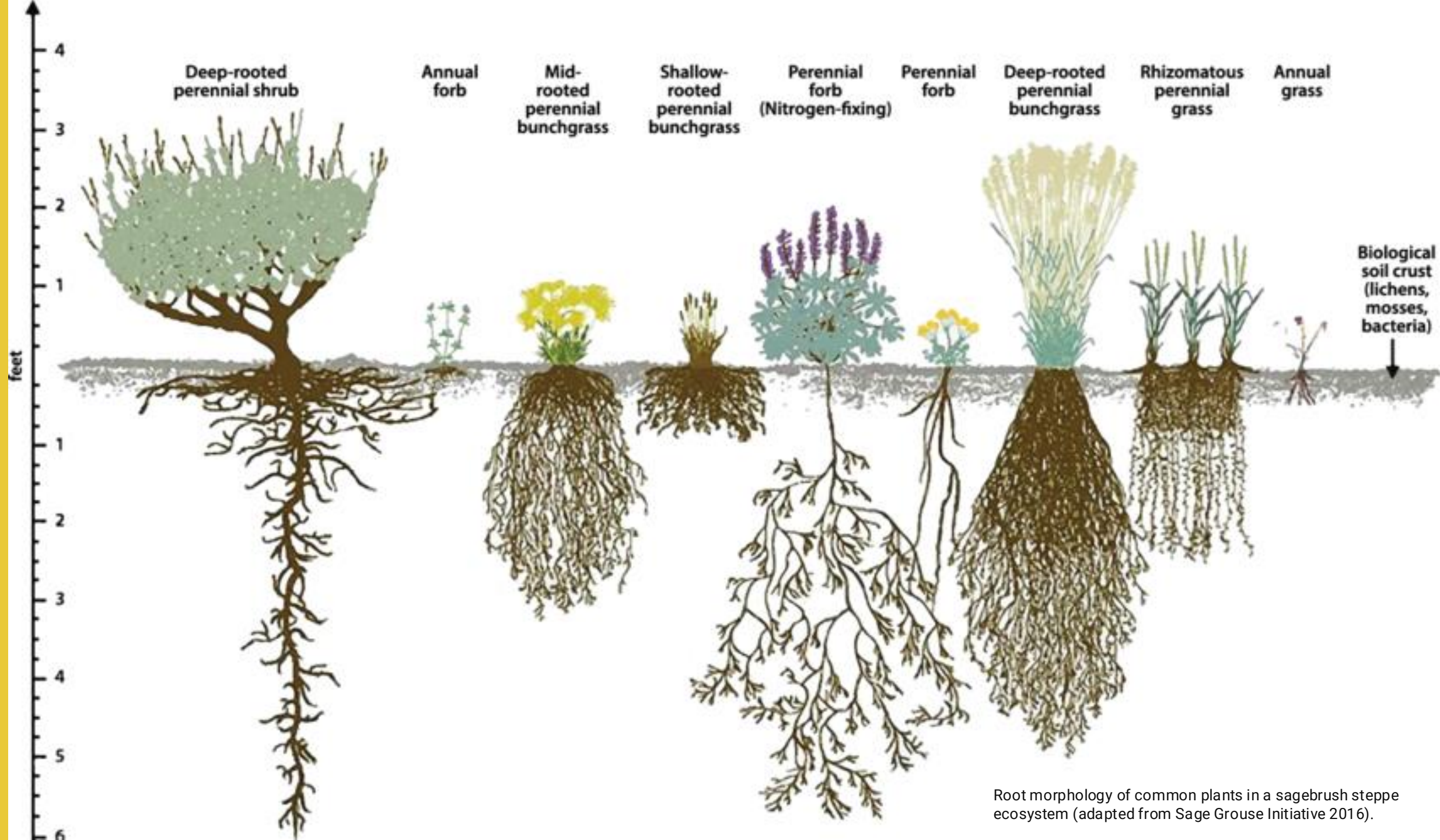


- Early Germination and growth - outcompete native perennial grass seedlings
- Rob mature perennials of moisture
- Decrease forage volume, consistency
- Decrease in forage availability & duration
- Increase fire risk and increase with fire
- Increased risk of other weeds
- Increase soil erosion

...it's about the (lack of) roots!



