

For the fish and people: APWC collaborates for ecosystem resiliency

BY BARBARA SUMMERHAWK

Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) has received over \$1.5 million in grants to partner with local landowners, farmers, timber companies, vineyards, water users, agencies, and other nonprofits to make life easier for fish in the Applegate and Evans Creek watersheds. Various projects across the valley and beyond will involve working with these partners to remove fish-passage barriers, improve stream health, and improve irrigation systems. Let's take a quick look at some of these projects planned for the 2020-2022 cycle.



Upper Powell Creek juvenile salmon.
Photo: Jason Jaacks 2017.

On Williams Creek, the Lower Bridgepoint Dam blocks juvenile fish access to core cold water upstream during the summer months. The dam is listed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) as a statewide fish priority, so the engineered designs for dam removal will eliminate one of the many speed bumps fish encounter while accessing miles of high-quality fish habitat for Chinook and coho salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, and Pacific lamprey. The project will also improve the irrigation system and stabilize the stream banks. Partners for this project include local irrigators, Blue Fox and Whistling Duck farms, local landowners, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rogue Basin Partnership, and Oregon Water Resource Department.

Downstream, Murphy Dam, on the Applegate River, has received funding to (1) secure survey and engineering services to improve irrigation efficiency throughout the ditch system and (2) provide designs to improve the diversion and fish passage at the dam. In partnership with the Murphy Ditch Association and Two Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District, the project will help 38 water users attain these goals.

Outside the Applegate Watershed, but within the APWC's mission, flows Evans Creek. This stream flows northeast to the town of Rogue River in Jackson County. The APWC has two fish-passage projects and a large instream habitat improvement project in this watershed. Through partnerships with local landowners, timber companies, and agencies, APWC is working to design fish passage improvement on Sykes Creek; implement fish passage improvements at Wimer Siphon, an abandoned concrete siphon on Evans Creek; and improve stream complexity and instream fish habitat on the West Fork of Evans Creek through the placement of large woody debris in the creek. Evans Creek is designated as a "core area" and one of the highest priority restoration areas under the Final Recovery Plan

for the Southern Oregon Northern California Coho (SONCC) Salmon. All of this work will mean the survival of more juvenile fish and aid in the recovery of Endangered Species Act-listed and state-listed species.

Back in the Applegate near Provolt, the lower six miles of Williams Creek struggles with barriers to fish, water quantity, and temperature issues, all problems that reduce water quality and stream complexity. This part of Williams Creek flows from the Williams Creek Preserve, owned by the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, down to the confluence with the Applegate River. Janelle Dunlevy, executive director of APWC, says, "This project gives us an opportunity to partner with the Williams Creek Watershed Council and develop opportunities with the landowners that will benefit both the landowner and the creek. We look forward to implementing this stakeholder grant and working with the landowners in this area."

With a new head gate, ditch piping, and fish screen on the Little Applegate River, the Upper Philips Fish Passage and Irrigation project will improve access to miles of essential cold-water habitat for steelhead, Pacific lamprey, and cutthroat trout, while improving irrigation water delivery to local landowners and improving water quality. The many partners on this project include landowners, water users, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Middle Rogue Steelheaders, and ODFW.

The APWC continues its mission to restore and maintain the ecological health of the watershed for the fish and for the people of the Applegate. We will continue our lecture series with a winter lecture on January 16 on well and septic health. For more information, please see our ad in this issue of the *Applegater* and our Facebook page. If you have any questions about these or other activities of the APWC, feel free to contact the organization at contact@apwc.info or 541-899-9982.

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Establishing an Education and Outreach Program in the Applegate

BY JENNIFER PAYNE

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) is developing an Education and Outreach Program (EOP) that provides hands-on learning opportunities for youth and the public. The program includes watershed education for students, opportunities for interns, and public outreach at various events. The goals are to build support for and knowledge of the Applegate and Rogue River watersheds and to offer opportunities for people to make a positive difference for local wildlife and the environment.

Take it outside! The APWC is ramping up partnerships with local schools to get students outside and to provide them with outdoor education experiences they won't soon forget. Students first learn about their watershed in the classroom and then visit local riverfront parks, Cantrall Buckley Park and Provolt Seed Orchard Recreation Area, for a field trip to learn about river systems, the life cycle of salmon, the health of wildlife habitats, and ways to make a positive impact. Wading knee-deep in the river and hunting for insects and signs of healthy salmon habitat keep students excited about learning. The word "watershed" comes alive when kids experience it first-hand. Students feel connected to their local rivers and forests by helping to plant native plants, remove invasive plants, collect data on the health of the ecosystem, and build and place bird and bat boxes in the Applegate Valley.

Investing in the community. For educational opportunities, APWC utilizes local professional expertise and brings in resources through student internships. For example, APWC has been working with local woodworker Tommy Maddox, owner of 4M Timber, to plan the construction of bird- and bat-box kits for student service projects with Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS). Through work with the Southern Oregon University Environmental Education Program (SOU EE Program), APWC is providing internship positions in the field, like habitat restoration and monitoring, as well as positions in outdoor education and public outreach. Currently, SOU EE intern Whitney Anderson is working with the eighth-grade class at ROCS in local plant-identification activities and geocaching for upcoming hikes. She is also helping with public outreach. These are examples of win-win relationships.

Reach out! Playing "Match the Scar" games, planting tree shoots, and designing salmon hats are surefire ways to capture the public's attention. Through these kinds of engaging activities, APWC is providing education about how to protect wildlife habitat, as well as promoting the Applegate Valley in general. Recently, APWC had a booth at the Bear Creek Fall Festival in Medford. People left with smiles on their faces, wearing silly salmon hats and carrying their willow tree



Top photo: Salmon enthusiasts Taylor Cooper and Owen Stabach create salmon hats at the Bear Creek Fall Festival in Medford in October.

Bottom photo: Whitney Anderson, Southern Oregon University intern, models a salmon hat at the APWC outreach booth at the festival.

plantings. In addition, APWC provides lectures throughout the year. Don't miss the Well Water Warriors on January 16. Bring your well water sample for testing and find out what's in your water! Visit the APWC website for time and location details, or look for our ad in this *Applegater*.

More opportunities for collaboration. Through the EOP, APWC is partnering with ROCS, Well Water Warriors, Salmon Watch Program, SOU EE Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Jackson County, Bureau of Land Management, SOLVE, and Rooted in Hope.

Funding for the pilot program this first year is made possible by:

- A small Momentum Grant from A Greater Applegate (AGA)
- Private fundraising efforts of APWC board member Cathy Rodgers
- Volunteer hours contributed by Janis Mohr-Tipton and Jennifer and Gregg Payne
- APWC capacity funds for executive director Janelle Dunlevy's hours

I am excited to develop the Education and Outreach Program because, with full funding, we can provide services for all Applegate Valley schools, bring students from other areas to experience our valley's natural beauty, provide a presence for the Applegate Valley at regional public events, and create a pipeline for more resources for the local environment. I am currently pursuing funding from both private and public sources. Please visit applegatepartnershipwc.org for more information and/or to donate to this new program or contact me at outreach@apwc.info.

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