

USFS prepares for summer

BY THE US FOREST SERVICE-SISKIYOU MOUNTAINS RANGER DISTRICT

Happy summer, Applegate community and partners!

Employees at the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District (Star Ranger Station) have been busy this spring preparing for another great summer of recreation, surveys, and implementation. Fire and Recreation crews have been busy clearing roads of downed trees and fallen rocks. Wildlife crews are busily surveying for owls, Siskiyou Mountains salamander, and bumblebees.



Illegal outhouse and trench built adjacent to Tamarack Meadow. Photo: US Forest Service.

Timber and Fuels crews have been working with various partners, including Lomakatsi, to remove dead and dying Douglas fir and other ongoing treatments in the Upper Applegate Watershed Restoration Project (UAWRP).

In keeping our promise made in the last edition of the *Applegater*, here are some updates related to various projects and a reminder on where you can find additional information.

UAWRP Environmental Analysis (EA)

The Decision Notice for this 52,000-acre project, signed in August 2020, was a unique collaborative approach between stakeholders and federal agencies aiming to restore ecological conditions resilient to disturbances and climate change. For information about the project, including maps, please visit fs.usda.gov/detail/rogue-siskiyou/landmanagement/projects/?cid=fseprd662282.

Progress to date. Commercial cutting and yarding wrapped up on April 8 in units 41, 42, 54, 60, 61, 63, 67, 68, 110, and 111, totaling approximately 650 acres. Tentatively, felling and yarding work via helicopter will resume in January 2025.

Grayback Shaded Fuel Break Categorical Exclusion

This project aims to reduce hazardous fuels along strategic linear features such as roads, trails, ridgelines, or key access routes. This project would provide and maintain a shaded fuel break, allowing firefighters to safely engage with wildfires and provide a safer ingress and egress for the public. For more information about the project, visit fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63141.

Progress to date. As mentioned in the last *Applegater*, this fuel break was not incorporated into the Yellowjacket EA (see below). Specialists have begun surveying and assessing the project area to develop the treatment areas. This will continue through the summer, and we hope to have a signed decision in fall 2024.

Yellowjacket EA (formerly Little Applegate EA)

The proposed footprint of this project bridges the landscape between the UAWRP and Ashland Forest Restoration project footprints. The primary focus will be to address the unprecedented Douglas-fir mortality through fuel-reduction treatments along main roads (Forest Service roads 20 and 22, and any roads designated with four digits), around infrastructure and communication sites, and adjacent to private and state property.

Progress to date. Over the past several months, our team of specialists have been refining the scope of work within the project area. This prioritization and discussion will continue into the summer as site visits and surveys are conducted. Once we have narrowed the scope of the work, we plan to organize multiple public-involvement opportunities prior to formal public comments during the scoping period.

Tamarack Meadow Restoration Project

During the 2023 field season, one of our employees noticed a recreational vehicle pad site created in the meadow, along with an outhouse (see photo). This meadow system on the Siskiyou Crest is home to a variety of sensitive and unique plant species. We plan on restoring the meadow and helping prevent other camps from becoming established there.

Where can you find information?

GovDelivery. This is a primary method of communication. GovDelivery is a web-based email subscription system that allows anyone to receive information on specific topics and projects that interest them. Subscribers receive an email whenever USFS makes information available. Subscribers may customize and manage their subscription profiles to receive exactly the types of information desired, and subscriptions may be canceled at any time. To subscribe, visit public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFS/subscriber/new. If you need help signing up for GovDelivery, please contact Amanda Merz at amanda.merz@usda.gov.

Constant Contact. Another primary form of communication, Constant Contact is a web-based email subscription that allows a member of the public to subscribe to our news release mailing list. Sign up for forest updates at fs.usda.gov/rogue-siskiyou.

RRSNF web page. To view current and recent projects across the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (RRSNF), please visit fs.usda.gov/projects/rogue-siskiyou/landmanagement/projects.

RRSNF Facebook page. Information shared here is of a general nature that highlights forest projects, events, announcements, and employees. Go to facebook.com/R6RRSNF.

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Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District

Pipe dream becoming a reality on the Upper Phillips Ditch

BY LUKE WIMMER

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) has been working in partnership with the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) on the Upper Phillips Fish Passage and Irrigation Efficiency Project. This years-long project aims to upgrade an irrigation ditch in the Little Applegate in order to restore instream flows of the Little Applegate River and provide infrastructure upgrades to irrigators.

Originally built in the mid-1800s, the Upper Phillips ditch required substantial annual maintenance to clear vegetation, repair rodent holes, and install the push-up dam in the channel to allow water to flow. Some years, downstream users would not receive water at all. Seepage from the unlined ditch also caused overly saturated areas downslope—a concern for several landowners whose residences and farming operations are in close proximity to the ditch.

The project comprised multiple phases. The first phase focused on improving fish passage at Upper Phillips Dam by enhancing a side channel to enable flow around the dam. This involved strategically placing boulders and logs in the stream to direct water toward both the side channel and the irrigation ditch, ensuring that irrigation water rights were met while allowing sufficient flow for fish to navigate around the diversion. Completed in 2021, this structure eliminated the need for a push-up dam and now helps provide fish passage to critical spawning and rearing habitat. By directing water into the side channel, we have made the stream passable year-round to adult and juvenile fish, allowing them to bypass the dam entirely. In addition, we installed a new headgate, fish screen, and measuring device at the intake to the irrigation ditch.

Currently underway, phase two involves the installation of nearly 7,000 feet of solid wall HDPE pipeline along the Upper Phillips ditch. This type of piping has a life expectancy of over 100 years and the flexibility to be bent into the original ditch footprint along the hillside contours, saving time and costs over other pipe options. A local construction company, C&C Constructors LLC, began construction in early March and estimates completion by the end of June 2024. Upon completion, the project should reduce water-diversion rates and volumes, allowing more water to remain instream, while increasing the amount of water available on-farm for the over 100 acres of irrigated land. Additional



JSWCD engineer Paul DeMaggio explains the new turnouts to irrigators. Photo: APWC.



Irrigation pipeline ready to be buried along Little Applegate Road. Photo: APWC.

benefits include reduced labor for ditch maintenance, improved flexibility, and reliability of irrigation deliveries.

Proposed phase three involves removing the Lower Phillips Dam and using the new Upper Phillips Ditch Pipeline to convey water to the Lower Phillips Ditch.

This irrigation efficiency project was funded by the Oregon Department of Water Resources and utilizes the Allocation of Conserved Water Program. Under this program, water users agreed to permanently return 75 percent of the conserved water back instream to the Little Applegate River to directly benefit fish habitat. The remaining 25 percent is split among the water users.

This project would not have been possible without the ongoing support for the water users who championed it through many years of planning and logistical challenges. It is the result of a long-term partnership of more than 13 years between the Upper Phillips Ditch Water Users, JSWCD, and APWC. Additional project partners include Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fish biologists and the Fish Screens and Passage Program, Adkins Engineering and Surveying, Cascade Stream Solutions, Middle Rogue Steelheaders, Rogue Basin Partnership, US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, Laird Norton Foundation, Pacific Power Blue Sky Habitat Fund, Trout Unlimited, and American Rivers.

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