

## Scotch Broom Presentation

Prepared by students in the Oregon Dunes Stewardship Project - Oregon Youth Summit, October 2015

- It is a privilege and honor to share the story of the decline of open sand on the dunes and how a group of Siuslaw students are making a difference.
- This story begins by painting a picture of healthy sand dunes. For thousands of years the dunes consisted of open sand with small amounts of native vegetation.
- A healthy dune is in constant movement. Overtime, this movement began to threaten major roads, bays and harbors.
- With good intentions, it was decided, in the 1940's, that a temporary solution to this problem would be to plant vegetation to prevent the dunes from moving in undesirable directions. Scotch Broom, Shore Pine and European Beach grass were chosen as the remedy.
- In a large organized manner, many different groups of people came together to plant these plants.
- Initially the vegetation helped with preventing movement of the dunes, however in time it became clear that these plants began to spread wildly, crowding out native vegetation and preventing the natural sand dune movement. This directly impacted the health and well-being of the ecosystem.
- You may ask why sand dunes are so important.
  - Sand dunes provide a habitat to native plant and animal species
  - Sand dunes naturally protect surrounding land from erosion, storms and tsunamis.
- In 2011, our school wanted to become part of the solution to rid the sand dunes of these invasive plants, and restore them back to their natural and healthy state.
- In the beginning, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade began their work at the Oregon Dunes Overlook. The focus was on the removal of Scotch Broom around the platforms of the Overlook. During that year lots of hard work and progress were made on improving the view from the overlook by spending many hours removing scotch broom from the hillside.
- Every year since, the students have come back to continue their work. Each year groups of students continue to build on the difference that the previous groups worked so hard to make.
- We were very proud to be awarded the "Invader Crusader Award" from The Oregon Invasive Species Council. Last year the US Forest Service awarded a bronze plaque to the students in recognition of our hard work. This plaque has been permanently mounted at the Oregon Dunes Overlook platform for all 1 million visitors a year to see.
- That is not the ending of this story. The future holds many more students working together to make a difference battling the Scotch Broom. They will come by bus loads ready to use tools, work as teams, have fun enjoying the outdoors and making a difference. Each one will board the bus at the end of the day tired, dirty, with calloused hands knowing that they played a huge part in this on-going story. Each student will learn one of the greatest lessons in their lifetime. They will learn that they alone with their own two hands can make a big difference in the world around them!

I would like to share with you:

**Star Fish Poem**

*By Author Unknown*

A little boy walked carefully along a crowded beach  
Where starfish by the hundreds lay there within reach,

They washed up with each wave as far as the eye could see,  
And each would surely die if they were not sent back to the sea.

So, one by one he rescued them, then heard a stranger call,  
“It really won’t make much of a difference....for you cannot save them all”

But as he tossed yet another one toward the ocean’s setting sun,  
He said with deep compassion,

“I made a difference to that one!”

Thank you for your interest in our story about kids making a difference in our environment.