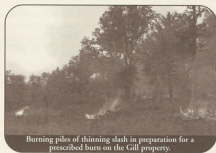


## Creating Breathing Room for the Oaks on the Gill Property

This was a productive year on the Gill property outside Oakland. Oregon white oak savanna and woodlands, understory bunchgrass communities, and riparian habitats are getting relief from fast growing conifers and invasive weeds. Our project partners, Integrated Resource Management, an ecological restoration firm, and the Forest Restoration Partnership, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring rare forest habitats in the Pacific NW, have taken lead roles in planning and implementing restoration efforts there. These partners treated over 70 acres using a combination of hand cutting (on steep slopes) and mechanical brush cutting, focused mainly on the removal of English hawthorne and Armenian blackberry. Conifers such as Douglas fir and incense cedar were thinned on an additional 10 acres. In October, a prescribed burn of 10 acres of savanna was used to clear woody fuel accumulations and reduce annual non-native grasses to allow native bunchgrasses and flowers to reclaim these habitats. Some particularly weedy areas were carefully treated with herbicide and then seeded with native grasses. Over time, the success of these actions will be monitored with photo records and vegetation plots, and management plans will be adapted accordingly.



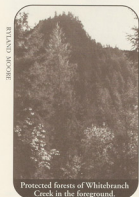
Burning piles of thinning slash in preparation for a prescribed burn on the Gill property.

DARIN STRINER

Historically, open oak savannas and grassland habitats in western Oregon were maintained by frequent, low-intensity fires that helped keep down the advance of woody shrubs and trees. The use of prescribed fire is growing in popularity as a management tool because it can be more cost effective than using machinery and because it reduces the need to apply herbicides. However, many lands today are so thick with shrubs and conifers that prior to the use of prescribed fire, these heavy fuels must be removed to ensure a low intensity fire that is easier to control.

The Gill property is a test piece and showcase property in the oak restoration arena. We hope to demonstrate how high value oak habits can be restored using a "full toolbox" of practices and techniques. Funding for these efforts has been generously provided by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, OWEB, Laird Norton Endowment Foundation, and the Landowner Incentive Program. ❖

## Whitebranch Property Transferred to US Forest Service



Protected forests of Whitebranch Creek in the foreground.

RYLAND MOORE

The Trust finalized the sale of our Whitebranch property to the Willamette National Forest. This parcel was purchased by the Trust in December 2002 and lies along Whitebranch Creek, a tributary to the McKenzie River near Belknap Hot Springs. The property was originally purchased to protect sensitive riparian and wetland habitat used by juvenile Chinook salmon and wintering elk. The acquisition of this parcel provided insurance against residential development and intensive forestry degrading the unique natural resources of the site. After acquiring the parcel, the Trust immediately began pursuing potential conservation buyers for the property. Because the property lies within the Willamette National Forest, the U.S. Forest Service was identified as a prime candidate for long-term ownership and management of the property. Under Federal ownership the parcel will be managed as late successional reserve forest alongside similarly managed U.S.F.S. lands. The funds received from the sale of the Whitebranch parcel will be returned to the McKenzie Conservancy Fund and used to identify and protect other critical fish and wildlife habitat in the McKenzie watershed. ❖