

Successes In Stewardship

Celebrating 10 Years

November 2011

Oregon DOT and Siletz Tribes Protect Culturally Significant Dogbane

In 2008, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) partnered with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (Siletz Tribes) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to transplant a population of culturally significant dogbane. Dogbane is a perennial plant found throughout North America in a variety of habitats and is known for its use as cordage. The Siletz Tribes have been harvesting dogbane for thousands of years, but prior to this transplant, herbicide use and highway runoff had caused a decline in the population. ODOT and the Siletz Tribes worked together to relocate the dogbane population from a site along Oregon Highway 99W (OR 99W) to a protected wildlife refuge. By working together, the agencies and the Siletz Tribes were able to protect and improve access to dogbane while maintaining roadway safety.

After nearly three years of growth, the dogbane plants are healthy and thriving in the new location, and the project has recently received national attention. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recognized the project with two environmental awards: a 2009 [Exemplary Human Environmental Initiatives](#) award and an [Exemplary Ecosystem Initiatives](#) award. Additionally, FHWA provided Technology and Deployment funding to ODOT to create an educational video highlighting the success of the transplant.

Successful Conservation Solutions

The Siletz Tribes approached ODOT in 2008 regarding the decline of the dogbane population along OR 99W. ODOT maintenance crews regularly apply herbicide there to slow plant growth and, in turn, maintain visibility for drivers. This has led to a decline in the volume and health of the dogbane population.

The Siletz Tribes place a high value on dogbane because of its significance in tribal culture. Traditionally, the Siletz Tribes harvested dogbane to produce mats, roofing for houses, fishing nets, snares, ropes, strings, and baskets. Today, the Tribes continue to harvest and process dogbane fibers for a variety of purposes, including fish-netting, elk snares, basketry, and other cordage products. The OR 99W site holds one of only a few large dogbane populations in western Oregon. Other dogbane populations in western Oregon are inaccessible or reducing in size due to agricultural practices and private property restrictions, making the location along OR 99W even more significant. However, the stunted plant was not ideal for processing. Members of the Siletz Tribes prefer to use long dogbane fibers over short ones.



In March 2009, ODOT and the Siletz Tribe transplanted 150 dogbane plants from a site along OR 99W to an ODFW nature reserve. (Courtesy of ODOT)

After the Siletz Tribes notified ODOT of their concern, the organizations partnered to determine how to conserve the dogbane population. ODOT and the Siletz Tribes held several meetings with county and State land management agencies to develop a conservation plan that met the needs of ODOT and the Siletz Tribes. ODOT and the Siletz Tribes decided to transplant the dogbane to a safer and more accessible location – a solution that would not only conserve the plant but would also remove the dogbane that was hindering driver visibility on OR 99W. After contacting 13 agencies to identify transplant sites, the team selected an ODFW wildlife refuge due to its accessibility and close proximity to Siletz Tribal lands. In preparation for the transplant, ODOT refrained from their annual herbicide application on a 500-foot section of

dogbane alongside the highway, allowing the plants to grow and become healthy. In March 2009, ODOT and the Siletz Tribes successfully transplanted 150 dogbane plants.

The dogbane population is thriving in its new location and the Siletz Tribes have harvested dogbane the past two years. As a result of this project, the Siletz Tribes now have better access to a larger, healthier population of dogbane and ODOT has improved safety for motorists. Based on the success of the transplantation project, ODOT and the Siletz Tribes may broaden the effort by conducting additional dogbane transplants at other conservation sites to further improve the health of and access to dogbane. This transplantation project provides a valuable foundation for future transplants and conservation efforts between Tribes and government agencies.



A member of the Siletz Tribe weaves a basket made from dogbane fibers. (Courtesy of ODOT)

In 2009, FHWA recognized ODOT with two awards for its collaborative environmental efforts relating to the dogbane transplantation project. FHWA identified the project as one of the Agency's 2009 [Exemplary Human Environmental Initiatives](#), highlighting it as a project that both promotes environmental conservation and benefits the public. FHWA also honored ODOT with an [Exemplary Ecosystem Initiatives](#) award for creating unique and notable solutions to conservation issues.

In the summer of 2011, ODOT, with help from several Oregon Tribes and funding from FHWA, produced an educational video documenting this collaborative effort. The video includes clips of tribal members processing dogbane fibers, conversations with tribal members from three other Tribes that harvest dogbane, and interviews with FHWA staff and Oregon's Governor Kitzhaber. It is available for public viewing on [ODOT's website](#) and will be shown at the Northwest Anthropological Conference in 2012. An earlier version of the video was shown at the 2011 International Conference on Ecology and Transportation.

Benefits of Collaboration

In addition to protecting and providing access to a major dogbane population and improving roadway safety, the transplantation project has improved coordination efforts between ODOT and the Siletz Tribes. The project complements other tribal collaborations that are part of ODOT's Archaeology Program, through which the agency works closely with 16 local Tribes on various transportation-related projects, including ODOT's Pioneer Mountain-Eddyville Project to transfer land to the Siletz Tribes. However, the dogbane project is unique. The agency distinguishes the dogbane transplantation project as the first of its kind between ODOT and the Siletz Tribes to arise solely as an effort to help preserve tribal values and practices. State or local regulations do not require the dogbane transplantation project, and it is not a required component of a larger project. It exemplifies an effective agency and tribal relationship that allows Tribes to play an active role in transportation-related issues. Additionally, the project demonstrates that such a relationship can yield solutions that meet both tribal concerns and agency interests. As the ODOT video and the FHWA awards generate national awareness of the dogbane transplantation project, this project provides an example for other agencies on how to improve tribal and agency relations in a mutually beneficial way.

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Look What's New!

- On September 8, FHWA hosted an *Eco-Logical* webinar titled "Mitigation Banking, Conservation Banking, and In-Lieu Fee Programs: Mitigation Options Using the *Eco-Logical* Approach." The presentations from this webinar are available for download [here](#).
- The Transportation Research Board recently released the report "[Reinventing the Urban Interstate: A New Paradigm for Multimodal Corridors](#)" through its Transit Cooperative Research Program (Report 145). The report presents strategies for planning, designing, building, and operating multimodal corridors, where freeways and high-capacity transit lines running parallel in the same travel corridors.

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