



Curry Currents

Winter 2005

Lower Rogue Watershed Council & South Coast Watershed Councils

Contents:

- 01 2005 Highlights
- 02 Watershed Education Field Explorations
- 03 Cleaning Up Abandoned Cars: The Car Crusher Project
- 04 Restoration at River's End Ranch
- 05 Coastwatch Program Needs Volunteers on South Coast
- 06 Noxious Weed Spotlight:



Driftwood Middle School students measure water quality at Brush Creek. [page 02](#)

We hope you enjoy the new format of the newsletter as we launch it on our web site www.currywatersheds.org! This is the last issue that we will send out by mail. We will instead notify you by e-mail with a link to view the newsletter as a PDF file. If you did not receive notification of this issue, please call or email dana.hicks@oacd.org

2005 Highlights

- Acting on a landowner's idea (Rick McKenzie), we were able to add a mile of high quality coho habitat to a straightened agricultural stream in the north county. The project involved constructing 15 large wood alcoves and planting over a thousand trees. Bethel Creek is one of the few places where coho thrive in Curry County.
- Through activities like the Chetco Check-Up; presentations to Rotary Club & Chamber of Commerce; and articles in local newspapers, we strengthened our outreach efforts.
- We made over 2.5 miles of stream accessible to salmon by improving fish passage; fenced and planted 3.5 miles of riparian area; addressed sediment issues on 0.5 miles of road and created 37 large wood placements.
- Through our monitoring program we inventoried 4 miles of road for sediment issues, monitored 75% of our road upgrades, used aquatic habitat inventory surveys to monitor 7 large wood placement sites, conducted rapid bioassessment snorkeling on 4 miles of Euchre Creek and conducted coho surveys on 27 segments in 13 small watersheds.
- Our web site averaged 316 hits per day this year. We have plans to expand and reorganize the site to include more information on agriculture, weeds, and additional reports.
- We completed water quality investigations on all estuaries in the county, with a focus on diurnal dissolved oxygen levels.
- We received funding for restoration planning to address aquatic weeds in coastal lakes, including Laurel, Croft, Floras and Garrison, as well as New River.
- Beginning in December 2004, we have sampled four storms, collecting a total of 347 samples and involving over 40 volunteer "stormchasers." All samples were tested for turbidity and specific conductivity, 27% tested for E. coli, and 43% tested for nutrients.
- We developed maps and data for our programs, to be included in a partnership with Curry County and the cities as members of an Enterprise Geographic Information System.

Watershed Education Field Explorations With Statia Ryder

I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I do and I understand.



This wise saying was spoken some 2500 years ago, but still holds true today. I doubt if Confucius made this statement referring to the most effective way to teach watershed sciences, but it applies in every way to the delivery method of the "Rogue Coast Education and Outreach" project, a.k.a. "Rogue Ed."

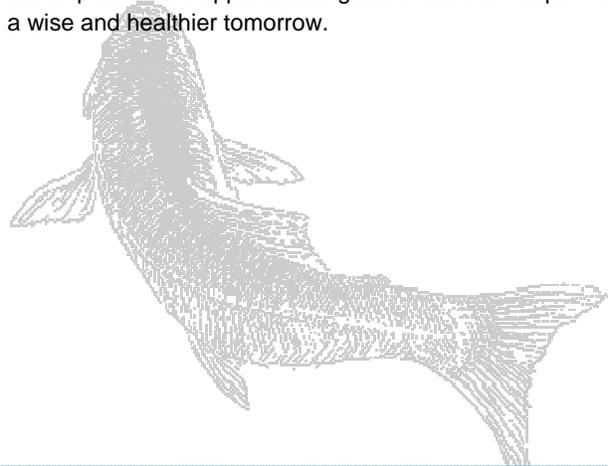
The study of watersheds in the classroom is only the starting point to prepare students for field explorations; this past fall, middle school students from north Curry County learned through experiences of getting their feet wet in their surrounding watersheds. Blanco's Middle School science teacher, Fred Betz and Driftwood's middle school science teacher, Georgia Weinblatt, were very happy for their 6th graders to receive Rogue Ed's 10 watershed lessons, as they both have an interest in watershed studies themselves.

