

FIRE PREVENTION



PHOTOS BY AXEL KOESTER

Michael Choi, the owner of Fire Grazers Inc., watches his dogs herd his goats along the Lunada Canyon Trail in Palos Verdes on Monday.

Goats

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acacia weeds, both of which are not native to the area and are highly invasive. Once a year, the mustard plant flowers and its seeds go wild, said Cris Sarabia, PVPLC's conservation director. The seeds dry up and become a fire risk. So the conservancy tries to remove the mustard plant, as well as other non-native plants, before its seeds are dropped.

The conservancy contracts with Fire Grazers Inc. to be the goatherd.

That company also has a contract with Rancho Palos Verdes to provide another

300 goats, which are grazing at a canyon near Grandview Park.

"When you got a dense forest of bush or mustard and you can't even begin to walk through it, you say, 'All right, let's throw 300 goats at it,'" said Fire Grazers CEO Michael Choi. "So you throw the 300 and they clear it out to a point where you can go in and really assess what your plans are going to be moving forward in the future. It's a great first attack against wild brush."

While the goats' work at Lunada Canyon focuses on reducing fire hazards and removing non-native species, the conservancy is also preparing for habitat restoration for various at-



risk species, including the El Segundo blue butterfly, the Palos Verdes blue butterfly, and several bird species, such as the coastal California gnatcatcher, Sarabia

said.

"As opposed to just clearing for fuel modification or fire clearance," Sarabia said, "we double up on that and make sure that we're actu-

ally working towards creating more habitat."

Community contributions and individual donors, Mohan said, have helped keep the goats grazing year

Dogs herd fire grazing goats after clearing the ridgeline along the Lunada Canyon Trail in Palos Verdes on Monday.

PHOTO BY
AXEL KOESTER

after year.

"We are so thankful for community support and for donors who can enable us to do this habitat restoration work," Mohan said, "for not only post-fire fuel abatement, but for the benefit of some endangered species we're working to protect."

Choi, for his part, said the goats' work is never done. The goats started on the Peninsula the second week of April, Choi said, adding that he expects the work to continue until September. There is also upcoming work in Torrance and Rolling Hills.

"We're working all year around," Choi said, "because goats never stop eating."