

IN 1859 A TURKISH IMMIGRANT LANDED IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, ITS NAME...THE YELLOW STAR THISTLE. OVER THE LAST 100 YEARS THIS PLANT INFESTED THE ENTIRE STATE. NOW THE ARMY AND VARIOUS STATE AND FEDERAL AGRICULTURE AGENCIES TEAMED UP TO DECLARE WAR ON THE SPINY PEST. ENVIRONMENTAL CORRESPONDENT JAVIER HERNANDEZ JOINS WITH THE STORY, JAVIER...

THANKS, WITH ITS TWO TO THREE INCH SPINS AND THE ABILITY TO PUSH OUT NATIVE PLANTS AND CROPS IT'S MORE THAN JUST A WEED. YELLOW STAR THISTLE IS AFFECTING FARMERS, COMMUNITIES AND MILITARY TRAINING.

MEET ART AND MIKE TWO FOOT SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT LINES OF A UNIQUE BATTLE. THEIR ENEMY IS THE YELLOW STAR THISTLE, A PLANT FROM TURKEY, WHICH HAS LITERALLY TAKEN OVER FT HUNTER LIGGETTE.

“PRETTY MUCH LIKE WALKING THROUGH CONSTANTINE WIRE JUST ALL OVER THE PLACE. (CUT) GETTING UP AND DOING FIRE AND MOVEMENT OR FIRE TEAM RUSHES THROUGH THE BRUSH...DEFINITELY CAUSE IRRITATION TO THE HANDS AND FACE AND COULD SLOW YOU DOWN CONSIDERABLY.” - Timothy Brady, 3rd Bn. 1ST Marines

BUT WITH THE FINICAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES ART IS TAKING BACK SOME GROUND. HE USED A COMBINATION OF PESTICIDE AND CONTROLLED BURNS TO ELIMINATED

PATCHES OF YELLOW STAR AROUND POST. BUT IN PLACES LIKE THIS A BURN MIGHT DESTROY NATIVE VEGETATION AND PESTICIDE COULD CONTAMINATE THE WATER. THAT'S WHERE MIKE COMES IN, HE'S PART OF A TEAM THAT RELEASED THREE INSECTS, LIKE THIS FLY, THAT ATTACK THE YELLOW STAR.

“THEY BURRO A HOLE INTO THE SEED HEAD OR JUST BELOW THE SEED HEAD AND WHEN THE LARVAE HATCH THEY CRAWL UP THE SEED HEAD AND DESTROY THE SEED. IT WON'T ACTUALLY KILL THE PLANT, JUST DESTROY THE SEED. “ - Mike Pitcairn, California Department of Food and Agriculture AND WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT THESE TYPES OF BIOLOGICAL AGENTS IS THAT THEY'RE SELF SUSTAINING AND NOW PERMANENT ADDITIONS TO THE ECO SYSTEM.

ART IS ALREADY SEEING SIGNS OF RECOVERY.

“DIVERSITY HAS RETURNED TO THIS AREA WHERE BEFORE THE YELLOW STAR EXISTED AS A MONOCULTURE, AND THAT'S A GOOD INDICATION OF THE LANDS HEALTH. AND THE PRESENCE OF THESE DIVERS GRASSES AND ANIMALS ACTUALLY WORKS AGAINST YELLOW STAR RE-INFESTATION.” - Art Hazelbrook, Ft Hunter-Liggett, Land Manager

WITH CONTINUED SUPPORT ART EXPECTS TRAINING TO GET BACK TO NORMAL IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

ANCHOR: USING BUGS IS VERY INTERESTING SOLUTION BUT COULDN'T INTRODUCING THEM TO THE ENVIRONMENT PUT OTHER PLANT SPECIES AT RISK?

JAVIER: SEVRAL STUDIES WERE DONE TO ENSURE THAT THESE INSECTS WOULD ONLY HARM THE YELLOW STAR. AND THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME AN ANIMAL WAS INTRODUCED TO CONTROL A PEST. NEXT TIME I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT THEY'RE DOING AT FT JACKSON TO CONTROL FIRE ANTS.