At Blanco, many of the lessons students were taught within the many diverse habitats in the 12-acre outdoor learning lab behind their school in Langlois. Some of their hands-on studies included: riparian and forest ecology, macroinvertebrate identification, decomposing log studies, the investigation of different soil types and their water holding capacity, a wildlife inventory, and a final field trip to the Elk River Fish Hatchery!

Georgia's 6th grade class at Driftwood School received the series of 10 lessons in Port Orford. With less accessible land near the school to utilize for outdoor classes, watershed science lessons become more interactive with activities; for example turning students into water drop-lets, vegetation, salmon, or even macroinvertebrates! The students did have the opportunity to put on rubber boots and experience a "creek" day at BLM's Edson Creek Campground to collect macroinvertebrates and test water quality. All of the students who receive these series of lessons keep a watershed journal where they record observations, data and keep handouts for reference materials.

In this second year of development of Rogue Ed, an exciting prospect has arisen for teachers and students who are interested in watershed studies. They will have the chance to participate in the Watershed Symposium, to be held in April of 2006 at the Curry County Fairgrounds. This will provide many opportunities for students ask questions about and investigate their watersheds in preparation of their projects for the event. Many teachers and students have already begun data collection through field investigations, while others throughout Curry, Coos and Josephine Counties have begun brainstorming on project ideas.

Whether in-class, in-field or in-life, learning through doing is the greatest route to understanding. Applying focus to the study of our land and water, a deeper knowledge and respect is born in our youth, as well as skill development and appreciation gained- with the hopes of a wise and healthier tomorrow.



Lower Rogue Watershed Assessment Complete!

The Lower Rogue Watershed Council has completed an evaluation of how well the Rogue River, from the mouth to river mile 55, is functioning.

Data was collected and summarized with existing information to evaluate fish and fish habitat, water quality, sediment sources, riparian, wetlands, the estuary, hydrology, and water use. Other chapters include an historic overview, a description of channel geomorphic types, and a summary of findings.

The watershed council will be using the assessment in the coming months to plan for future projects.

To view the assessment go to www.currywatersheds.org.

Cleaning Up Abandoned Cars

The Car Crusher Project

By Harry Hoogesteger

Unightly car bodies. Leaky batteries. Brake and transmission fluid spills & stains. Old junker tires. The South Coast & Lower Rogue Watershed Councils went after all of them this summer and fall in a massive effort to remove abandoned cars from the county's riparian corridors—areas adjacent to streams and rivers.



—Beth Pietrzak

“We really wanted to help clean up our watersheds,” said project manager Beth Pietrzak. The project soon expanded to include “eyesore” cars in some neighborhoods around the county.

Pietrzak contracted with Steve Smith of Rebel Salvage in Cave Junction to set up a “Car Crusher” during the summer and fall. The Crusher was stationed at the old TamCo Mill on Euchre Creek in Ophir, and at a city yard in Port Orford.

The program was sponsored and funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Curry County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Rebel Salvage crushed the cars, stacked them, and eventually hauled them away to be recycled into scrap metal for building projects elsewhere. All together, over 250 cars were removed from the county's watersheds, along with almost 1400 tires and 340 batteries.

High tire disposal costs proved to be an unforeseen cost for the project, which pushed it over budget \$1,949.66. Any donations to help us cover these costs would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be mailed to Curry SWCD: Car Crusher Project, PO Box 666, Gold Beach, OR 97444.

Make your home safe for the river in the winter months!

