

RESTORATION: Riparian and wetland species will be planted

Continued from page 3

The site is a beehive of activity with heavy equipment not usually seen on a restoration site plying up and down the valley. Three 35,000-pound, large off-road dump trucks carry dirt from place to place. The trucks are loaded by three 75,000-pound excavators whose huge jaws remove earthen berms that have been holding the stream in an artificial, straight alignment. A bulldozer pushes dirt into large piles and created the temporary dirt roads used by the equipment. This effort will help promote the natural movement of meandering creek channels across the historic floodplain, a process called braiding. A skidder is used to move trees for placement in the eventual restored creek bed.

At the same time, soil is being removed in some places and built up in others to even the floodplain and raise the water table, while leaving islands of mature vegetation to help provide mixed topography and maintain the healthy cottonwood, willow, and dogwood that currently grow there. Throughout the entire area there is ample gravel deposited by long-ago glaciers, which helps filter the water and provide scum for spawning fish.

In order to use heavy equipment in the vicinity of the water while safeguarding the creek and its surrounds,

the equipment must run with biodegradable transmission oil.

Salvaged whole trees are being added where the creek will eventually flow, to create complex, layered habitat for fish and wildlife while slowing down the flow of the water and creating quiet spots for fish to rest.

When all three zones of the restoration are complete, there will be 1,000 salvaged trees in place in the creek. Those trees are coming from a USFS thinning project and 300 of them from an ODFW thinning project on Pole Creek Ranch. Those thinning projects promote foreststand health while providing salvage trees for a healthier creek.

While this work is being completed, the fish are being held out of the area with a picket weir and fine-mesh block nets. It took 30 days to capture and move all the fish that were in the restoration area of the creek. Mathias Perle, restoration program manager with the UDWC, indicated there are now Chinook salmon upstream of Camp Polk Meadow and steelhead are making it upstream beyond Sisters.

Because of the appearance of the Chinook, ODFW has shortened the period for permitted work in the stream from July 1 – October 15 to July 1 – August 15. With the one-week delay due to the fire, work will be right up against the August 15 deadline.

Once all the excavation work is complete and the trees are in place, the flow of the creek will be activated slowly, with only a

20 percent flow to allow the water to seep in and wash the gravel before slowly ramping up the flow.

Perle said, “When the creek is fully flowing through the restoration area, the macroinvertebrates on which the fish feed will come back better and stronger. The overall health of the river system will be greatly improved.”

The fish will return very quickly when the weir and block nets are removed. While the work is underway, animals are coming back to the area at night, as evidenced by tracks in the dirt found by the workers in the morning. Some of the in-stream work being done will bring beavers back and then, according to Perle, “they can do the work for us.”

Over three years, 60,000 riparian and wetland plants and trees will be planted around the islands and throughout the floodplain to provide for diversity and complexity of the ecosystem. The end result will be “a complex, diverse, and dynamic half-mile of creek that will change from year-to-year,” according to Perle. The UDWC began monitoring the creek before the restoration work started and will continue to do so for years after it is completed to determine how well they are meeting their goals and objectives.

A third restoration project is scheduled downstream, to begin in 2023. The planning and permitting for these projects takes two to five years, so work is already on the drawing board for the 2023 project.

Why restore Whychus?

Historically, Whychus Creek was a combination of stretches through narrow canyons and others with broad, well-vegetated meadows where the creek could spill over its banks. These large meadows were of significant biological importance as they provided diverse stream and side-channel habitats for fish to spawn, rear, and hide. Streamside vegetation provided cover for wildlife and helped maintain cool stream waters, necessary for fish health. Amphibians and songbirds made their homes in nearby wetlands.

Over the years, the creek was artificially straightened and bermed to keep the creek in place and avoid flooding. This practice diminished fish and wildlife habitat in and along the creek. In an effort to correct the situation, Deschutes Land Trust and its partners re-meandered Whychus Creek through Camp Polk Meadow Preserve with stunning results. They have also focused on a mile of the creek at Whychus Canyon Preserve. Rimrock Ranch is the third area undergoing restoration.

In 1979, the property that is now Rimrock Ranch was permitted for a 14-lot subdivision. That never came to fruition. In 1988, the land was purchased by Bob and Gayle Baker and they moved to the ranch full-time in 2001. They sustainably grazed cattle on the ranch while working hard to

protect and enhance habitat for wildlife.

They realized they were sitting on a unique piece of Central Oregon and worried that when they were gone, the ranch could very well be developed, and the precious habitat destroyed. That was when they contacted the Deschutes Land Trust to see if, working together, they could conserve the ranch forever.

In 2006, a land preservation agreement between the Bakers and the Land Trust was the first step in protecting the ranch. The Land Trust then purchased and permanently protected Rimrock Ranch in 2020, making the Bakers’ long-term vision a reality. Gayle still resides on the ranch.



ONLINE BOOKING FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

Facials • Nails • Waxing
Sugaring • Tinting/Lifting
A fast, easy way to secure your appointment!

ROAM
natural skincare

541-953-7112 
392 E. Main Ave., Sisters
roamnaturalskincare.com



SISTERS MEAT AND SMOKEHOUSE

MEATS, GAME
ALASKAN SEAFOOD
CHEESES
SANDWICHES
BEER, WINE, CIDER

110 S. SPRUCE ST. | 541-719-1186 



CCB#203769

ELITE ROOFING LLC

- Re-Roof & New Construction
- Composite, Metal, Flat & Cedar Shake Products
- Residential & Custom Home Framing
- Gutter Installation
- Free Estimates
- Financing Available
- Transferable Warranties
- 10-Year Workmanship Guarantee

Family Owned & Operated for 20 Years
541-526-5143



Necessity is the mother of Invention

Ponderosa Forge
Sisters, Oregon
“Your Local Welding Shop”
CCB# 87640

541-549-9280
207 W. Sisters Park Dr.
PonderosaForge.com



SISTERS FARMERS MARKET
BY SEED TO TABLE

FIR STREET PARK
SUNDAYS 11-2PM
JUNE 6-OCTOBER 3

WWW.SISTERSFARMERSMARKET.COM

SUPPORTED BY



BLACK BUTTE REALTY GROUP