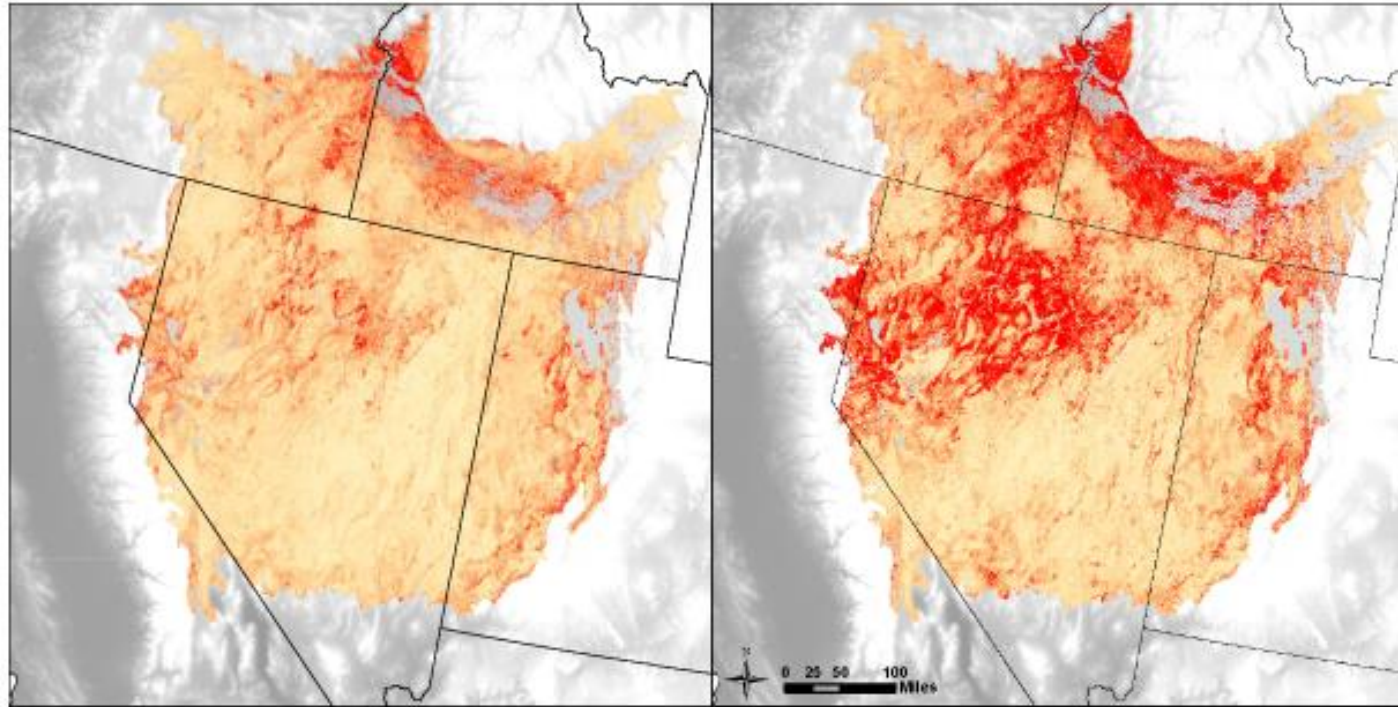
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Root morphology of common plants in a sagebrush steppe ecosystem (adapted from Sage Grouse Initiative 2016).

Wildfires Lead to Invasive Grass Growth in Great Basin

More annual grasses, like cheatgrass, are growing in region previously dominated by sagebrush



Annual Grasses 1990

Annual Grasses 2018

Low Cover

High Cover

Source: Matthew Jones and Brady Allred at the University of Montana and the Rangeland Analysis Platform, an app funded by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Bureau of Land Management

