

Williams Community Forest Project

BY SARAH PARKER

In Williams, a group of residents is redefining the relationship between the community and the forest. The Williams Community Forest Project (WCFP) was founded in 2007, and gained steam in spring 2011 when word spread of a 320-acre parcel of private land that was slated to be clear-cut. A businessman from Idaho currently owns the parcel, called the W320. It contains the headwaters for three freshwater streams; is utilized by the Pacific fisher, northern spotted owl, and other important animal species; is home to a rich, ecologically diverse forest; and is highly visible throughout much of the Williams valley. Additionally, the forest is part of a continuous wildlife corridor with surrounding old-growth forests, the majority of which are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The WCFP intends to purchase the property from the landowner and turn it into a community forest, managed ecologically to support the local economy and enrich the environment.

"This property is special because it is so central to our community. The water that originates on this land supports not only countless plant and animal species, but the livelihood and economic viability of farms and families downstream," said

Christina Strelova, vice president of the WCFP Steering Committee and a small farmer in Williams.

Such a forest would provide Williams with the opportunity to take responsibility for a piece of its local forest system. Possibilities for the land include enhancement of recreational trails for hikers and horseback riders, small-timber utilization programs, harvesting of mushrooms and other edibles, land-based education and outreach, and programs to reduce fire hazards and boost wildlife habitat.

Ecologically maintained community forests represent a new paradigm in forest management, and this project can serve as an example to other communities nationwide.

Since the initial news, the WCFP has bolstered strong community support for their mission through an auction fundraiser that raised over \$8,000, and over 100 supporters have pledged \$100,000 toward the purchase of the property. News that the logging operation has been postponed until 2012 has increased the group's determination to reach an agreement with the landowner.

While the WCFP works to negotiate the purchase of the property, they are

planning a series of workshops to be held in partnership with their fiscal sponsor, the Williams Creek Watershed Council.

Kari Rein, a farmer and business owner in Williams who cofounded the WCFP, wants to share her enthusiasm for ecological forestry and help connect landowners in Williams with resources to help them be better stewards of their properties. "This kind of outreach will give us the opportunity to offer our community high quality information about eco-forestry, and hands-on experience taking care of our natural resources," said Ms. Rein.

Forestry on commercial land is a contentious subject, but the WCFP seeks to open the dialogue about ecological forestry, and the responsibilities of private landowners to their neighbors and communities.

Cheryl Bruner, a registered nurse, is president of the WCFP Steering Committee. "We are looking to create a new standard of forestry management,"



Some of the old-growth trees on the W320 property in Williams.

Ms. Bruner said. "Our biggest challenge is inspiring individuals to take action to protect our environment."

Donations are critical to securing the W320 property. To donate or to learn more about the Williams Community Forest Project, visit www.williamscommunityforestproject.org.

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NOTE: *The Williams Community Forest Project is currently hiring a Project Manager. Visit their website for more information.*

For more photos of the W320 property, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/wcfc>.

What is the Williams Creek Watershed Council doing?

BY CHAS E. ROGERS

This summer was another successful season for the Williams Creek Watershed Council (WCWC). Our restoration crew was very busy working on projects to enhance habitat for salmon and developing programs to improve forest health. We completed significant restoration efforts at many sites and the results of this will show wildlife improvements over the next decade.

FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENTS

One of our most unique accomplishments was improving fish passage at the Laurel Hill irrigation diversion. This diversion consists of a large gravel push-up dam located at the mouth of Williams Creek where it enters the waters of the Applegate River. Here, Williams Creek water and Applegate River water combine to provide irrigation water for many farms in the Applegate Valley. Being one of the oldest irrigation diversions in the area, it is a major obstacle to salmon trying to enter Williams Creek on their return from the ocean. Our mission was to find a workable solution to

encourage fish passage through the steep drop from Williams Creek to the Applegate River along the face of the dam so that adult and juvenile salmon can navigate the rocky channel into Williams Creek.

We were fortunate to get financial support from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board through its Small Grant Program. The Small Grant Team saw the potential of building a series of step pools below the "push-up dam" that would act like a ladder to accomplish this goal. The concept included use of large boulders to construct a series of weirs across the creek that would cause high creek flows to scour deep jump pools while maintaining the existing grade to the irrigation diversion point. These pools would allow fish to travel upstream and downstream during lower water flows and during salmon runs in winter and outmigration in spring. It was important that the structure could withstand high floodwaters in winter.

Working with Nick Anderson from the Anderson Rock and Dirt Company, a local operator, we brought in 50 large

boulders to the site. The boulders were from three to six feet in diameter, some of them weighing well over a ton each. The Bureau of Land Management's Provolt Seed Orchard next to the site gave us access for equipment and boulder delivery. A large excavator was brought in to move the rocks.

With project manager Chas Rogers, a geologist with WCWC, and the excavator, the boulders were carefully

placed to form arching weirs across the channel. The weirs were placed to turn stream flows toward the center of the channel and encourage high water to scour deep pools. Each of the ladder-like weirs and step pools created a one-foot rise. The lowest weir started at the remains of an old concrete dam structure that blew out during the 1964 floods.

A laser level was used to guide the work as each layer of rock was placed. The rocks are irregular and difficult to place due

to their size and shape and had to be sorted through to find the right configuration. The team needed a flat-lying smooth transition between each boulder to provide a natural look, and to make certain that they wouldn't move during high-water flows. Each weir was placed to withstand the tremendous power of the water at flood stages. Many of the rocks were placed so that they were flat at their tops. This level profile allows water to flow freely over the rocks with laminar flow patterns, then fall vertically into the scour pool to release its energy, deepening the pool. Many pre-existing boulders that were used to maintain the dam in the past were used to augment the project. This

project successfully created the step pools that can be seen today.

Although the structures have not yet been tested through a full year's water cycle, the shape and design was duplicated from other successful weirs built in Williams by the WCWC. What has yet to be determined is how well the structures will serve the salmon that return to Williams to spawn in winter. We will

See WCWC, page 7



Photo, top: Excavator moving boulders—some weighed over a ton.

Photo, bottom: Completed step pools.

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