

DAM REMOVAL:
IEE students will still do part of project

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Forest, forcing project managers and Upper Deschutes Watershed Council (UDWC) to halt much of the work on the project until the summer of 2021.

The removal of the Plainview Dam was one component in a multifaceted restoration project being completed by the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, Deschutes National Forest, Three Sisters Irrigation District and private water-right holders.

Other project components have included upgrading the existing irrigation diversion with a state and federally approved fish screen to prevent fish from entering the irrigation canal. There will be piping of over 3,000 ft. of unlined canal to promote water conservation. Project funding is provided by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Pelton Round-Butte Fund, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

When stakeholders first heard of the postponement, they were hopeful to restart work in the fall, but that plan had to be pushed back as well.

“We have been shut down because on September 11, the U.S. Forest Service Industrial Fire Protection Level (IFPL) was raised to a Level IV in the Deschutes National Forest,” said Kris Knight, UDWC Executive Director.

A Level IV prohibits all heavy equipment work on

U.S. Forest Service lands not related to firefighting. Because the project site is on Forest Service land there’s uncertainty about when or if work could restart this fall.

With the IFPL remaining at Level IV, Knight and other project participants made the decision earlier this week to postpone much of the work until next summer.

“We’ve been unable to work for three weeks, so the timeline for the project would be pushed out to at least the entire month of October,” said Knight. “Risks increase as we go later into the fall. Water level in Whychus Creek could rise from a rain or snow event, compromising the goals of the project and the investment by the project funders. Therefore, we determined the responsible decision was to postpone the project until next summer. If and when the IFPL is lowered, we will do some work this fall and winter that’s away from the creek to help speed up implementation of the project next year.”

Knight noted, “This removal of this last dam represents over a decade of work and progress. Twelve years ago, there were six dams or fish passage barriers. This



PHOTO PROVIDED

Whychus Creek has become an outdoor classroom for Sisters students.

is the last one. We hoped to be celebrating that, but we’ll have to wait a year.”

An on-going partnership with Sisters school students in the Interdisciplinary Environmental Expedition (IEE) program and the UDWC will continue. The setback may change how the students assist the project but the value of stewardship, and appreciation for natural environments around them can’t be stopped.

Kolleen Miller, the UDWC education director works closely with IEE instructors.

“We’re still planning on the IEE students doing some restoration along Whychus Creek,” she said. “We’ll be taking some of the IEE students to the location for the planned project. The good news is since March we’ve been doing online education videos to prepare students for what they’d do in the field. The plan is to do what we’d normally do in November and also include work along Whychus Creek. They will be planting in riparian zones, as well as invasive weed removal in the Plainview Dam area.”

Sisters woman killed in Josephine County wreck

An 18-year-old Sisters woman suffered fatal injuries in a single-vehicle wreck in southern Oregon early on Wednesday morning.

Oregon State Police reported that troopers and emergency personnel responded on Wednesday, September 23, at approximately 12:18 a.m. to a single vehicle crash near milepost 16 on Hwy. 199 in Josephine County.

According to OSP, preliminary investigation revealed that a Chevrolet Malibu, operated by Rianna McGonagle of Sisters, was southbound when it veered off the road and struck a tree. McGonagle was a recent graduate of Sisters High School.

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Portraits OF SISTERS

After 20 years in Portland, *Kelly Rae Roberts* and her family moved to Sisters for more sunshine and opportunities. Starting and operating a business wasn't her plan, but in May of this year she found herself launching Marigold and True — an artistic boutique she says will touch the creative spark in everyone. Cultivating work from over 30 individual artists in her store, Kelly's business brings a vintage appeal to happiness.



PHOTO AND STORY BY *Cody Rheault*

This week's "Portraits of Sisters" presented by The Nugget Newspaper.

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