

People & Places

Using rain garden as biofilter

Jim Ekins develops natural filter for runoff heading for Idaho river, aquifer

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

With the right approach in the right setting, slowing water's flow can go a long way toward improving its quality, a University of Idaho demonstration project near the Spokane River in Coeur d'Alene finds.

UI Extension water educator Jim Ekins led the creation of a bio-infiltration swale at the school's Coeur d'Alene Center.

Essentially a landscaped temporary holding pond with added features, the swale captures water runoff — and what is suspended in it such as oil and other pollutants from cars — and filters it through sand and coarse soil before it can reach the river or aquifer. Natural processes in the soil destroy or neutralize most of the pollutants.

Each year the swale can treat up to 50 million gallons of storm water runoff from nearby streets and parking lots.

The swale is also designed to benefit wildlife. It is planted with native grasses, flowers and shrubs to help make it a self-watering garden for pollinators and other animals.

A bio-infiltration swale is “a fancy name for a rain garden,” Ekins said. “In a lot of cases, you will see them as grassy swales, meaning the functionality is based on the plants that happen to be growing in it.”

Swales are “all over in Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, Dalton, Hayden,” he said, referring to cities in the Idaho panhandle's lake region. “Usually they are tucked into



University of Idaho Extension water educator Jim Ekins: Swale is “a fancy name for a rain garden.”



A new bio-infiltration swale at the University of Idaho Coeur d'Alene Center gathers and filters storm water before it enters the nearby Spokane River.

a small corner of a development.”

Bio-infiltration swales help municipalities comply with federal Clean Water Act rules for non-point-source storm water pollution, Ekins said. The required size of a swale is based on the amount of nearby impervious surface such as pavement.

Swales often are near large

buildings where they can handle roof and parking lot runoff that otherwise would rush into a storm drain and a nearby stream, he said.

“Here the idea is to slow it down, let it sit in the swale a short time,” Ekins said. “The stream doesn't have to accept this big rush of water, which can cause erosion.”

UI's swale is 9,600 square

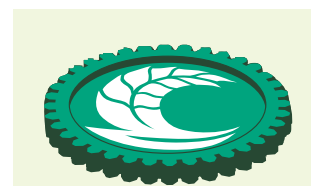
feet with a water holding capacity of about 5,500 cubic feet. Ekins said it is bigger than most because it takes water from a large area. The swale has one pipe that delivers stormwater to it before the water gets to the river about 100 yards away. Another pipe helps keep the swale from overflowing.

The design applies some recent research findings and aims to show how effective bio-infiltration swales can be, he said.

Grass excels at treating stormwater pollution, though most plants can do an adequate job, he said. UI's swale is mostly grass — it features fescue — with some woody shrubs and native plants. Soil components, basically minerals and compost or humus, add filtration capability while accommodating plants.

The UI swale, between busy Northwest Boulevard and the Centennial Trail, is at the bottom of a hill below a neighborhood and section of road.

“These swales also protect the aquifer as much as the riv-



Western Innovator

Jim Ekins

Occupation: University of Idaho Extension water educator

Age: 47

Hometown: Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Education: Master's degree, community and regional planning, University of Oregon; bachelor's degree, natural resources, Western Carolina University

Family: Single

er,” he said.

The Spokane-Rathdrum Aquifer, largely lacking a protective cap because sandy soil overlays it in many places, is the sole source of drinking water for almost 600,000 people in the region.

Ekins, who works with students of all ages and community volunteers, plans to install a monitoring well — a kind of perforated pipe with a container at the bottom — to take samples of water before and after it enters the swale and percolates through the soil. The goal is to record differences in water quality.

Funding sources for the approximately \$8,000 project included the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the City of Coeur d'Alene, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's lake-management division and the Kootenai Aquifer Protection District.

“We are trying to figure out how to retrofit these swales, or rain gardens, into existing city areas, and that is the innovation,” Ekins said.

Younger generation takes on family ranch

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

SILVER LAKE, Ore. — At the age of 16, Daniel Miles said he was ready to take over the operation of his grandfather's ranch in the high desert of Central Oregon.

But Harold Miles told his grandson to have patience and that finishing his schooling had priority. Daniel Miles did follow his elder's advice, graduating from North Lake High School in 2010 and then from Oregon State University in 2013. His degree was in agricultural science.

Daniel, now 25, and his wife, Leanna, have now taken over the Miles Ranch, a 1,300-acre hay, grain, pasture and cow-calf operation. Leanna is also an OSU graduate, having earned a degree in agricultural business management.

This type of generational transition doesn't always occur in agricultural businesses because there are fewer younger people who have an interest in making agriculture a career. But Daniel grew up in this environment and has been helping on the ranch since he was old enough.



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

The Miles Ranch in the Silver Lake, Ore., area is transitioning from Harold and Lois Miles, left, to their grandson, Daniel, and his wife, Leanna, who is holding their son Marcus. Daniel Miles says he is blessed to have the opportunity to carry on the family's ranching tradition.

His father, Lloyd, was actually in the transitional stage of taking over the family operation, but died in a traffic accident in 2009 on a dusty, rural gravel road while en route to check an irrigation pump motor. That's when the 16-year-old Daniel said he could take over, but his grandfather quickly re-directed the teenager back to getting an education.