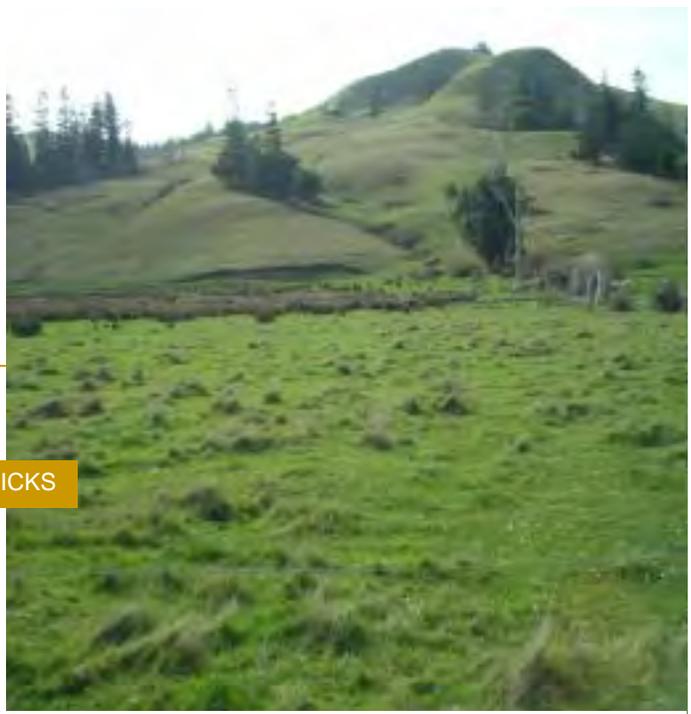
Keep sediment out of our waterways. Make sure bare dirt is not exposed by placing weed free



straw, mulch, or even wood chips to temporarily protect exposed areas and by using native plants or grass seed for long-term stabilization. Sediment can smother salmon eggs and interfere with feeding success of juveniles. In Port Orford, clays coming into Hubbard Creek greatly interfere with the City's ability to treat the water for drinking.

Disconnect your downspouts. Direct downspouts into your yard (unless you have high clay soils) or special planter boxes rather than into the storm drainage system. This helps filter and reuse the water and can help minimize pressure on our sewer system during high storm events.

Fix oil leaks on your car. Rains carry oil from parking areas and roads into streams. The resulting oil film spreads and makes oxygen transfer difficult and toxic for aquatic animals and plants. One gallon of oil can contaminate one million gallons of drinking water.



Restoration at Rivers End Ranch

BY DANA HICKS

Ranch Creek runs through the historic Wedderburn Ranch and enters the Rogue River at mile 2, within the estuary. The Lower Rogue Watershed Council has worked with the landowners, Tim and Sylvia Tuttle, to fence and plant the riparian area, replace fish passage barriers, and improve hydrologic function to a wetland on the property. Coho, steelhead and cutthroat spawn in the headwaters of Ranch Creek, and the river is important as an overwintering area for salmon.

Top: Elk such as this one are frequent visitors to the Ranch (credit: Terry Spivey, USFW). Above: The valley at River's End Ranch. A tile drain under this wetland has been disabled to help sustain summer flows to Ranch Creek.

At some point in the past when the land was being settled the channel was straightened to increase pasture, and to dewater the wetlands of the valley floor. Also during settlement the hillslopes surrounding the valley were converted from at least partial forest cover to open pasture. These factors impacted the hydrology of Ranch Creek and the stream eroded down into the valley floor, creating a deep, ditch-like channel that persists today. These conditions limit the upstream migration of adult and juvenile salmonids, dewater the valley floor, and lower the summer baseline flow in Ranch Creek. Timber harvest and settlement also required the construction of road network. Some of these roads include stream crossings that block fish passage.

In October, 35 pieces of large wood were placed in a one mile section of Ranch Creek. The wood will help provide complexity to the stream. Some of the wood was placed entirely within the channel to help seal the bottom and encourage the water to pool up and slow down. This will help gravel deposition needed for fish to spawn.



Funding provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Small Grant Program and Tim and Sylvia Tuttle. Contractors were Duane Rath of Duane Rath Excavating and Lyle Dishner of Silvertip Trucking.

Some of the wood was placed with only part of it in the channel. During higher flows, the water will migrate around the wood at its lowest point and encourage meanders in this straightened stream. This will encourage more channel complexity and energy dissipation.

On December 16th, over 100 Riley Creek Elementary 4th and 5th graders will work with the council to plant willows and conifers around the large wood.

In the headwaters of the creek, a fill containing two fish barriers was excavated. The crossing was moved 100 feet upstream to a bridge constructed out of a shipping container. The bridge will be decked this winter.

The area of the old crossing is being restored to allow the stream to flow across it. Large cobbles and root wads were added in the area to give the stream something to bounce off of and take form on its own. Native grass seed and willows were planted in the area and fenced off from cattle access.



