

APWC's Butcherknife Creek project, a cut above

BY BARBARA SUMMERHAWK

Fifteen miles west of Grants Pass, Butcherknife Creek slices through the northwesternmost section of the Applegate watershed, feeding into Slate Creek right below Hayes Hill, the highest point on Highway 199 between here and the coast.

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) has been working to replace this creek's rusting and dilapidated culvert, which is a serious barrier to fish passage and makes passable the only road providing ingress and egress to residents of Butcherknife Creek Road and Onion Mountain Road. The culvert will be replaced with a bridge this summer when streamflows recede. In keeping with the APWC mission to maintain and restore ecological health to the valley, this project will provide access to the creek for coho salmon, a threatened species listed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries.

Butcherknife Creek is a tributary of Slate Creek, which is one of our watershed's most important streams due to its potential for highly productive habitat for coho and chinook salmon and steelhead. Butcherknife Creek flows year-round in the upper reaches of the Slate Creek watershed and provides adult and juvenile salmon and steelhead crucial cold water refugia and rearing habitat.

Coho, it should be noted, were once as prevalent as chinook salmon, but are now at five percent of historical levels because of human impact on aquatic habitat. Historically, coho, chinook and steelhead provided food for Native Americans and settlers and for bears and other wildlife, besides supplying nutrients for small fish after the adults have spawned and died.

Replacement of the culvert has been a five-year project. The APWC and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologists began developing this project in 2013 based on fish passage and habitat needs in the watershed, but the design



The dilapidated Butcherknife Creek culvert will be replaced with a bridge this summer.

and funding were complicated, time-consuming, and expensive. Removed from Josephine County Public Works management, Butcherknife Creek Road is now maintained by local residents, who don't have the resources to replace the culvert. The APWC worked with all the stakeholders: landowners along the private road, permitting agencies, design reviewers, contractors, engineers, fisheries biologists, funders, and so on.

Soon the Butcherknife Creek Project will be completed, providing safe passage for salmon to upstream habitat and safe passage across the creek for emergency vehicles that currently could collapse the culvert. This is an example of the collaborative work the APWC provides in bringing landowners and agencies together to improve the health of the Applegate watershed.

All of our projects can benefit from efforts by volunteers willing to work on activities in their realm of interest and ability. If you would like to support and join in the APWC's mission "to promote ecosystem health across the Applegate watershed through stewardship, education, and restoration carried out in partnership with landowners, agencies, and other interested parties while contributing to local economic and community well-being," visit apwc.info, our Facebook page or Instagram site, or email us at contact@apwc.info. The watershed needs you!

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Update on the Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project

BY DON BOUCHER

The Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project (UAWRP) is designed to implement actions to restore structure and processes in the Upper Applegate watershed and provide for landscape conditions resilient to disturbances and climate change. The project aims to protect the following important community-identified values: recreation (motorized and nonmotorized), late-successional forests (northern spotted owl habitat), biodiversity (both plant and animal), important connectivity corridors, roadless and unmanaged areas, sustainable flow of goods and services, and human life and property. This proposal is a result of over a year and a half of meetings and workshops with the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and community members. The most recent meeting was held on April 19.

In addition to building relationships with local communities, this planning process helps us to move toward the vision and goals in the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA) Guide by engaging the community early and often in the process.

The "benefits from nature" concept of this planning process underscores relationships between ecological, social, and economic conditions in and around the AMA. This concept aligns well with goals in the Applegate AMA Guide and the Applegate Fire Plan, i.e., to manage the land adaptively to achieve social and ecological sustainability. Using this approach, we hope to highlight the goods and services provided by forests to communities.

To further refine proposed actions, the planning team organized the key community values into three major themes: (1) water and aquatic habitat, (2) terrestrial biodiversity, and (3) community and culture. For each of these, the team described objectives to protect, enhance, or maintain important values. The community identified projects to deal with threats to those key values.

The following is an example from the list of actions for the UAWRP:

Two of the objectives identified by the community are (1) manage forests to increase biodiversity and (2) develop and maintain habitat-connectivity corridors. One of the actions that will address these objectives is to enhance pollinator habitat to benefit monarch butterflies and other

native pollinators. To enhance pollinator habitat, UAWRP would plant native pollinator plant species on five sites in the Upper Applegate Valley (Flumet Flat Campground, Jackson Campground, Kanaka Gulch Flat/Kanaka Gulch, and Nick Wright Flat). A low-intensity prescribed fire in the fall to burn grassy fine fuels would improve the site before seeding. In addition to providing butterfly habitat, this action would provide the following benefits: wildlife species diversity, natural pest control, nutrient cycling/soil fertility, recreation opportunities, scientific and educational opportunities, as well as identification of cultural and intrinsic values. This is just one example that you will find in the scoping notice.

Additionally, this planning and implementation effort will utilize adaptive management principles. Adaptive management is a process that bases management actions on clearly defined outcomes and monitoring to determine if actions are meeting desired goals. If not, the process facilitates changes in management that will best ensure those outcomes are met. The most critical and challenging component of adaptive management is to monitor the work that we do. As we move through the planning process, we will engage with the community to provide input as we develop a monitoring strategy for the Upper Applegate project.

By now many of you will likely have seen the scoping letter or notice asking for comments on the proposed Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project. We are in the process of seeking comments and concerns related to the proposed implementation actions to determine if there are issues or other aspects that we did not consider, and whether there are any alternative ways to achieve the project's purpose. Proposed project descriptions and maps are available by stopping by the Star Ranger Station at 6941 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, Oregon, or calling 541-899-3800.

For those who have been involved through the lengthy series of meetings and workshops, we sincerely want to say thank you.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

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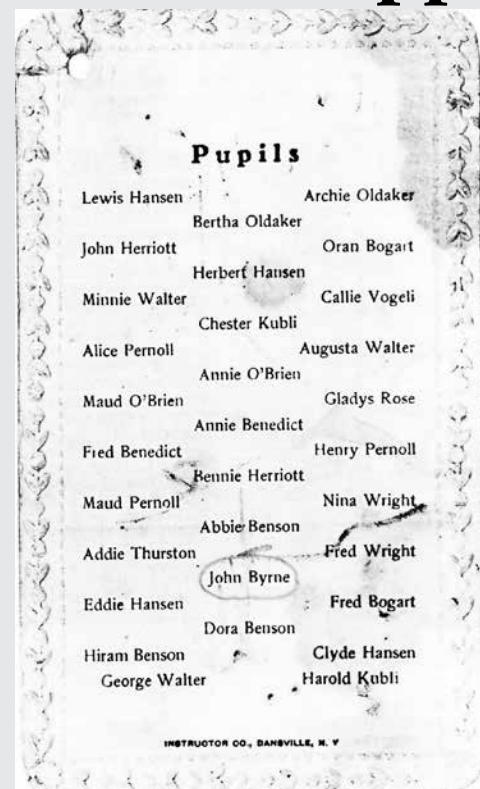
Back in Time | Applegate School history

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

Applegate School was built in 1879-1880 on land donated by Rial Benedict. This school was on the west side of Humbug Creek near where the Applegate School stands today.

My grandparents were living on Humbug Creek, where my dad, John Byrne, was born in 1887. His oldest sister and brother were already going to Applegate School. The family moved from there to Forest Creek and then to Watkins in the Upper Applegate area. However, an Applegate School card (see photo) lists my dad in attendance while he was staying with the family's good friends, the John O'Briens, who lived a few miles from the school.

Evelyn Byrne Williams with Janeen Sathre • 541-899-1443



Applegate School, 1902 SOHS Photo #15376