

2006 Annual Report

In 2006, the Bear Creek Watershed Council (BCWC or the Council) accomplished major parts of our 2005-2007 Work Plan and are in the process of developing projects and grant proposals for our 2007-2009 Work Plan. We have completed restoration projects on Ashland Creek, Larson Creek, and Jackson Creek. We are partnering with Southern Oregon Land Conservancy to create a conservation easement on Bear Creek and with Oregon Water Trust to restore flow in Neil Creek, local irrigation districts, irrigators, and landowners.

We also partnered with numerous community organizations to complete several outreach and education projects. These projects helped us reach a wider audience and were reported in English and Spanish newspapers, as well as by local television and radio stations. We have improved our Web site content and accessibility, and added information for the public about projects and salmon migration in the Bear Creek watershed. We are working to obtain 501(c)3 non-profit status. Overall we achieved our mission: *to foster collaborative efforts that protect, enhance, and restore the Bear Creek Watershed and the Rogue Basin.*

Restoration Projects: Jackson Creek, Larson Creek, Ashland Creek and Baby Bear Creek Wetland

Jackson Creek Wetland Planting

Despite flood waters in winter 2005-2006, many wetland plants planted by South Medford High School students, community members, and Bear Creek Watershed Council in November 2005 survived!



During Planting- November 2005



Nine months after planting- August 2006

Larson Creek

This \$1.2 million urban restoration project improved coho habitat, removed two dams blocking fish passage, and added six miles of spawning habitat for steelhead. This project returned Larson Creek to its natural channel, installed 8,800 feet of 60-inch diameter pipeline for irrigation flow, constructed eight weirs, five grade control structures and added wetland mitigation.

We learned that large urban projects take time to develop and implement! Project design began in 2002, construction and planting were completed 2006 and site monitoring for plant establishment will continue through 2009.



Larson Creek Weirs on Mainstem- October 2006

BCWC hopes to arrange an Adopt-a-Site program with our education partners to assist with monitoring and maintenance of restoration sites in the Bear Creek watershed. Partners who worked with BCWC included: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Pactrend Inc. Building Company, City of Medford, Barnett Road landowners, Rogue Basin Coordinating Council (RBCC), Rogue Basin Fish Access Team (RBFAT), Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) and three local irrigation districts (MID, TID and RRVID).



Jump pools/weirs in Ashland Creek

Ashland Creek

The completed Ashland Creek project enables passage for coho salmon and steelhead at all life stages and all times of year. The annual disturbance from constructing a push-up dam was eliminated, with irrigators still receiving their full irrigation allotment. BCWC sponsored the project and technical assistance was provided by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and RBFAT. Partners also included: U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Recreation Disabilities Project, City of Ashland, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Rogue Flyfishers, and D.C. Erosion Consulting.

Baby Bear Creek

The Baby Bear Creek water quality improvement wetland was completed fall 2005. The wetland was an education station for Kids and Bugs day in Spring 2006. Students drew pictures of the establishing wetland and studied wetland sediment under their microscopes!

Project partners include: City of Medford Parks Department, RVCOG, Ursa Consultants, George Waller and K & C Environmental Services.



Baby Bear Creek Wetland
Kids and Bugs Day- Spring 2006

Salmon in the City!!! Outreach & Education

2nd Annual Kids and Bugs: Chicos Latinos

BCWC was a leading partner in “Kids and Bugs: Chicos Latinos” in April 2006. There were 8 event stations in Bear Creek Park including: macroinvertebrate sampling, macroinvertebrate identification, water quality testing, fly-tying, fly-casting, salmon dissection, wetland discovery, and salmon storytelling.

Enthusiastic youngsters, watchful group leaders, and skilled station leaders provided terrific hands-on instruction! Altogether, 105 people participated in this event. Plans for next year include leadership opportunities for older experienced kids to assist with event organization and mentoring younger ones. Participants included: OSU Extension and 4-H, Bear Creek Watershed Education Partners Coordinator and teachers, Jackson Education Services District - Migrant Education, SOU students, Rogue Flyfishers, City of Ashland employees, Rogue Valley Transportation District, U.S. Bureau of Land Management environmental educators, and City of Medford Parks Department.



Chicas Latinas
Macroinvertebrate Sampling

Greenway Adventure Day

BCWC coordinated this family-focused, regional event with the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation and City of Phoenix at Blue Heron Park in September 2006. The event featured “Salmon on Your Plate,” macroinvertebrate collecting, Bear Creek native plant and birds tours, “Claudia Chinook,” rented from Rickreall Watershed Council, USFS Salmon Tent and costumes, the Pacifica Caterpillar, storm drain stenciling, a watershed demonstration model, a bike rodeo, a performance by the Ballet Folklorico Ritmo Alegre, and other community exhibitors. 250 people attended the event, 32 community organizations provided displays and exhibits, and 60 volunteers assisted with the event.



Claudia Chinook and SOU Volunteers

Otis Swisher, a migratory bird-banding expert and community contributor, was honored for his years of service and data collection with a native tree bird habitat planting dedicated to him and a photo of a willow flycatcher. Sponsors for this award were: Rogue Valley Audubon, Klamath Bird Observatory, Bear Creek Watershed Council, and the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation.

“Bear Creek Salmon a Mouse Click Away!”

Bear Creek Watershed Council has launched a new interactive Web site feature that helps people track returning wild Chinook salmon spawning in Bear Creek. A clickable map shows eight locations along Bear Creek to view spawning salmon, along with travel directions and parking tips.

The public can post their salmon sightings, learn the importance of salmon in Bear Creek, and receive an e-mail notice when salmon arrive. This tool engages citizens, community organizations and schools in the Bear Creek watershed.

Salmon on Your Plate

The Salmon on Your Plate activity, initiated by the Bear Creek Watershed Council, was a huge hit at the Greenway Adventure Day and the Salmon Festival, October 2006. The activity linked making clay salmon with information about the salmon license plate program. The purchase of salmon license plates provides funds to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, which are allocated to projects to enhance salmon habitat. Kids and adults alike loved the hands-on activity of creating and glazing clay salmon, which were fired courtesy of Southern Oregon Pottery and Supply. Many thanks also to our helpful volunteers and pottery enthusiasts; Ray Foster, Bill Childress, the Guss-Gonzales family, Jason Lynch, Ana Businger, Anita Ward and BCWC Executive Committee members.



“Salmon on Your Plate” Activity,
Salmon Festival.

Stream Enhancement

Instream Flow Restoration Committee

The Council is coordinating efforts to identify possibilities to restore stream flows to creeks in the Bear Creek watershed. Other participants include: Oregon Water Trust, Talent Irrigation District, WaterWatch, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Water Resources Department, and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Neil Creek is the current focus, being an important regional restoration priority of the BCWC 2005-2007 Work Plan. The committee has completed technical review and is currently working on several different possibilities for increasing flows, with an initial goal of securing five cfs.

Eagle Mill Conservation Easement

The Bear Creek Watershed Council partnered with the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC) to secure a conservation easement for Eagle Mill Farm. The Easement includes the confluence of Butler Creek with Bear Creek mainstem. This location was identified by the U.S. Forest Service staff as important habitat for salmon. In September 2006, OWEB awarded \$11,174 to SOLC to finalize the Eagle Mill Conservation Easement. The Council plans to partner with SOLC and possibly other organizations to secure additional conservation easements in the future.

Bear Creek Watershed Council - Executive Committee 2006

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