



CURRY CURRENTS

WINTER 2007

Lower Rogue Watershed Council, South Coast Watershed Councils
and Curry Soil and Water Conservation District

Riley Creek's Rich Riparian Zone in it's 4th Year!

by Statia Ryder



Riley Creek School in Gold Beach has had an ongoing Adopt-a-Stream program for their school's namesake, Riley Creek, since 2004. The name "*Riley Creek's Rich Riparian Zone*" was decided as the official project name after a school-wide vote in 2005. Activities such as invasive weed removal, creek litter pick-ups, trees, shrubs and native perennials planted and bird boxes hung have progressed throughout the years. These habitat improvement projects have been a constant theme for students, teachers and community volunteers who have devoted their time and energy into improving the riparian habitat around the school. Before these efforts started, the creek was not even accessible due to the large wall of impassible blackberries, and many students didn't even realize there was a creek next to their school!

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Above: Ms. Hale (standing behind students) and her class receiving instruction from Mrs. Ryder at the beginning their much anticipated native plants planting day, April 2007.



Left: Ms. Hale overseeing 2 of her students as they work on planting some native riparian ground-covers. Center: Students work with Jacquelyn Aiello to plant trees. Right: Macroinvertebrate Stream Team with their team trainer, Colleen Ellis, watershed council staff, posing with their ice cube tray of sorted macroinvertebrates

To say things have changed is an understatement. Since the blackberry “fortress” has been broken, students have been knee deep in Riley Creek studying stream habitat, macroinvertebrates, water quality, riparian ecology, decomposing logs, plant and tree identification and many other activities. The creek is becoming integrated into 4th-8th grade teachers’ science curriculum, as Mr. Baxter, middle school science teacher, is demonstrating quite well as the new school year progresses forward.

Mr. Baxter has partnered with the South Coast & Lower Watershed Council’s Education Coordinator, Statia Ryder, along with other watershed council staff, to create “Stream Teams” out of his two 6th grade classes. The Stream Teams consist of a Surveying Team, a Mapping Team, a Macroinvertebrate Team, a Water Quality Team, a Flora and Fauna Team and finally, a Photography Team who will document the whole process with photos which will later be used in end of the year presentations. Each team received individualized training from watershed council staff in October to collect and record good data and will make monthly visits until spring. At that time they will be visited by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to conduct a fish survey and then learn what it means to “crunch data” from the past months of collection, into graphs and learn other meaningful ways of arrangement for their final presentation.

With a new set of classroom waders being stored in Riley Creek School’s Watershed Education Resource Room, also known at Mrs. Ryder’s room, the 6th graders at Riley Creek will learn the many ups and downs of field work throughout the year, and will have good gear to keep them dry during their field days, as will many more students in the school (and county!) in the years to come.

Meanwhile, other classes in Riley Creek from 5th through 8th grade have been putting their time in this fall staying ahead of the blackberries so that the many flora species planted will survive and also so they can continue to learn outside in their *rich riparian* habitat!

To learn more, or become involved with this or other school projects, please contact Statia Ryder at (541)247-6604x329 or email: Statia@currywatersheds.org.



Gold Beach premiere screening of *Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean*

Green Fire Productions will show their documentary, **Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean**, in Gold Beach on Tuesday evening, November 20, 2007. A reception starts the evening off at 6pm and the film screens at 7pm. The 30-minute film will be followed by a Q & A discussion with scientists, commercial and sport fishermen, a member of Oregon’s Ocean Policy Advisory Council and the audience. Frank Burris, OSU Extension, will moderate the discussion. This is a free event and open to the public.

This groundbreaking film features stunning views of Oregon’s underwater world and weaves leading marine science with perspectives from those who rely on the ocean for their livelihood. The program provides essential information for the discussion about the future of Oregon’s marine environment.

6:00 pm reception – Snacks & meet the filmmakers and panelists, 7:00 pm film and discussion Tuesday, November 20, 2007 Curry County Fairgrounds, Showcase Room, Highway 101. Free and open to the public.

New River



Approximately 100 pieces of large wood were added to Butte Creek, an important Coho tributary to New River. The wood was placed primarily upstream of Highway 101 where the bulk of the spawning occurs. The goals of the project are to increase pool habitat and complexity, so juvenile salmonids rearing in Butte Creek have higher growth and survival rates.

Sixes River

In Crystal Creek approximately 3.5 miles of mainline road were upgraded on private timber lands beyond requirements of the Forest Practices Act. Under-sized stream crossing pipes were replaced and additional ditch culverts were added.



On Ecotrust Forestry's property in lower Dry Creek one mile of road that runs along the Council's conservation easement is being addressed over a 2 year period. In 2007 ditch culverts were added, 3 stream crossings were replaced (one with a railcar bridge for fish), and 2 crossings were pulled so they can flush out sediment that has accumulated upstream. In 2008 the "pulled" crossings will be reassessed for fish habitat, and new culverts will be installed according to those findings.