Bloomberg Environment



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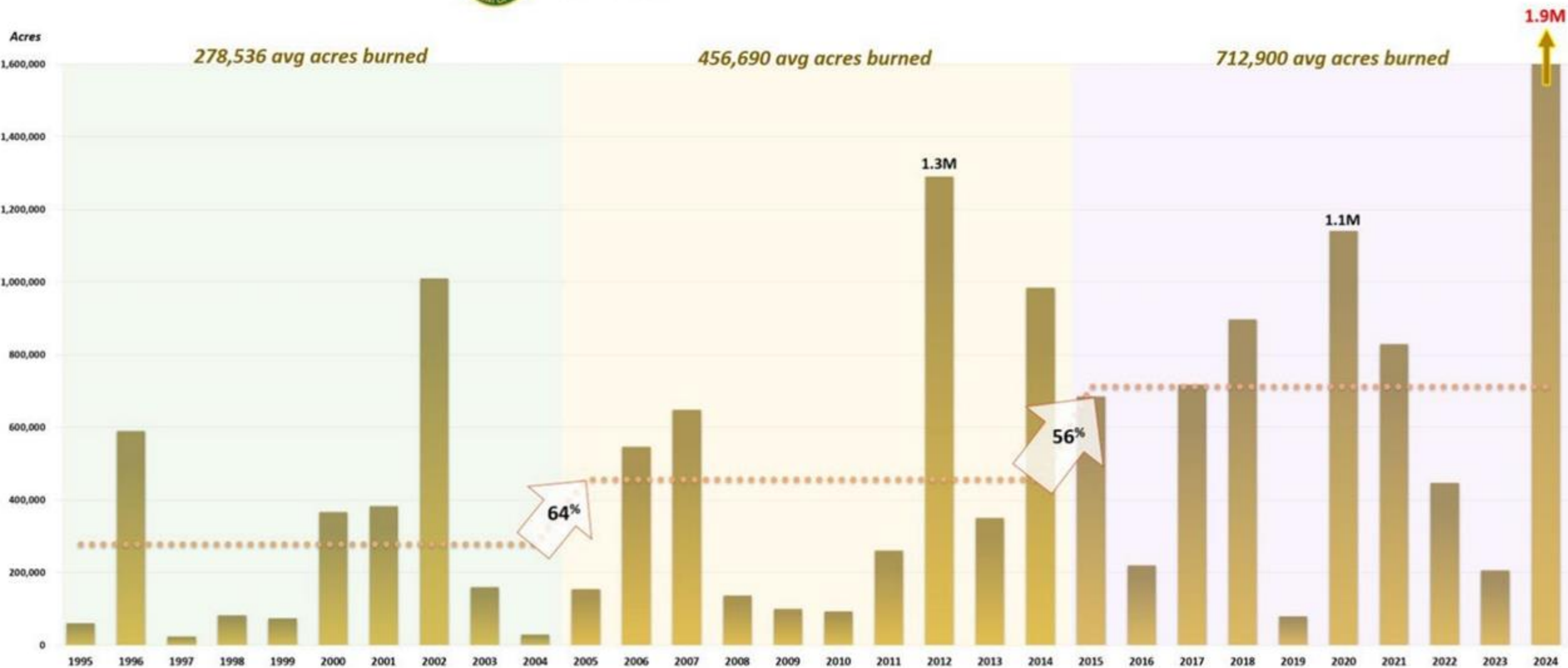
Acres Burned by Decade – All Jurisdictions

Chart Area



Oregon All Agencies - Wildfire Acres Burned by Decade

9/16/2024. NIFC, NWCC, ODF.



Unburned, Uninvaded



Burned, Uninvaded



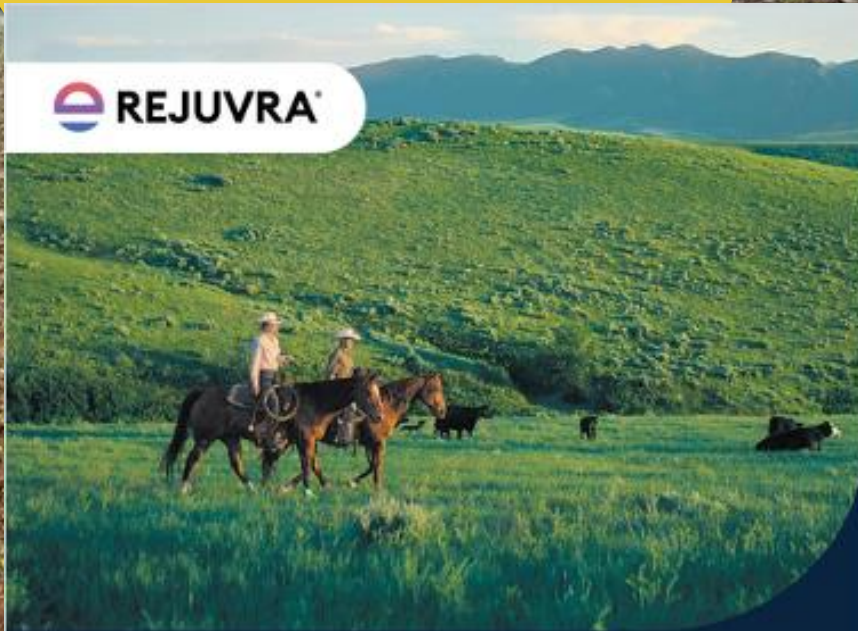
Unburned, Invaded



Burned, Invaded



Reclaiming (Bare) Ground



Rejuvra® herbicide stewardship guide

A restoration guide for rangeland, Conservation Reserve Program and natural areas

Cheatgrass isn't something you have to live with. Redefine your rangeland with Rejuvra® herbicide.

Rejuvra is a restoration herbicide designed for the long haul. It features a unique mode of action that provides long-lasting control of invasive annual grass and broadleaf weed species including cheatgrass, medusahead, ventenata and Japanese brome. By depleting the soil seed bank, you can get up to four years of cheatgrass control with just one application.

Invest in your land. Invest in your legacy. Invest in your livelihood. Invest in the long haul with Rejuvra herbicide.



