

Humbug and Iron Creek: OWEB small grants make big impacts

BY BARBARA SUMMERHAWK

Two in-stream projects being carried out by the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC) underscore the importance of small streams in the larger scheme of ecosystem health. According to Geoff Becker, chair of the APWC Aquatic and Riparian Committee, these streams used to be key components of the habitat of the endangered coho salmon, but have largely been taken out of the equation.

One of the projects funded through a small grant from the Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB) will remove reed canarygrass and excess cobble from Humbug Creek near Applegate. Reed canarygrass is extremely invasive and has cemented the cobble so it won't wash downstream into the Applegate River. According to Geoff, he and another landowner noticed in February that Humbug Creek, for the first time in at least 25 winters, went subterranean about 50 feet on either side of the bridge at Highway 238 and Humbug Creek.

They also found a dead, spawned-out female salmonid and a dead juvenile steelhead. After consulting with Steve Barzier, a fish biologist, and Chris Parks, a hydrologist, both from the US Forest Service, they recommended removal of the aggrading cobble and the reed canarygrass. Thereafter, Geoff worked through the

APWC on applying for a small grant from OWEB. With the grant, the work will be done over a few days when in-stream activity is permitted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, usually in late summer when no fish are present. "If we get the excess cobble out, the stream will be less likely to go subterranean during the critical spawning season," says Geoff.

Debris from the high water event of 2005 created a dam at the Highway 238 overcrossing that resulted in a considerable amount of material piling up in the immediate vicinity. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) removed much of the cobble, but the southeast bank of Humbug Creek was eroded. Some erosion control using logs will also be completed at this site. Jerry Voight from ODOT will donate truck time to the project, which involves three landowners and the various agencies.

Another APWC project involves Iron Creek, a tributary located right below Murphy. The spark for in-stream work to protect steelhead and coho (an endangered species) came from a landowner who noticed fish stranded in pools because they were unable to go up or downstream. He contacted the APWC, who then initiated the process for a grant to create step pools, plunge pools and deposits of spawning gravels



The location of this photo, taken in March 2014, is downstream of the Highway 238 bridge at Humbug Creek. The grass in the middle of the channel is reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), which is highly invasive and can choke out streams.

by strategically placing boulders and large woody material in the stream. These pools will allow fish easier passage and places to spawn. Unlike Chinook salmon, which begin their migration to the sea in the first spring after hatching, coho spend around 14 months in the stream in which they are born. Steelhead spend somewhat less than a year in fresh water. This makes coho much more susceptible to the degradation of these smaller tributaries. Joseph Vaile with Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center has also emphasized the importance of these smaller streams.

Landowner awareness of the role that small streams play in the overall health of the watershed is of great significance. The Humbug and Iron Creek projects being carried out by the APWC together with landowners and agencies help all of us enjoy a richer Applegate environment.

For more information on projects of the APWC, check out the home page at www.applegatepartnershipwpc.org.

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APPLEGATE VALLEY WINES

per ton in 2012 increased 19 percent and, in combination with greater production, resulted in a 42 percent increase in total crop value. This census shows that the largest varietal in acreage statewide was Pinot Noir, with Pinot Gris second and Chardonnay third. In the *Rogue Valley*, Pinot Noir was still first and Pinot Gris second, but Syrah was third. According to the census, Oregon grapes stay in Oregon and Oregon winemakers buy very few grapes from other states.

Kara Olmo is one of the new generation of leaders in marketing and promoting the wine industry in the Applegate Valley. She said that when Ted and Mary Warrick planted the Wooldridge Creek vineyard back in the 1970s, they were part of a core group that included Frank Wisnovsky, Roger and Barrie Layne, and Dick Troon, who collaborated on getting their new wine

region on anyone's radar. Their goal was to make the Applegate Valley a viable wine destination, which meant adding more tasting rooms and more commercial vineyard setups. There was no competition and lots of cooperation. They didn't want the valley to be solid vineyards because that makes it more difficult to grow grapes and harder to maintain the pest and predator balance. "Here we have natural boundaries [mountain terrain] and BLM lands, and those, coupled with crop diversity, keep pests and predators in balance to help maintain the health of all the valley's agricultural endeavors," emphasized Kara.

When Kara and Greg Paneitz came to the valley in the early 2000s there was only one tasting room—at Valley View Winery. The development of a marketing plan for the valley was part of the job of the Applegate Valley Oregon Vintners Association (AVOVA), formed in 2006.

Its mission was not only to create a wine destination out of a quiet valley and become a resource for ideas and equipment, but also to share ideas in order to elevate the quality of the wine produced in our valley.

In the last decade, Barney Smith of The Academy, Herb Quady of Quady North, Kara Olmo and Greg Paneitz of Wooldridge Creek Winery, Mike and Mark Wisnovsky of Valley View Winery, the Martin family of Troon Vineyards, and Liz Wan of Serra Vineyards—to name a few—have helped brand the area, attracting more people to select southern Oregon as their wine destination. This helps not only the vineyards with tasting rooms, but also the economic stability of the entire area.

Kara said that the large plantings by

Dick Braden, co-owner of Serra Vineyards, and Padre Properties on North Applegate and Highway 238 will increase the acreage planted in the Applegate by hundreds of acres, but that all of these plantings are under long-term contract with a northern Oregon winery and will not oversaturate the Applegate Valley market. In fact, these new vineyards may use local wineries to create juice for transport to large commercial operations farther away.

It benefits the entire community to have farmers and grape growers working side by side to develop the land in our valley in the best possible way.

The future of Applegate Valley wine does indeed look bright.

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