Cooperative Weed Workshop Scheduled

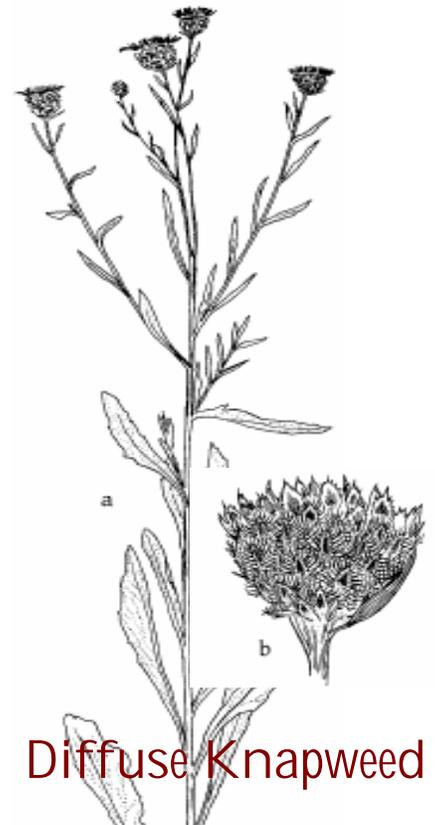
Fencing off riparian areas is a great thing to do, but you may need to develop a strategy to replace or supplement livestock grazing as a management tool for the weeds that are almost sure to come.

Weed management in riparian areas and pastures is the topic of a workshop on Wednesday, January 18 from 8:30am to 4pm at the new Bandon Library (1204 11th Street).

Scheduled talks include: Pasture weeds and management, Grazing rotations for weed control, Problem weeds/non-chemical control, Aquatic weeds and drainage, Pesticide Use Reporting System, Effective herbicide application and sprayer calibration, Forestry versus Ag labeling, and Weed control with riparian restoration plantings.

Lunch and snacks are provided, but you must register for the workshop by calling the Coos & Curry USDA Service Center at 541-396-6879!

Workshop sponsors include the Coos SWCD, Curry SWCD, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, Coquille Watershed Association, Oregon Dept. of Forestry, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, OSU Extension, South Slough Estuary Reserve.



Diffuse Knapweed

COASTWATCH PROGRAM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS ON SOUTH COAST—Phillip Johnson

CoastWatch is a unique project through which volunteers adopt segments of Oregon's shoreline. No other state has a program in which every mile of coast is watched over by citizens. CoastWatch is a project of the non-profit Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition.

CoastWatch "mile adopters" keep watch both for immediate impacts to their mile (oil on the beach, litter, vehicles outside posted limits, marine mammals being harassed) and long-term changes. Volunteers commit to monitoring their stretch of shoreline four times per year, once per quarter, and filing a report on those occasions. (The more additional visits that can be made, the better.)

Founded 11 years ago, CoastWatch now has nearly 1,200 volunteers, including more than 170 in Curry County. However, fresh volunteers are particularly needed in Curry County. A number of segments, many of them in remote or rugged areas, lack any adopter. Other areas have adopters who aren't able to cover them regularly, due to reasons of age or infirmity, or to the fact that the adopter lives some distance away. Some of the miles needing improved coverage are in such areas as Boardman State Park, Humbug Mountain and Cape Blanco, but some readily accessible segments near Gold Beach, Ophir and Brookings also need new volunteers.

Any number of people can adopt a "mile" (as the units are called—they are actually of varying length). The program's goal is to have a minimum of two active adopters on every mile, so there will always be a back-up. Groups and businesses are also welcome to adopt segments.

CoastWatchers come from all walks of life, and include everyone from college students to retirees. No expertise is needed; mile adopters can "learn on the job," and the program periodically offers training sessions in various aspects of coastal natural history and monitoring techniques. For more information contact the CoastWatch Director Phillip Johnson, (503) 238-4450, orshores@teleport.com or Curry County Chair, Lee Van Zee (541) 247-5159, lee.vanzee@gmail.com.



— Steve DiCicco

Additional Volunteer Opportunities

If you or someone you know might be interested in participating in watershed explorations with students, volunteers are welcome! Looking ahead in the Rogue Ed Calendar of Events: Riparian tree planting will be taking place in the winter/spring 2006, in Gold Beach and Brookings, along with invasive weed removal; extra hands and tools are always appreciated!