In Your Watershed

by Matt Swanson

Floras Creek

In June, ten large spruce trees with rootwads were added to a ranch on Willow Creek, where the Councils have been building log jams since 2002. This year's placements were near the downstream end of the ranch, where an old channel may someday be activated as the wood traps gravel and raises the existing streambed. In July an additional 20 pieces of wood were added to lower Willow Creek near the confluence with Floras Creek.

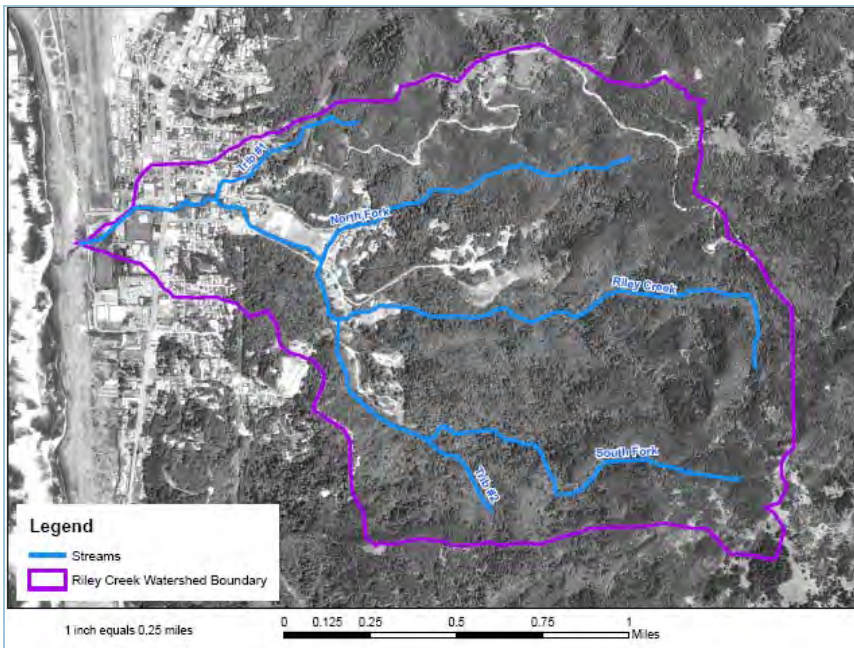
Within this segment the stream is confined by historic rip rap, and as a result the winter stream velocities are high and complex habitat is lacking. The wood was placed using cables and large boulders, to insure the long-term stability; with the goals of creating habitat and slowing bank erosion.



Road upgrades beyond Forest Practices Act requirements were also completed. In the lower watershed, 1.5 miles of road were improved, including the replacement of two stream crossing culverts with railcar bridges. One of these sites also opened up a small amount of winter rearing habitat for fish in the Floras Creek mainstem. In Willow Creek approximately 3.5 miles of mainline and secondary ranch roads were upgraded. Thirteen stream crossings were replaced, and 17 ditch culverts were installed.

In upper Floras Creek additional ditch culverts were added, and a 66" diameter and a 78" diameter culvert were installed. The 78" culvert was particularly challenging because it is down in a narrow stream canyon, with roughly 50 dumptruck loads of earth on top of the pipe. Also in upper Floras Creek a livestock bridge was replaced. Half a mile of road was upgraded because the ditchline was cutting due to a lack of culverts, and sediment was being delivered to Guerin Creek. Six ditch culverts were added, and the Guerin Creek culvert was upgraded so it could pass a large, 50-year storm event.

All of these 2007 projects were implemented through grant funds and landowner contributions. The OR Department of Fish and Wildlife's "Restoration and Enhancement" (R&E) program paid for the large wood placements, and the landowners donated most of the wood and some equipment time. The OR Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) paid for the road projects through Oregon lottery funds, and the landowners matched their equipment time, resources (rock, wood, bridge decking, etc.) and money. The Councils are grateful to both the granting agencies and the landowners for making this work possible.



PARTNERS SEEK TO RESTORE RILEY CREEK

From a grant application on behalf of Riley Creek School to fix the eroding bank by the soccer field, a major community project has blossomed.

Various groups were already contemplating what they could do with their sections of interest along this urban coastal stream that runs through Gold Beach. Maggie McHugh of Remediation, a local consulting firm, knew about alternative methods of bank protection

that could be used instead of the rip-rap, which is so commonly placed along the stream banks to protect against erosion and property loss. Statia Ryder, education coordinator for the Watershed Councils had been working with students using the Riley Creek as an Adopt-A-Stream project and opportunity to learn about watersheds. The City of Gold Beach had been working on their wastewater treatment plant expansion. They were interested in removing fill near the mouth of Riley Creek to replace wetland habitat lost during the initial construction of the plant. The project would help qualify the City for a low-interest loan through the State.

