

# Outdoor Rec / Local

## SWCD / NRCS: Post-fire reseeding project completed

Submitted by SWCD, Baker City

2015 was a tough year for Baker County. Landowners and producers experienced another consecutive drought year, which brought with it a horrific wildfire season. Baker County faced four separate wildfires over the summer, which burned hundreds of thousands of acres and disrupted countless livelihoods.

Now that the fires are long out, and we are drawing closer to a new spring, landowners are facing the next big concern: erosion. Lands affected by wildfire are at a much higher risk for flash flooding and landslides, because the burned, bare soil cannot absorb as much water. Erosion also removes or redistributes top soil, the layer of soil with the greatest amount of organic matter and nutrients. Not only does losing top soil reduce the chance for a plant community to recover after an event such as a wildfire, but it can cause a shift to less desirable plants; for example, from native grasses to

shrub species.

To help mitigate this multifaceted issue, the Burnt River Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to hire a contractor to aerially apply a grass seed mix on approximately 5,700 acres of rangeland that were severely burnt in the Windy Ridge/Cornett Fires.

Getting a jump start on re-vegetation will decrease the chance for major erosion once the snow begins to melt and the rain begins to fall. Participating landowners, who submitted an application to NRCS' EQIP program, were chosen based on burn severity and vegetation mortality throughout their affected property.

Because of these collaborative efforts, the Burnt River SWCD and the NRCS were able to help 16 individual private landowners treat their burned rangeland. This amazing partnership and cooperation have allowed agencies to come together and help our local landowners when they need it the most.



Submitted Photos.

A helicopter drops a grass seed mix.

## USDA announces \$40 million project

USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie announced a federal investment of over \$40 million for restoration of forests near growing communities to reduce wildfire threats, protect water supplies, improve wildlife habitat and support rural economies. This is the third year of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet.

"The health of our forests and our rural communities very often go hand in hand," Bonnie said. "USDA works with other public and thousands of private landowners through a range of programs and partnerships to decrease the threat of wildfire, restore forest habitat and increase economic and other opportunities for the families and businesses that make their homes near woodlands." Washington and Oregon were awarded funding for two new projects, plus additional funding for ongoing projects.

In Oregon and the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region, the Greater La Pine Basin Cohesive Strategy Project was selected:

This project leverages strong partnerships across diverse organizations and community groups to integrate multiple objectives across the landscape. This includes increasing forest resiliency to insects, disease, and fire; enhancing and protecting water yield and quality; improving wildlife habitat; and engaging communities to increase awareness about the project. Spanning 344,701 acres the project area includes state, public, and private lands. The project will implement activities focused on hazardous fuels reduction, restoration, and maintenance on federal lands, fuels reduction and restoration work on private lands, and outreach and education to assist local communities in becoming more fire-adapted.

Fiscal year 2016 funding: USFS - \$952,125; NRCS - \$250,000

Forest: Deschutes

Partners: Deschutes County; Project Wildfire; Oregon Department of Forestry; U.S. Bureau of Land Management; Oregon State University Extension; Walker Range; Oregon Department of Corrections; Upper Deschutes River Coalition; Upper Deschutes Watershed Council; Firewise Communities; Klamath County; Central Oregon Fire Chief's Association; Central Oregon Cohesive Strategy Initiative; Deschutes Fire Learning Network; Oregon Department of Transportation; Oregon Department of Agriculture; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. In addition to the two new projects, two existing Joint Chiefs' projects in Oregon (awarded in 2014 and 2015) will receive additional funds this year. The East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains Partnership in Baker and Union counties will receive \$1.2 million this year; and the Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration Project in Jackson County will receive \$3 million. In addition, one existing Joint Chiefs project in Washington (awarded in 2015) will receive additional funds this year. The Northeast Washington Initiative in Eastern Washington will receive \$1.2 million this year.

In total, Bonnie unveiled 11 new Joint Chiefs' projects totaling \$7 million for 2016 and committed additional investments totaling nearly \$33 million in 27 projects launched in 2014 and 2015. Local partners plan to invest up to an additional \$11 million in financial, technical and in-kind assistance for the 38 projects.

