

Volunteer Programs in Rural Areas

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Exotic species removal projects on conservation lands are often under funded and can gain from participation by community volunteers. However, rural areas may not provide a large enough pool of volunteers to draw upon, and managers must develop diverse programs that utilize various labor sources.

Dune restoration at Manila Beach and Dunes near Eureka, California, primarily involved the eradication of three invasive exotic plant species using labor-intensive hand removal techniques. Funding for the project was insufficient to hire the crews needed to perform the work, and supplying non-reimbursable labor over the first five years of the project required utilizing all available sources. Networking with various agencies, outreach to local schools and communities, and partnerships with community service programs has helped sustain the restoration project in lieu of adequate funding. Over 92% of the restoration work has been accomplished by non-paid labor, including volunteers, community service groups, and inmate programs. Volunteer hours donated to the project increased by 355% over the five year period. Volunteer interest and restoration work continue through ongoing collaborative efforts