

# Sucker Creek causes soil erosion at Bridgeview

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The Illinois Valley Watershed Council has recently enacted measures to combat extreme soil erosion caused by Sucker Creek at Bridgeview Vineyards. The creek has, in the past, been quite a distance away from Bridgeview's crops but has been encroaching further every year. This past winter's high water events have quickly and unfortunately caused significant damage to property.

Before receiving a permit from the government to go ahead with the work, the stream swept away a gravel road, exposed underground infrastructure and destroyed a large swath of grape vines. Unfortunately, and in addition to vines that were washed away by the stream's erosion, four additional rows of costly vines, valued at \$45,000 an acre, had to be removed so that another road, vital to the emergency work and farming infrastructure of Bridgeview, could be constructed.

The immediate fix, permitted under the Emergency Authority Program, was to place large amounts of basalt-type rocks around the problem areas but these rocks will have to be removed during the summer because they are nonconductive to the health of protected coho salmon habitat. The Emergency Authority Program can only be invoked when there is an imminent threat to lives or property.

While the rocks sufficiently stopped property destroying erosion, a more permanent and fish friendly solution is to enhance existing side channels and construct large wood

complexes. Both of these tactics are designed to absorb the stream's destructive energy during high flow events, thereby slowing the water and limiting erosion, while enhancing important fish habitat for threatened coho salmon using the stream.

Generally, stream modification is only allowed from mid-June to mid-Sept. by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. This restriction is in place so as to safely perform necessary work during the least sensitive time-frame for salmon lifecycles.

There was a point of contention among the stakeholders of Bridgeview because receiving the emergency permit took much longer than expected. The unforeseen delay added an additional problem because the vineyard's frost protection system had been rendered non-functional and it needed to be repaired in a timely fashion so as to ensure the upcoming crop's success. "It had some delays that were a little inexplicable. It took about six weeks," Kevin O'Brien said, highlighting Bridgeview's anxiety. O'Brien went on to explain that a similar case invoking the Emergency Authority Program several years ago only took a few days to receive a permit.

Ideally, when the more permanent bank stabilization work is done this summer, the salmon will be able to use the off-channel areas with slower moving water as shelter when the creek is running too rapidly and the large wood complexes will provide young fish with shelter against predators and access to cooler water which is very important for salmon during the hot summer months.

## Oregon's water supply outlook remains positive

PORTLAND, Ore. — (April 6, 2017) — All basins in Oregon are experiencing near normal to well above normal snowpack conditions, with a statewide average of 126 percent as of April 1, according to the latest water supply outlook report released today by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Oregon.

Warm temperatures and rain-on-snow during mid-March

caused widespread snowmelt throughout the state. The most notable amounts of snowmelt occurred in eastern Oregon, where some sites lost more than twice the normal amount during the month. However, the previous three months of cold winter storms built sizeable snowpacks across the state, which remain near normal to above normal despite recent melt losses.

The last time the state had a well above normal snowpack on April 1 was in 2012, when the snowpack was 120 percent of normal. Last year, Oregon's snowpack was 101 percent of normal on April 1. Current conditions are favorable for abundant spring and summer surface water supply.

"This winter has seen consistent snow accumulation, while the beginning of the snowmelt season has resulted in variable snowpack in each basin," said Scott Oviatt, NRCS snow survey supervisory hydrologist. "Snow at many lower elevation sites has melted, or is actively melting, while higher elevations sites have yet to fully enter their seasonal melt phase. The return of colder temperatures late in March helped preserve the snowpack following the mid-month warm and wet periods."

Before recent snowmelt, most Oregon snow telemetry (SNOTEL) sites had surpassed their normal annual peak snow amounts and were recording a well above normal snowpack. The surplus of snow from the cooler winter months resulted in an above normal statewide snowpack as of April 1, despite the accelerated snowmelt in mid-March.

Precipitation for the month was well above average and brought twice the normal amount at some locations. Eleven SNOTEL sites broke records for

the highest or second highest March precipitation. The lowest amounts of monthly precipitation fell in southeastern Oregon at 136 percent of average in the Owyhee and Malheur basins, and in the Lake County region. The wettest region in March was in the Hood, Sandy, and Lower Deschutes, which recorded 186 percent of average precipitation.

"The snowpack that remains in the mountains is significant, so our summer streamflow forecasts continue to show promise for the spring and summer," Oviatt said. "As of April 1, the streamflow volume forecasts are calling for above average to well above average summer streamflows during the water supply season throughout the state."

As of the end of March, many reservoirs across the state are near or above normal levels for this time of year. For the first time since 2012, the largest reservoir in the state, Lake Owyhee, is storing above average amounts of water (136 percent of average).

The latest information on Oregon's streamflow forecasts can be found in the April Water Supply Outlook Report available on the NRCS Oregon website.

The NRCS Snow Survey is the federal program that measures snow and provides streamflow forecasts and snowpack data for communities, water managers and recreationalists across the West. In Oregon, snow measurements are collected from 81 SNOTEL sites, 42 manually measured snow courses, and 26 aerial markers. Water and snowpack information for all SNOTEL sites nationwide is available on the Snow Survey website in a variety of formats. The reports are updated every hour and are available at: [www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/snow](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/snow).

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