The announcement was made at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, where Bonnie highlighted several projects that demonstrate the power of this kind of partnership. Bonnie said, "By taking an all hands, all hands approach, Forest Service, NRCS, and countless partners are demonstrating that smart, proactive investments to restore forests yield extraordinary benefits for landowners, communities and taxpayers." Since its start, \$104 million has been invested through USDA's Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water resources, and improve habitat for at risk species. Summaries of all projects selected can be found on the NRCS website <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelpdrb1244394>

## —ODFW WEEKLY RECREATION REPORT—

**Weekend fishing opportunities:** Steelhead angling is good in the Umatilla River. The Wallowa River is fishing well for steelhead and the bulk of a very healthy run is on the way. If your favorite fishing spot is no longer listed

It's probably because that river, lake or reservoir is closed for the season, inaccessible due to snow and bad roads, or offers limited fishing opportunities during the winter months. These water bodies will re-appear in the Recreation Report when they re-open next spring, or when access and/or opportunity improves.

**GRANDE RONDE RIVER:** trout, whitefish, bass

The Grande Ronde is currently (Feb 22) relatively high which will make fishing difficult. The river likely won't return to flows typical of the last few months but steelhead will still be available when the water isn't muddy. This year's run of steelhead is one of the best in recent years and catch rates have been good throughout the season.

Remember, the new closure date for the Grande Ronde River steelhead fishery is now April 30. Year-round fishing for hatchery trout will also be allowed beginning Jan. 1, 2016.

**HOLLIDAY PARK POND:** rainbow trout

Pond was stocked in September with trophy-sized trout. An ADA fishing dock for anglers with disabilities is available. The pond may be ice covered and unsafe for ice fishing.

**HUNTER POND:** hatchery rainbow trout

This pond was stocked with 150 trophy-sized rainbow trout the 1st week of September. The pond will now be ice covered. From I-84 take Hwy 244 to

wards Ukiah. At the Blue Mtns summit, turn left onto USFS Rd 5160. Proceed for approximately 3 miles to the Jct. of roads 5160 and 5155. Stay on 5160. Just past this Jct. on the right will be spur 710. Take this spur. The pond is just off 5160.

**IMNAHA RIVER:** Steelhead With the recent uptick in flows steelhead have started to enter the river at a higher rate and anglers are finding success. Look for the run to continue to improve as the late winter/spring progresses. Local biologists expect very good catch rates this spring with the stronger than usual run. Remember, the new closure date for the Imnaha River steelhead fishery is now April 30. Year-round fishing for hatchery trout is also allowed under the 2016 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations.

**JOHN DAY RIVER:** steelhead Steelhead fishing has been slow on the John Day River since flows are high and water clarity poor. Flows are predicted to be lower by the weekend but will likely be too high for successful fishing. Steelhead have dispersed throughout the system and numbers are increasing above Service Creek in the upper John Day.

Anglers have success primarily drifting with jigs, shrimp or eggs with a bobber. Another popular method is drifting a worm along the bottom. Fly anglers are primarily nymphing with lower success. ODFW encourages all anglers to keep any ad-clipped steelhead taken in this fishery. All wild (adipose intact) steelhead must be released unharmed.

**LONG CREEK POND, CAVENDER POND:** trout

Both ponds may be iced over so proceed with caution for ice fishing. Cavender Pond was stocked last fall

with trophy trout.

**LUGER POND:** hatchery rainbow trout

Luger Pond was treated with the chemical fish toxicant rotenone in the fall and all fish were removed. The pond will be restocked with legal-sized rainbow trout in May 2016.

**MAGONE LAKE:** rainbow and brook trout

Lake is iced over so use caution for ice fishing. Access road to lake is covered with snow and will require 4-wheel drive to reach.

**McHALEY POND:** rainbow trout

Pond was recently excavated to improve capacity and to remove aquatic weeds. Very few fish are in the pond post excavation treatment and fishing will be poor.

