

SUCCESS

REGIONS 1 & 4, STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

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Part of the "Ogden Front" in the Wasatch Mountains, the Mount Ogden area is a popular and heavily used recreational area and includes the Snowbasin Ski Resort.

In 2006, many invasive weed species in many different locations were identified across the roughly 34,000 acre area between Weber and Ogden Canyons.

The weeklong fight on weeds on Mount Ogden has become an annual effort involving many partners and monitoring indicates the work is paying off.

Treatments have resulted in the eradication of spotted knapweed, musk thistle and yellow star thistle within the Snowbasin Ski Resort; the eradication of Japanese knot weed in Ogden Canyon; and a significant reduction in plant densities and spread of leafy spurge, and Dalmatian toadflax through the project area.

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Mount Ogden Weed Project

When members of Weber Pathways, a group that promotes trails and open spaces stopped by the Forest Health Protection office in Ogden in 2006, they were looking for help in identifying a plant that was causing problems along area trails.

Liz Hebertson, Forest Health Protection plant pathologist met with the group and identified the plant as the yellow starthistle, a noxious weed.

Liz followed up with botanist Mike Duncan of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and the two hiked a number of area trails to get a sense of the starthistle infestation.

What they saw was alarming: many invasive weed species in many different locations across the roughly 34,000 acre area between Weber and Ogden Canyons. Part of the "Ogden Front" in the Wasatch Mountains, the Mount Ogden area is a popular and heavily used recreational area and includes the Snowbasin Ski Resort.



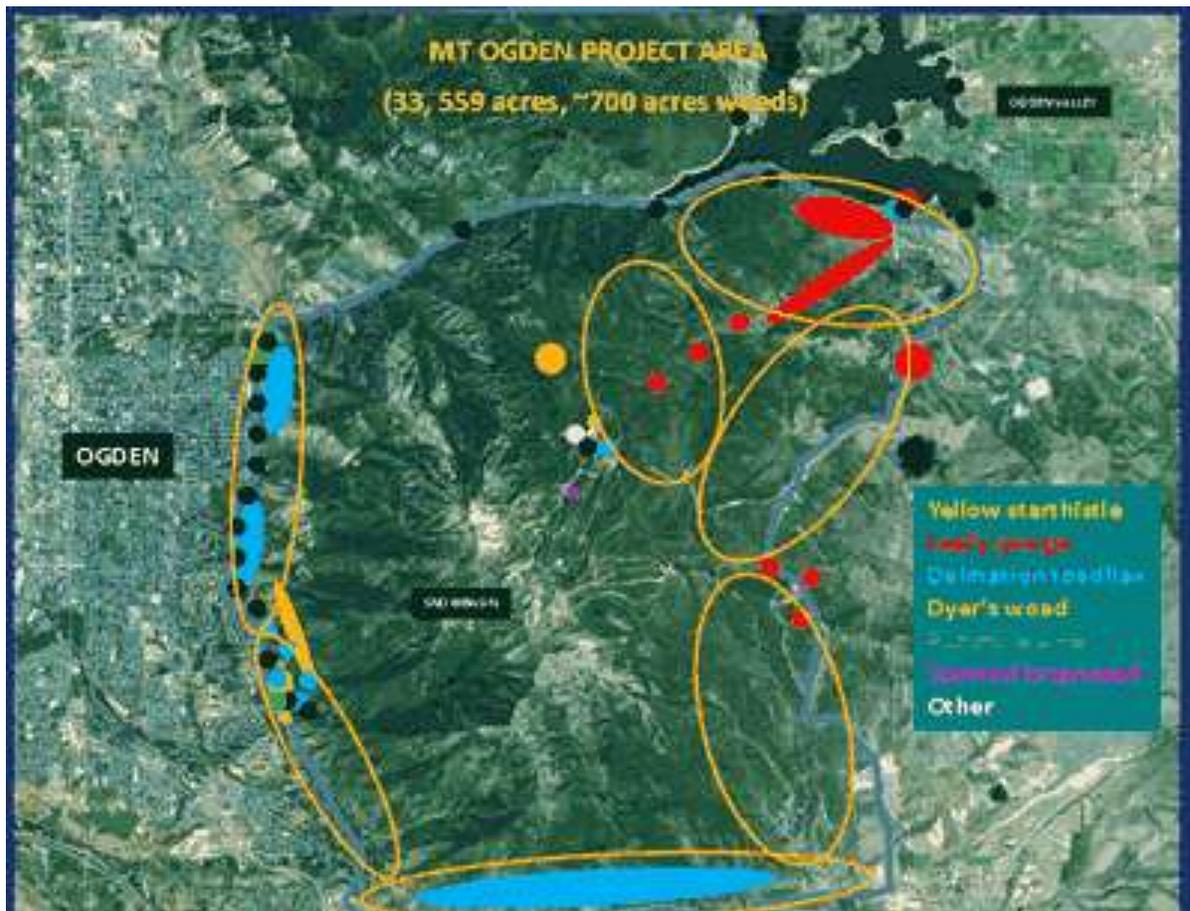
Mike contacted Utah State University professor Steve Dewey to see if the Mount Ogden area could be included in the mapping of invasive weed species that was underway to help quantify the problem and identify the size and

locations of the different weed infestations. Steve agreed to add the Mount Ogden area into his weed mapping project. The locations of established and new weed infestations were identified, entered into County, State, and Federal databases, and shared among land management entities to better coordinate weed management efforts.

After discussing their findings with then Forest Service District Ranger Chip Sibbernsen, Chip made an extraordinary commitment to dealing with the weed problem. He would commit all the staff on the ranger district for one entire week to work only on combating weeds.

With that initial commitment, additional interested and involved partners convened a meeting in early 2008 to discuss their mutual interest in combating the weeds. Those involved included the City of Ogden, Weber County, Snowbasin Ski Resort, Utah State University Extension, and public interest groups.

The partners agreed they needed to clarify landownership boundaries to help establish a feasible project boundary that could be treated.



Special considerations within the project area were identified, such as known hazards and safety issues, any threatened and endangered species, and special permissions or authorities that would be needed before undertaking weed treatment.

With information in hand about size and location of infestations, the group analyzed treatment alternatives and prioritized areas and species for treatment. Finally, they identified all the available resources each could contribute to the effort, including staff, funding, equipment, and supplies.

The organization in this “fight the weeds” campaign mimicked the organization used to fight fire, called an incident command system. Representatives from the various agencies were assigned to cover

responsibilities in planning, operations, logistics, finance, public information, and safety.

The group developed an operations plan that identified who was going to do what, and where. A practice run with participants before the actual activity helped to work out problems before hand and a debriefing at the end of the week captured lessons learned from the week’s activities.

Since that first week, the weeklong fight on weeds on Mount Ogden has become an annual effort and monitoring indicates the work is paying off.

Populations of Dalmatian toadflax and leafy spurge treated with biocontrol insect releases have been reduced, and in some areas

eliminated; a level of success not seen at many other treatment sites in other places.

Treatments have resulted in the eradication of spotted knapweed, musk thistle and yellow star thistle within the Snowbasin Ski Resort; the eradication of Japanese knot weed in Ogden Canyon; and a significant reduction in plant densities and spread of leafy spurge, and Dalmatian toadflax through the project area.

Happily, infestations of the weed that first drew attention, yellow starthistle, are also greatly diminished. It has been controlled in Beus Canyon on national forest lands, the same area that first brought the Weber Pathways members to Liz Hebertson’s office back in 2006.