



“Drought”

with Tami Quinn Hollenbeck

drought | drou (noun)
a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall; especially one that adversely affects growing or living conditions

Sound familiar?

There are a lot of concerns in our area about how the lack of rainfall is going to affect our groundwater.

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Project Youth Plus and Grow Youth programs nurture outdoor education

BY NATHAN GEHRES

Over the past year plus, the educational experiences of local students have been greatly disrupted. The outreach and education program of the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) was not immune to that disruption. With COVID-19 protocols in place and improved conditions locally, APWC restarted and revamped our outdoor education efforts through partnering with Project Youth Plus and Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS) and designing a pilot service-learning project at Cantrall Buckley called Grow Youth.

In March, APWC partnered with Project Youth Plus and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for an event at the Provolt Recreation Site.

Project Youth Plus provides education and support for students 16 to 24 years old wanting a career in the outdoors. APWC and the BLM set up stations to demonstrate riparian restoration and anadromous (salmon and lamprey) fish passage habitat restoration. The Provolt Recreation Site was perfect for in-the-field demonstrations of habitat restoration projects. BLM staff members from the Grants Pass Field Office were indispensable partners for this event. They demonstrated electrofishing for lamprey ammocetes (larval lamprey), providing amazing visual aids to illustrate the life stages of fish. They gave context and history of the BLM property and answered technical questions related to project infrastructure. The Grants Pass Field Office of the BLM is committed to outdoor education, and the Provolt Recreation Site is going to be an amazing location for outdoor education events.

The APWC worked with ROCS this April to provide two days of outdoor education for sixth-grade students from ROCS and Kennedy Elementary. These days came with COVID challenges, but we were able to successfully provide more than 60 students with lessons in salmon biology, riparian/habitat restoration, watershed science, water quality, macroinvertebrates, sound mapping/haiku, and outdoor yoga. These classes and a teacher training day for ROCS staff and volunteers are helping us set up and lay the groundwork for our Grow Youth project.

Grow Youth is a pilot project that builds upon existing local partnerships with Jackson County Parks Department, ROCS, and A Greater Applegate and will provide lesson plans and service-learning opportunities at Cantrall Buckley Park. The goals of Grow Youth are highly aligned with many community needs, mainly for outdoor education opportunities and high-quality riparian habitat on the Applegate River that is open to the public.

Through hands-on science activities students will learn about watershed



The Grow Youth project uses a “stream table” model as part of its watershed education program. Photo: Nathan Gehres.



Ruch Outdoor Community School students net macroinvertebrates in the Applegate River in April. Photo: Nathan Gehres.

health and the principles of natural resource stewardship, keystone species and life cycles, water quality, riparian zone function, and collecting and analyzing data. Providing students with this type of discovery-based service learning is invaluable, especially during critical developmental years, and opportunities for field instruction are exceedingly rare as school budgets are squeezed. K-8 students will receive integrated watershed education, funded through a grant from Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District.

The second component of Grow Youth is riparian restoration and the installation of interpretive signage at Cantrall Buckley Park. Currently, a large portion of the riverbank is inundated by invasive species, such as Himalayan blackberries and poison hemlock. APWC has recently secured funding from the Carpenter Foundation and the Schwemm Family Foundation to fully implement the Grow Youth initial restoration phase of this project, carried out by our Restoration Crew. After the initial removal, our service-learning opportunities begin with local elementary students who will have the opportunity

to apply their lessons and get their hands dirty planting native species and setting up plant growth monitoring plots. ROCS has established a tree nursery as part of its outdoor education program, and some of the trees that the students cultivate will be used in the project.

The APWC and ROCS Grow Youth project leverages resources to build on programs that have proven successful and to enhance future planned projects. In addition, the Grow Youth project has set goals for expansion throughout the Applegate Valley, forging partnerships with additional schools.

Thank you to the teachers and students who participated in the watershed education program and to the volunteers from the community and agency staff who helped make these events possible.

If members of the community would like to assist or donate to the Grow Youth project and associated interpretive signs at Cantrall Buckley Park, please contact the APWC at contact@apwc.info.

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