**McKAY RESERVOIR:** Closed to fishing until March 1, 2016.

**MORGAN LAKE:** rainbow trout Closed to fishing as of Nov. 1.

**OLIVE LAKE:** rainbow trout, brook trout, and kokanee

Lake has been stocked with both legal and trophy-sized rainbow trout. Lake is iced over and the access road is covered with snow. It will require a snowmobile to reach lake.

**PEACH POND (Ladd Marsh):** rainbow trout

Peach Pond was treated with the chemical fish toxicant rotenone in this fishery. All fish were removed. The pond will be restocked with legal-sized rainbow trout in May 2016.

**ROULET POND:** rainbow trout

The pond is ice free and will be stocked with rainbow trout in April.

**ROWE CREEK RESERVOIR:** rainbow trout

Remains open all year. Fishing is fair for carryover and stocked trout.

**TAYLOR GREEN POND:** hatchery rainbow trout

Was stocked with 150 trophy-sized rainbow trout the last week of September. The pond will now be ice covered.

From Hwy 203 at Union, turn left staying on Hwy 203 towards Medical Springs. At the summit between Union and Medical Springs, turn left onto USFS Road 7700 (opposite snowpark area). Proceed East on 7700 road for about 9 miles to USFS Road 7740 on the right. Proceed on the 7740 road for about 1/4 mile. The rock pit pond are on the right.

**UMATILLA WALLA WALLA FOREST PONDS:** trout

Boundary, Keyhole, Yellowjacket, Granite Meadows, Goldfish and Windy Springs ponds are closed to angling until Dec. 31 due to pesticide applications to remove unwanted fishes. These ponds are closed to access by the public until all signage is removed. Stocking of these ponds will resume during the spring of 2016.

**UMATILLA RIVER:** steelhead

No reports on steelhead fishing for last week, the river was high and unfishable for most of the week. Water levels have dropped and the color is a nice green in the Pendleton area, expect a good week for anglers. Steelhead are spread throughout the river system, creel surveys are now concentrated on the upper river area, but good angling opportunities are still available in the lower river. Anglers can access fish counts at updated Threemile Dam fish counts. Flow data is available

**WALLOWA COUNTY PONDS:** rainbow trout

Surplus steelhead have been out-planted in Marr, and Weaver ponds (Lower Diamond) however Weaver pond is still mostly froze over. This would be a great opportunity to get kids out and into some big fish. These fish are most often caught by fishing a worm or other bait under a bobber a few feet.

Kinney Lake was treated with a pesticide on Oct. 5 to remove unwanted fishes. ODFW testing has determined the area is safe to enter and the reservoir has been filled. New regulations for Kinney Lake will be in effect for 2016. ODFW, Triple Creek Ranch, and the Wallowa Valley Improvement District #1 (WVID#1) have collaborated to open Kinney Lake for year-round fishing starting Jan. 1, 2016. However, catchable trout will not be available until the lake is stocked in the spring. Non-motorized watercraft will also be allowed at Kinney Lake for 2016. Remember, to be respectful of the private land access that the Triple Creek Ranch and WVID#1 have provided and pack out any trash you bring or find.

**WALLOWA LAKE:** rainbow trout, kokanee, lake trout

Some holdover trout will still be available for the hardy trout fisherman willing to brave the cold weather. As spring progresses the anglers that find those holdovers will likely have some large fish on the end of their line. Kokanee can also be caught by jigging deep during the winter months. Wallowa Lake does not reliably freeze every year. However, when the lake does freeze, ice fishing can produce good catch rates for trout and kokanee.

**WALLOWA RIVER:** steelhead, mountain whitefish

The Wallowa River is fishing well and the bulk of a very healthy run is still to come. Biologists expect catch rates to be very good as the season progresses into the spring. This year's run of steelhead is one of the best in recent years and catch rates have been good throughout the season.

Winter fishing between Minam and the mouth at Rondowa can be very good for anglers willing to walk. Remember, the new closure date for the Wallowa River steelhead fishery is now April 30. Year-round fishing for hatchery trout is now allowed under the 2016 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations.


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