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Combating Threats to Rangeland



- Preventing conversion
- Invasive species management
 - IAGs and juniper
 - EDRR
 - Minimize disturbance
- Native plant community restoration
- Post-fire recovery
- Riparian restoration/protection
- Grazing practices
- Wildlife corridors



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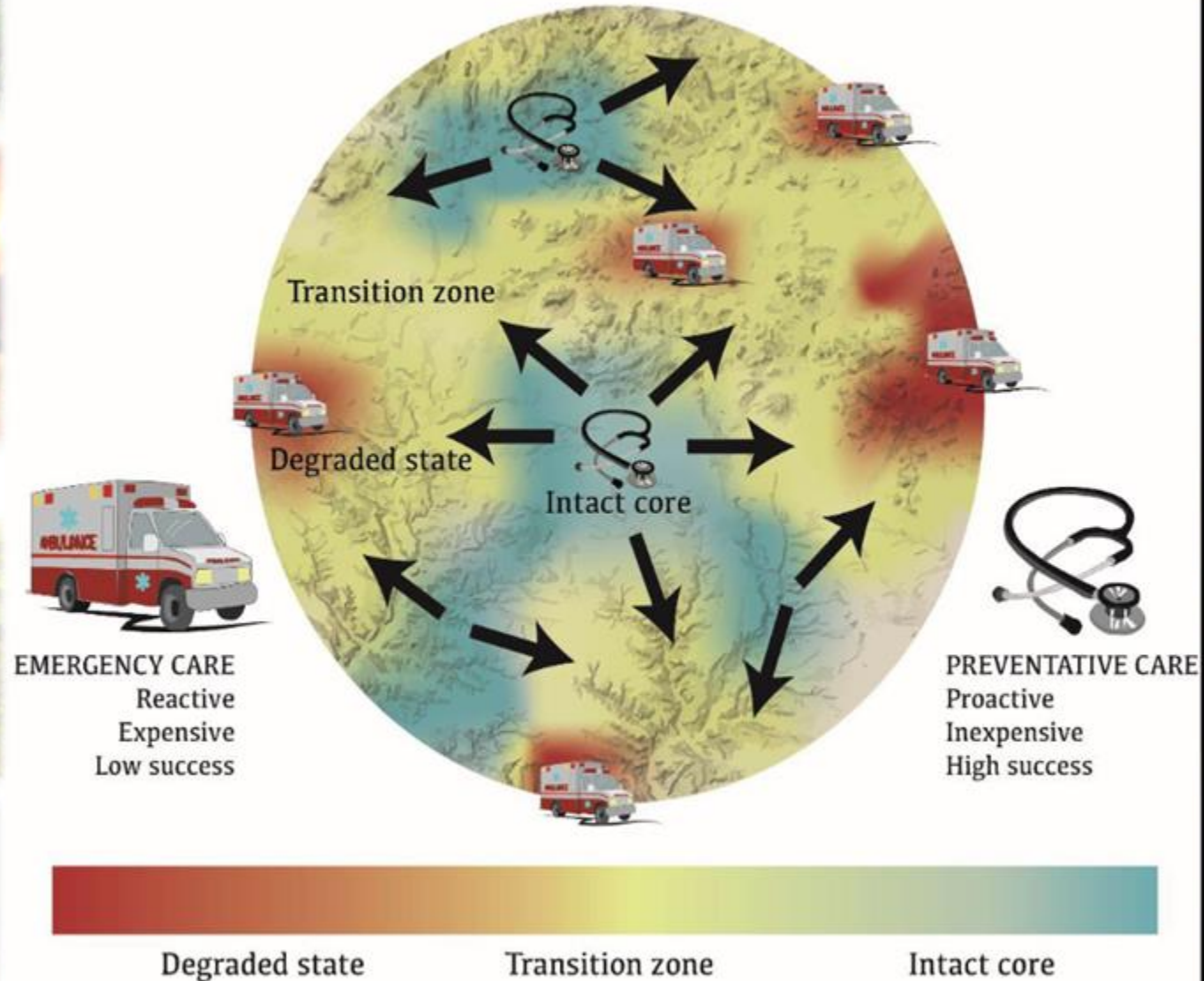
Native Juniper Encroachment

- Not All bad
- Displacement of Important Vegetation
- Reduction in Plant Biodiversity
- Reduced water availability
- Streamflow reduction
- Fuel Load changes



Photo: Dominic Rocco, ODFW/NRCS Crook County

"Defend the Core"



Credit: USDA-NRCS, Working Lands for Wildlife



Building Capacity Together

- Technical Assistance
- Consultation
- Planning
- Partnerships
- Regulatory (Listings)
- BMP Development
- ODFW Funding Opportunities
- NRCS Initiatives/Other FF programs



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Go big or go home?

We are home.

So, Let's go BIG!

Discussion & Questions



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