Also, with Watershed Symposium projects underway throughout the county, many group field events are scheduled for data collection and investigations, where volunteers could be very useful and well appreciated. If you have knowledge/experience to share in watershed studies, have any project ideas for students, or would like to learn more, please contact: Statia Ryder, Watershed Education Coordinator at 541-247-6672 or statia.ryder@oregonstate.edu.



Curry County Weed Advisory Board Noxious Weed Species Spotlight

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)

Description: Japanese knotweed is a native of Asia with hollow, upright, bamboo like stems growing to 3 to 16 feet in height. The plant has large, smooth-edged leaves ranging from heart-shaped to “elephant ear” type. Stems are often reddish or red-speckled and young shoots look similar to red asparagus. Flowers are small white or greenish flowers that form in July and August.



Britt Slattery, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Impact: Japanese knotweed is a weed of economic importance that is abundant in the county, but may have limited distribution in some watersheds. It thrives in moist soils and therefore grows in riparian areas and other wetland habitats. Japanese knotweed spreads quickly to form dense thickets that exclude native species and are of little value to wildlife. The plants extensive rhizome system can reach 15 to 20 m in length enabling the plant to achieve early emergence and great height, which combine to shade out other vegetation, and reduce native species diversity. At the end of the season, a mass of dead stems remains that further inhibits native plant regeneration and leaves river banks vulnerable to erosion. This erosion and flooding facilitates the spread of the plant downstream from fragments of stem and rhizome that rapidly colonize scoured banks and islands.

Control: Japanese knotweed is very extremely difficult and time consuming to eradicate once it is established. Thoroughly digging out roots and stems takes years to succeed, if it ever does -- if even a tiny speck of stem remains, the plant will regenerate. It is vital to burn or otherwise properly dispose of the plant. The most common and effective control methods are cutting followed by an herbicide application, or stem injection of the herbicide. Types of biological control agents (BCA) are being studied; it is known that there are many insects and fungi which control the plant's spread in its native range, so prospects are hopeful.



Projects: The South Coast Watershed Council in partnership with the Oregon Dept. of Forestry and landowners, currently has a Japanese knotweed control project on Crystal Creek in the Sixes River Watershed. Treatment in 2004 averaged 95-100% kill rates when surveyed in 2005. In summer 2005, knotweed around the Sixes River store and the mouth of Crystal Creek was treated. Additional sites have been found upstream of Highway 101. Landowners are urged to relay information about additional sites in this area to Matt Swanson or Dana Hicks at 541-247-2755.

Curry Currents

Winter 2005



Liesl Coleman and Steve DiCicco sample the Rogue River estuary. [page 01](#)

Curry Soil & Water Conservation District

Michael Knapp - Chairman
Don Smith - Secretary/Treasurer
Keith Smith - Director
Bob Pommarane - Director
Steve Kalina - Director
Beth Pietrzak - Farm Planning
Liesl Coleman - Office Manager

Watershed Council Staff & Contractors

Dana Hicks, Coordinator—Lower Rogue Watershed
Harry Hoogesteger, Coordinator—South Coast Watershed Council
Steve DiCiccio, Riparian Specialist
Statia Ryder, Watershed Education Coordinator
Cindy Myers, Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator
Matt Swanson, Monitoring Program Manager
Project assistance provided by Colin Edgar, Erin Minster, Chris John and Aaron Fitch

Watershed Councils (541) 247-2755

George Fleming, Chair, South Coast Coordinating Watershed Council
Peter Aspinwall, Chair Lower Rogue Watershed Council
Dick Laskey, Chair, Chetco Watershed Council
John Leuthe, Chair Port Orford Watershed Council
Joe Marsh, Chair - Elk/Sixes Watershed Council
Joe Brown, Chair Floras Creek Watershed Council
Hunter Creek/Pistol River Council, Winchuck Council, Euchre Creek Watershed Council
Oregon State University Extension: (541) 247-6672 or (800) 356-3986 Frank

**South Coast Coordinating Watershed Council &
Lower Rogue Watershed Council & Curry County SWCD**
PO Box 666
Gold Beach, OR 97444