“He was willing, but probably not ready,” Harold Miles said of Daniel.

Daniel still helped with the work, however. The neigh-

bors helped the Miles family get the third cutting of hay in the barn during that tragic year and some of the ranch was leased for the next two years and some for the next five years.

After earning their degrees at OSU, Daniel and Leanna returned to work the family ranch with the blessing of their grandparents, Harold, 85, and Lois, 78.

“We're very happy to have somebody in the family continue our labors,” Lois Miles said. “There are fewer young

people who are taking over for the older generation. We feel fortunate to have Daniel and Leanna back here.”

Daniel said he feels blessed to have the opportunity to carry on the family's ranching tradition.

“I feel more honored by the responsibility than overwhelmed by it,” the young man said of making sure the ranch continues to be a success. “It's an opportunity to carry on and to build on what others have essentially done for me, to build something for their kids.”

“The story of this ranch is how much I've been given, how much we've been given,” he explained. “When dad died, the community helped us so much and we've been helped a lot since then.”

Scott Pierson, another Silver Lake area rancher and vice president of the Oregon Hay & Forage Association, said it is wonderful to see young people like Daniel and Leanna step up and make agriculture their profession. Pierson was friends with Lloyd Miles.

“It is so imperative that we have the next generation coming into agriculture,” Pierson

said. “For all the effort people like Harold and Lois Miles put out there, you don't want to see it be in vain. We want our children to be the next generation. We want our children to be independent, but also interdependent so they're able to work successfully in agriculture with other people in the industry.”

“It's a challenge,” he added. “It's a volatile environment passing the torch from one generation to another, trying to keep the land without being taxed to death. You need to be really sharp in your business in navigating the process of passing the torch. It's not an easy thing to do.”

Harold Miles is optimistic Daniel and Leanna can make that transition “because they are willing.”

“I have faith in Jesus Christ that they can do this successfully,” Harold said.

The young couple already has the next generation wanting to help. Their 6-month-old son, Marcus, has been on a tractor.

“He would like to steer,” Daniel said, drawing laughs and smiles from his wife and grandparents.

Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on “Submit an Event.” Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com. Write “Calendar” in the subject line.

Saturday, June 23

2018 Washington State Dairy Ambassador Coronation. 5 p.m. Bellevue High School Performing Arts Center, 10416 SE Wolverine Way, Bellevue, Wash. Five candidates are vying to become the Washington State Dairy Ambassador for the coming year. The doors open at 5 p.m. and the program begins at 6 p.m. Tickets ordered by June 12 are adults \$20, students \$10 and 6 and under free. Tickets purchased after June 12 or at the door will be adults

\$25, students \$15, under 6 still free. Tickets will be available for pick up at the door. For ticket information, please contact Gloria Edwards by email at gloria.wsdw@hotmail.com or 360-273-7313.

Saturday-Sunday June 23-24

Aquaponics in Oregon: Discover the Growing Potential Conference. Western Oregon University, Smith Hall, 345 Monmouth Ave., Monmouth, Ore. Aquaponics is the marriage of hydroponics (growing food in water) and aquaculture (growing fish) in a sustainable closed system. This highly sustainable closed-loop ecosystem creates the optimum environment for fish and plants to thrive naturally, therefore, growing pure, chemical-free food. This weekend workshop is intended for anyone interested in learning more about how

we can grow this emerging green industry here in Oregon. We will hear from some of the top commercial growers, innovators and educators in this emerging green industry and discover the challenges and opportunities aquaponics presents. Cost: \$75 for Saturday or Sunday; \$135 for entire weekend. Website: <https://bit.ly/2KdDXSM>

Tuesday, June 26

Get Ready for Market Workshop. 5-7 p.m. OSU Extension Library, SOREC, Research Building, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Learn everything you need to know to get your produce and crafts to market. This class will walk you through market preparation and presentation. Experienced farmers, crafters jury committee chair and a site manager from the Rogue Valley Growers and Crafters Market

will review the rules for entry into markets. They'll also share tips and tricks learned over the years to make bringing products to market easier and more profitable. There will be some handouts for reference. A sample booth will be set up. Cost: \$10 Website: <http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms>

Wednesday, June 27

Forestry Shortcourse. 9 a.m.-noon. Sandpoint Orchard, 10881 N. Boyer Road, Sandpoint, Idaho. This is the third session of a six-session course on forest ecology, silviculture, wildlife habitat, and other forestry topics. Cost: \$38 Email: cshnepf@uidaho.edu

Snake River Pest Management Tour. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, 1684-1698 2700 West Road, Aberdeen, Idaho. The tour will feature several weed-control trials in potatoes including targeted herbicide mixtures in potatoes, Sonalan tank treatments and sulfentrazone-formulation comparisons. Researchers will also discuss their work on herbicide mechanism of action, quinoa herbicide screening and Litchi tomato herbicide management.

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EO Media Group

dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper

published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is published weekly by EO Media Group, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR 97308-2048.

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P.O. Box 2048

Salem, OR 97308-2048

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