In a few short months these partners, and more, have come together as the Riley Creek Restoration Team to support restoration activities on Riley Creek. When all the different interests were looked at, two components came to the forefront. Education and fish passage were the keys.

Education is the key to maintaining and improving Riley Creek. It runs past both the elementary/middle school and the high school in Gold Beach and provides a wonderful outdoor classroom to teach everything from salmon life history to water quality. Students put forth a vision for restoring anadromous fish runs that elders in the community remember fishing. The students at Riley Creek have already cleared blackberries and planted native trees along the stream, cleaned out trash, and studied the aquatic life in the stream. While many residents of the watershed say that fish have not used Riley Creek for years, the kids (with assistance from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) have found cutthroat trout and steelhead near the school.

Unfortunately, the anadromous fish only have access to the lower 1.5 miles of the watershed, the same area that has been the most impacted from development. Three culverts block fish passage either because they are too small and fish cannot move through them during high flows, and/or because the outlets are too high for fish to jump into. Replacement of the three barriers would allow fish, primarily steelhead, trout and possibly Fall Chinook, access to a total of 3 miles of habitat with half of this in the undeveloped, forested headwaters.

The Lower Rogue Watershed Council has submitted three grants in the last several weeks to address fish passage design and replacements in Riley Creek. Riley Creek School hopes to address the bank erosion at the school using a combination of "hard" (rock and wood) and soft (vegetation, bank sloping) methods. OSU Extension Service and Remediation will be planning a workshop to coincide with the project to teach residents and contractors alternative bank stabilization techniques to rip-rap.

We will continue to highlight activities in Riley Creek over the next several issues. Comments or questions can be addressed to Dana Hicks at 247-2755.

Growing Sustainable Foods

by Harry Hoogesteger



The watershed councils, in partnership with the Curry SWCD, are exploring the possibility of enhancing local agriculture by getting “value-added” higher prices for Curry County food products.

There is an increasing interest in our country in safe, local, healthy foods. Here on the coast, we have over 100 producers who are raising top quality crops and animals --- and also protecting their rivers and creeks for wild salmon and steelhead. We want to encourage and support those efforts.

The Council is looking at a number of initiatives. One would be a branding and marketing effort -- something like “*Wild Rivers Coast Foods*” or “*Cape Blanco Foods*” -- something to identify these products as from a special area similar to Tillamook Cheese or Napa Valley wine.

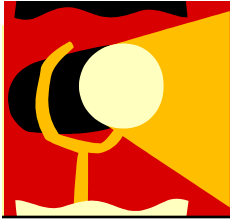
Another initiative is looking at ways to certify growers and ranchers as Salmon Safe or Organic. Many of these certifications help agricultural producers claim a larger market share or higher price for their efforts, especially in urban areas.

And the Council is also looking at ways to encourage efficiencies and good stewardship as part of everyday agricultural operations. Methods might include irrigation replacement systems to conserve water; constructed wetland to filter waste; or riparian buffers to absorb nutrients before they reach streams and rivers.

The agricultural landscape is an important part of our heritage here in Curry County. And agriculture will likely be a big part of our future as well when you consider rising oil prices for transportation costs, food “scares” such as contaminated meat or spinach, and a desire to eat locally grown foods. Plus, our county is one of the few pockets left where there are still working family farms not taken over by corporations.

The Watershed Council partnered with the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) to host a “South Coast Foods Conference” earlier this year. OEC is “beefing up” their Food and Farm connection, and has secured a grant to continue exploring high paying markets for agricultural producers. They will pilot a program on the South Coast in 2008.

Principal agricultural products grown in Curry County include cranberries, sheep and cattle.



Curry County Weed Advisory Board

Noxious Weed Species Spotlight

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

By Kean Fleming

Invasive species carry a tremendous economic and ecologic cost for Curry County, Oregon, and the United States. According to the USDA, the economic impact from invasive species is estimated at \$137 billion per year in the U.S. alone. It has also been estimated that more habitat is lost annually in the United States from invasive species than from the combination of urban development and pollution (Source: www.noivyleague.com). On account of such startling figures, invasive species are often tagged with metaphors such as “biological pollution” or “biological wildfire” which aim to describe their destructive and costly behavior. English Ivy is an invasive plant that is particularly threatening in the Pacific Northwest and right here in Curry County.

