

CREEK: Stretch through town needs some restoration

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debris floating downstream during high water flows. The sewer line on the Highway 20 bridge is on concrete pilings that are causing the creek to swirl around them, creating more bank erosion. Everyone involved would also like to prevent future issues with any sewer line adjustments blocking projected fish passage.

The multiple approaches to both sides of the creek have created wear and tear on the banks. With proper planning, specific appropriate access points can be created, reducing damage to the creek bank as a whole.

The UDWC has been working closely with the Deschutes Land Trust, Portland General Electric, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the City of Sisters, and local farmers, ranchers, and residents to protect and enhance the entire habitat of Whychus Creek and the surrounding land to encourage not only the return of steelhead and trout to the creek, but to accrue other benefits as well.

Their goals include clean, abundant water; healthy habitat for fish and wildlife; scenic views; and recreational

opportunities. Over the past six years, a great deal of restoration work has been undertaken along Whychus Creek where it flows through Sisters Country. The Land Trust has remeandered the creek to its original course through Camp Polk Meadow, and has also secured eight miles of property along the creek to conduct and maintain guaranteed habitat enhancement for fish and wildlife as well as recreational and educational opportunities.

Screens have been placed on all irrigation diversions off the creek to keep fish in the main channel. Small dams have been removed and pocket habitat is being created for spawning areas.

If the fish are to reach the sixteen miles of Whychus that lie upstream from Sisters, it is imperative that there be no barriers to moving the fish through the one mile of urbanized habitat in Sisters.

The City and the UDWC would like to work together to create a comprehensive plan investigating all options for the entire Creekside Park and Campground area holistically.

To accomplish that goal, City staff and the Parks Advisory Board are going to ask the City Council to approve changing the designation of the \$10,000 from the campground restroom facility grant for repair of the riparian area, to using that

money to secure larger grants through the UDWC funders to address the many layers of the Whychus Creek habitat enhancement, which include: two utility crossings (sewer); two vehicle bridges at the boundaries of the project site; a foot bridge; recreational access; interpretive signage; planning for flood flows and other factors.

Ryan Houston, executive director of the UDWC, explained to the PAB the processes involved in a comprehensive project.

"We would like to begin the project with a comprehensive planning phase in which we enroll the services of a team of hydrologists, engineers, and restoration professionals to develop a plan that will result in a high-quality project for the area. Once this plan is in place, and we have secured the support of key local partners, we can then pursue funding to implement the restoration project.

Houston proposed the project be staged in two phases. Phase I (Design) would begin this summer by applying for



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Whychus Creek needs a little TLC in the stretch that runs through Sisters.

design funding. A design team would be hired in fall 2017 with the design being completed by summer 2018.

Phase II (Implementation) would involve applying for implementation funding in summer 2018, followed by securing the necessary permits and completing other implementation preparations in fall 2018. The actual project would be implemented in summer 2019.

The UDWC is confident their funding applications will probably be successful. The

funding will require matching funds from the City such as the \$10,000 from the OPRD grant and in-kind City staff time.

The City Community Development department has also applied for a \$60,000 OPRD matching grant to make access improvements to the pedestrian bridge in Creekside Park to make it ADA-compliant by reducing the slope of the approaches on either side. That project will fit nicely into the riparian enhancement project.

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