



# Cooperative effort cleans up sediment, road problems

By **BRIAN WALKER**  
For the Capital Press

PLUMMER, Idaho — The days of Alder Creek Road in North Idaho's Benewah County being unsafe have been left in the dust.

The Plummer-based Benewah Soil and Water Conservation District and Benewah County performed improvements along Alder Creek from Alder Creek Loop Road to the intersection of Carlin Creek.

"Addressing the sediment issues also addressed many safety issues for residents on the road," said Bill Lillibridge, lead engineer for the project.

"It was built as a seasonal road, but was being utilized year-round due to increased residential use. It is pretty much the only road in the immediate area and is seeing extensive traffic with the expansion of small-acreage residential use."

Lillibridge said the road posed a year-round concern.

During wet weather and snow,



The road before any work was done.

Benewah SWCD

the road could be impassible. It would wash out during the summer and fall.

Besides road grade raising, widening and improvements, 21 culverts were added.

"These culverts provided drainage ditch relief and creek/draw conveyance," Lillibridge said. "This replaced over-road flow in most situations, which was a large source of stream sediment and road degradation."

Proper road rocking, fill and shaping was used on the project area to improve drainage through the road surface and reduce surface runoff.

Projects that reduce sediment are a high priority for the Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Program. The St. Maries watershed contributes a high load of nutrients to the lake, according to environmental officials.

Much of the road was too nar-

row and unsafe for residents as well as fire and medical emergency vehicles prior to the improvements. Catastrophic events such as the 2015 fire season emphasized the critical need for road improvements in this remote area of Benewah County.

The project cost about \$400,000. An Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Section 319 grant funded more than half of the project, with the local government funding the rest.

Leann Daman, manager of the conservation district, said the first two phases of the Alder Creek grant were serviced with a private engineering firm. That cost was built into the budget for all three phases of the project.

"When the conservation district was asked to assist with Phase 3, we were able to include the benefit of our partnership with Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the technical assistance we receive through ISWCC. That cost savings enabled the conservation district to address about 2.5 addi-

tional miles of road by using engineering services of ISWCC and not a private hire engineer as had been included by Benewah County and its original grant budget."

Those additional 2.5 miles were treated with culverts and rock for the benefit of local residents and the Alder Creek watershed, she said.

Another project the conservation district is involved with is St. Joe River streambank stabilization.

The project addresses water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and riparian health restoration. IDEQ, private landowners and Avista Utilities are assisting with funding. More than \$100,000 has been spent. The conservation district will monitor the site for five years.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game funded a separate \$300,000 St. Joe River streambank restoration project of the conservation district.

"There has been some great streambank restoration happening on the St. Joe River," Daman said.

# Wildfire upstream can mean erosion problems afterward

By **GAIL OBERST**  
For the Capital Press

DETROIT, Ore. — The devastation to the North Santiam Canyon is palpable. At Detroit, if you roll your car window down, the smell of wet ashes drifts in on the chill winter air.

Along the banks of the North Santiam River, piles of charred trees and brush removed from the hillsides await removal.

The fires that in September burned more than 1 million acres in Oregon are out, but erosion and floods may be the next disasters that follow them, hydrologists warn.

Rain and snow now blanket more than 400,000 acres torched in September by the Beachie Creek and Lionshead fires in the Cascade Range east of the Willamette Valley, the largest two of the seven major fires that sparked in September.

Dozens of community groups, including farmers, have helped residents of the



Gail Oberst/For the Capital Press

**Detroit buildings were devastated by fires that swept through the Cascade Range in September. The surrounding burned forests are precursors to erosion that will impact water quality, experts say.**

canyon with emergency supplies. Now, well into the winter rain and snow season, the post-fire's threat to private, local, state and federal lands is becoming evident. Winter storms could wash down soil exposed by the fire causing flash floods and erosion, according to local, state and

federal officials.

Flooding not only threatens fish-bearing streams and drinking water sources, but also can leave noxious weeds on farm fields, according to Kyle Abraham, chief of the Oregon Department of Forestry's private forests division.

Rebecca McCoun, North Santiam Watershed Council executive director, said local volunteers have been working hard to help landowners whose properties were, or will be, affected by the fire.

By mid-November, more than 122 landowners had been contacted in Marion and

## RESOURCES FOR LANDOWNERS

A webpage, <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/fire/Pages/afterfire.aspx>, lists resources for landowners impacted by the wildfire, including NRCS/USDA financial assistance to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in Marion, Clackamas, Linn, Lane, Douglas, Jackson, Tillamook, Washington, Yamhill, Lincoln and Josephine counties.

sites where there's potential."

Root wads can be used to fortify banks and donated straw bales could prevent some erosion. Planting trees and protecting water sources may stave off future problems, she said, but the time to act is now.

Work began quickly to assess the damage and plan projects that will guard against landslides, clear roadways and prevent erosion and other disasters.

Fire-caused erosion may increase this winter, U.S. Forest Service Hydrologist Jamie Sheehan Alonso predicted in November as she shared a multi-agency assessment of the watershed's damage.

National forest land makes up approximately half of the Lionshead and Beachie Creek burned area.

In addition to federal assessments, the multi-agency Erosion Threat Assessment Resource Team (ETART) is also assessing water-related issues on state, private and tribal lands.

Linn counties; 106 of these were given 240,700 pounds of straw donated, gathered and delivered by volunteers to help reduce erosion.

"It has blown my mind," McCoun said of the volunteer help.

"Very little can be done in some places," she said of steep banks and canyons with basalt walls. "Erosion is going to be a problem. But there are

## OTECO WHEEL TRACK FILLERS

- Fills ruts properly and with the correct material.
- Completely fills ruts with one pass.
- 10 cubic yard (28,000 lbs.) total capacity.
- One-man operation.
- Off-season uses include filling ruts in roads and transporting grain.

**THE ONLY SOLUTION**  
*All else is just another problem.*

**(307) 331-0734 • (307) 322-9415**  
**www.otecomfg.com**

## WATER MASTER SERIES AND EVERGREEN

**SUPERIOR SERVICE & DESIGN**

- All your needs for irrigation parts service
- We build custom equipment for your special needs.
- Hose replacements & fusion repairs
- Transport Tanks • Rental Returns & Used Equipment
- Structural and steel buildings available for purchase.

**Truck Equipment** VALLEY WORKMAN

- Full Service • Alterations • Dump bodies
- Hoists • Farmbeds • Flatbeds

## VALLEY FAB

CORP

10910 Portland Rd. NE • Brooks, OR  
Call: 503-792-3739 • Fax: 503-792-3738

## LONG BROS.

BUILDING SUPPLY  
*Since 1974*

195 Birds Eye Ave. Woodburn  
P: 503-981-4041 F: 503-982-7821

LongBrosBldg.com  
sales@longbrosbldg.com

Your Local Pipe Source

PVC Pipe • ABS Pipe • CPVC Pipe • Pex Pipe • Sewer & Drain  
Corrugated Pipe • Wirsbo Pipe • Fernco • Sharkbite • Galv. Water Pipe  
Black Iron Pipe • DWV • Poly Pipe Fittings • Glue • Tools • Repair Parts

Family Owned & Operated since 1974!

## Best Prices on Irrigation Supplies

Sprinklers • Rain Guns  
Drip Tape • Dripline • Filters • Poly Hose  
Lay Flat Hose • Micro • Valves • Air Vents  
Fertilizer Injectors ...and much more!

Fast & Free Shipping from Oregon

1-844-259-0640

www.irrigationking.com

10% OFF  
PROMO CODE:  
**CAP10**