

MANAGEMENT OF SANTA CRUZ TARPLANT AT THE SANTA CRUZ ARMORY

BACKGROUND

The Santa Cruz Armory is located near the north boundary of the City of Santa Cruz, on Upper Park Road, opposite the DeLaveaga Golf Course. The Armory was completed in 1955. It is currently occupied by C Company of the 1-149th Armored Battalion. Only 2 personnel occupy the Santa Cruz Armory full-time, as the battalion headquarters is at Ford Ord in Monterey County.

Santa Cruz tar plant (SCTP), (*Holocarpha macrodenia*) was discovered at the Santa Cruz Armory 27 July 2000 during a rare plant survey. The population has been estimated at several thousand plants and is distributed over approximately six acres.

A seven acre portion of the Armory has been designated as Critical Habitat (CH) for the SCTP. This is an almost level area which contains standing water during the wet winter months due to poor draining soil. The plant community is a mostly ruderal grassland with some wetland species in the low-lying areas. There is no current land use within the CH although there have been reports of occasional use by off road vehicles. Historical land use included vehicle travel and parking.

Within the designated CH there were logs piled in several locations, some wood chips spread over a small section of likely SCTP seedbed and a large number of noxious weeds. In an effort to improve and increase Santa Cruz tar plant habitat at the Armory, the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG) proposed a project to remove the wood chips, logs, and invasive exotic species. CA ARNG informally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which resulted in a letter of concurrence dated March 7, 2002. Following the conditions set forth in the USFWS Biological Opinion, the CA ARNG conducted a habitat improvement project during the spring and summer of 2002.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

Phase one - Log and wood chip removal

The piled logs were cut into manageable sized sections using chainsaws and splitting mauls. The cut logs and resulting saw debris were removed from the area by hand and wheelbarrow and then loaded into dumpsters. The full dumpsters were hauled from the site.

The wood chips were first gathered into small piles then collected into trash cans. Once full, the trash cans were hand carried from the area. The wood chips were loaded into dumpsters and removed from the work site.

Phase Two - Exotic plant species removal

Exotics were cut by chainsaw to within six inches of the ground and the stumps were immediately treated with herbicide. Each treated stump was counted so that, if present, a percentage of sprouting stumps can be calculated at a later date. The cut biomass was removed by hand and loaded into dumpsters. Once filled, the dumpsters were removed from the work site.

RESULTS

Approximately six acres of Santa Cruz tar plant habitat was safely restored and/or improved without any observed disturbance to the endangered Santa Cruz tar plant or its habitat. The project was carried out in 12 working days over a two month period. A total of 294 cubic yards of green waste (234 cubic yards of wood and chips and 60 cubic yards of exotic weed biomass)

were removed from the site. There were 9,956 stems cut and treated with herbicide (8 eucalyptus, 35 acacia, 6 pampas grass clumps and 2,707 Spanish and/or French broom stems).

A site visit on 20 August 2003 revealed that numerous SCTP are occupying the area where the wood chips were removed. The areas where log piles were removed have been revegetated by adjacent plants and sprouting occurred on only one acacia and approximately 20 broom plants.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Creation of an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) and Environmental Assessment. Along with other information, the INRMP will include an environmental awareness program, both a sensitive species and wetlands inventory, a pest management plan and research and monitoring of the SCTP.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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