In early colonial times, English ivy was introduced to the U.S. for ornamental purposes (as quickly propagating groundcover / a vigorous climbing vine). Today gardeners and landscapers continue to cultivate English ivy because it colonizes rapidly and requires little upkeep. However, as a result of these very same qualities, the vine has escaped the garden setting and today travels unchecked throughout many miles of public and private forestlands. English ivy is one of the few invasive plants that can establish and grow in deep shade. Once established, English ivy forms thick carpets on the forest floor, chokes out native vegetation and tree seedlings, and climbs tree trunks and branches in search of light. When it reaches the canopy and is exposed to full light, English ivy flowers and produces berries. Birds eat the berries and disperse the seeds to other locations. As the ivy climbs, it engulfs and kills branches by preventing light from reaching the host tree’s leaves. Branch dieback proceeds from the lower to upper branches, often leaving the tree with just a small green “broccoli head.” The added weight of the vines makes infested trees much more susceptible to blow-over during high rain and wind events, making trees hazardous if near roads, walkways, homes and other peopled areas.

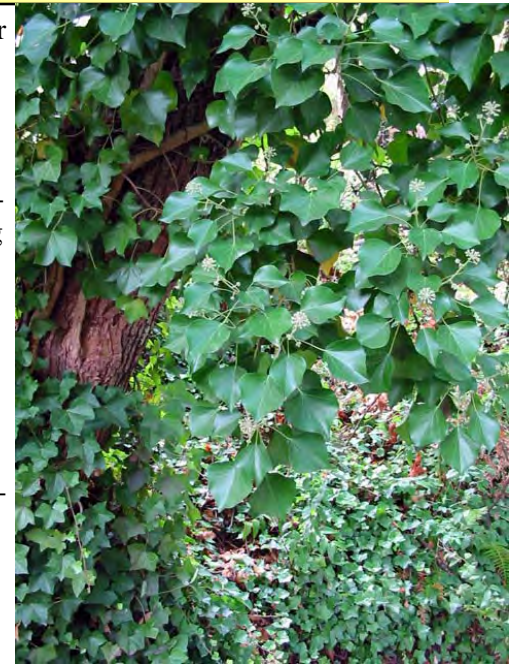


Photo courtesy of ODA

The first step in controlling English ivy is to kill the vines that are growing up trees. This can be accomplished by cutting out a 2-3 foot section of vine at the base of the tree. Over time, the vines that climbed



the tree will die off for lack of nutrients. Removing groundcover vines can be considerably more exhausting and expensive. One can use machines or handtools to remove and then pile and burn the vines, intensively graze the site with goats for many years, or spray repeatedly with herbicides.

**English Ivy infesting
the riparian zone at
Brush Creek, East of
Humbug Mountain**



***Oxalis oregana* is native to Pacific Northwest and capable of displacing English Ivy (photos courtesy of Oregon State University).**

A fourth strategy involves replacing ivy with the native groundcover *Oxalis oregana* (Redwood sorrel, Oregon clover). *Oxalis* species release defensive chemicals into the soil through their roots in a process known as **allelopathy**. Allelopathy is a tool that some plants use to reduce competition from other plants by secreting toxins into the soil and poisoning neighboring plants. Since *Oxalis* species thrive in the same conditions as E. Ivy (low light, understory), *Oxalis* is an ideal candidate for directly competing with this invasive ivy. Similar to firefighters lighting a backfire and “fighting fire with fire”, a gardener or weed controller can pit one weedy species against another. By clearing a series of holes throughout an English ivy infestation and then replanting *Oxalis* in the ivy’s place, the *Oxalis* will eventually poison the ivy and come to dominate the site. This method requires little effort compared with other control strategies, and it returns the land to its native form.

My Life Story

By Arman Carrasco, Upper Chetco Charter School

I started out as a droplet of water in a lake. One day, I almost made it to the ocean when all of a sudden the current changed. It washed me back into the lake. Soon after that I was consumed by a cow. I went through all four of its stomachs until . . . The cow urinated me into the ground. I became ground water. I stayed in the ground for quite awhile, until one day the fog rolled in. It sucked me up like a vacuum cleaner. Before I knew it I was in the clouds. The next day there was a violent storm. I was rained into the ground close to Lake Tahoe. I ran into my old college buddy, Bob. Sorry, I sort of got off topic. Anyways, about two weeks later I was drained into the lake. I thought to myself, “Man, is this journey ever going to end?” I stayed in the lake for about a month or two. Then out of nowhere a kid loads me into his water gun. I went really high when he shot me into the air. I closed my eyes. When I opened them I was surrounded by a white puffy substance. Then it came to me. I was in a cloud again. A long time after that I noticed that it wasn’t sunny and warm anymore. It was dark and cold. The next day it rained. I wasn’t a droplet of water any longer. I was a snowflake on top of a huge glacier. I’ve been up here for about a year now. I wonder if this is the end of my journey. I hope so.



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Colleen Ellis measures flow in Lobster Creek, a tributary to the Lower Rogue River, as part of a macroinvertebrate study.

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Put a Salmon on Your



Plate!

Get a salmon license plate to
support abundant salmon
populations, healthy streams,
and state park salmon projects.

Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds
website: www.oregon-plan.org