INVASIVE WEED AWARENESS COALITION (IWAC)

Eliminating Jubata Grass from Sheer Cliffs at Point Reyes National Seashore

Workers rappelled from ropes to control invasive weeds at Point Reyes National Seashore.

The Point Reyes National Seashore, a recreational parkland north of San Francisco, Calif., was established by President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s. The park boasts over 37 land mammal species and a dozen marine mammals. According to the park, nearly 20 percent of the state's flowering plant species are represented on the peninsula and over 45 percent of the bird species in North America have been sighted here.

More than 19,000 jubata grass plants have been removed from Point Reyes National Seashore.

Challenge:

In the late 1990s, park officials spotted an invasive weed called jubata grass *(Cortaderia jubata)* spreading across large parts of the coastal scrub and chaparral areas of the park. Originally introduced into the U.S. as an ornamental plant, jubata grass is now a widespread problem in the area. Since that time, the park has worked diligently to eliminate this exotic, invasive grass and the closely related pampas grass.

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Solution:

To combat the weed, volunteers and park staff removed more than 19,000 jubata grass plants from about 32,000 acres of land, controlling the invader in most of the park. However, treatment of the largest remaining jubata grass population in Point Reyes proved to be a daunting task. This population was found on steep, crumbling slopes 300 to 600 feet above the Pacific Ocean at a site known as "Wildcat Cliffs." Access to the weeds was further complicated by the need to hike treatment equipment and materials a distance of three miles to the site.

Invasive weeds such as jubata grass and pampas grass threaten natural vegetation on the scenic cliffs of Point Reyes.

Removing jubata grass on Wildcat Cliffs requires the use of ropes and rappelling techniques normally used in high-angle rescue efforts. Once anchor points have been identified, an area can be cleared to make room for the anchor team and its operations. Anchor systems are constructed using suitable trees or shrubs, or by installing a set of pickets. Once the anchor, mainline and belay systems are constructed and inspected for safety, technicians rappel over the cliffs with backpack sprayers. After spraying the jubata grass with herbicide, the technicians contact the anchor team by radio when they are ready to move to another section.

Result:

Working on the Wildcat Cliffs project one week each fall for the past three years, the Point Reyes crew inventoried more than 90 acres of land and treated 70 percent of the infested acreage, equivalent to one solid acre of jubata grass. Officials hope to eradicate the entire Wildcat Cliffs jubata grass population within two to three seasons of additional treatment.

Learn More:

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