

LOSTINE



Courtesy photo by Leon Werdinger

The confluence of the Lostine and Wallowa rivers in Oregon's Wallowa Valley.

Wallowa County ranch to adopt new water conservation practices

By GEORGE PLAVERN
East Oregonian

A Wallowa County ranch figures to save 1 billion gallons of water annually through a series of conservation projects, such as adding sprinklers and forgoing irrigation during peak summer months.

The Freshwater Trust, an environmental nonprofit with offices in Portland, announced it is working with Wolfe Ranch to upgrade irrigation infrastructure, transfer points of diversion and lease water rights on the farm to benefit endangered salmon in the Lostine River.

Funding comes from a \$1.4 million grant awarded by the Oregon Water Resources Department. Irrigation upgrades are also expected to boost crop yields by 5 to 20 percent on the ranch.

"We've formed lasting relationships with dozens of farmers and ranchers who understand conservation isn't just about protecting fish," said Aaron Maxwell, flow restoration project manager for The Freshwater Trust, who works out of Enterprise. "It's about the longevity of their farms, economies and entire communities."

Nearly 1,100 acres of forage and grain crops will be converted to pivot sprinklers as opposed to flood irrigation at the ranch — which Maxwell compared to the difference between letting your hose run into the yard, or watering just the section that needs it most.

"In the face of present and future water scarcity, modernizations like this will only become more imperative," he said.

Ditching flood irrigation may also have a positive effect on water quality, Maxwell said, reducing the amount of standing water in fields that can become contaminated with sedi-

ment, bacteria and toxins before draining back into streams.

Water saved through the irrigation upgrades will be transferred back into the Lostine River, which harbors summer chinook and steelhead populations. Wolfe Ranch will also voluntarily abstain from irrigating in August and September, when the river reaches critically low water levels.

The changes may allow Wolfe Ranch, a sixth-generation family operation, to begin growing more high-value food crops, which could have a ripple effect down the entire Wallowa County agricultural industry. Local businesses are already slated to provide approximately \$2 million in construction materials and labor.

"Production and economics must always be taken into consideration with projects like these," Maxwell said. "This will have positive implications for the landowner and the local economy."

The Freshwater Trust has been working with farms and ranches on the Lostine River for more than a decade, Maxwell said, after chinook runs were nearly wiped out in the 1990s. The organization was also awarded \$114,265 from the Water Resources Department last year to study whether irrigation efficiencies could help protect salmon on upper Catherine Creek in Union County.

Woody Wolfe, owner of Wolfe Ranch, said water scarcity and quality issues aren't going to simply go away.

"Projects like this help further the responsible use of our natural resources while benefiting the environment," Wolfe said.

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Teaching kids snow sports takes patience

By MARK MORICAL
The (Bend) Bulletin

MOUNT BACHELOR (AP) — Mason needed a nudge, so I did what parents often do and resorted to bribery.

"Mason, if you come ski Cloudchaser with me, I'll buy you a root beer float at Cascade Lakes after," I told him.

"Fine," was the stubborn response from my 8-year-old son.

So we skied over to the new Cloudchaser chairlift on our outing to Mt. Bachelor ski area last month. Mason was all smiles as we explored the new terrain, and he declared the area his new favorite part of the mountain.

This, after refusing all morning to try something new.

Confidence is a significant part of what helps kids progress with activities like skiing and snowboarding. But I wondered as a parent how I could keep my son improving his skills on the hill after his five lessons last season.

When he was really young, maybe 4, I took him to the Carousel chairlift, a small lift for beginners near the Sunrise Lodge at Bachelor. But he refused to let go of me as I held him between my legs while turning down the hill, and thus it seemed he did not learn much.

I knew he needed to learn from somebody else.

So last year, when Mason was 7, my wife and I registered him for Bachelor's "Ski or Ride in 5" program for beginner skiers and snowboarders.

His progression amazed me. By the spring, he was skiing off the Summit chairlift with me.

"We hear a lot that, 'My kids won't listen to me but they'll listen to somebody else,'" says Jason Montoya, director of activities at Mt. Bachelor. "That gives them the chance to learn from somebody that has the knowledge and skills to allow them to learn that foundation from the bottom up."

Instructors also try to promote independence, so parents hanging on to their kids as they slide down the mountain might not really be in the child's best interest, Montoya says. Instructors want to ensure that skiers and boarders have the skills necessary to ride new terrain independently.

"Just having them build that foundation and working toward that next step," the director says.

"It's a balance, but we won't take them to the next chair (in skill level) until they're able to do it independently."

Montoya explains that instructors evaluate youngsters' skiing by how they are



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin via AP

In this Jan. 15 photo Marisa Paine skis with her daughter Carys Paine, 5, near the base of Sunshine Accelerator ski lift at Mount Bachelor in Bend.



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin via AP

In this Jan. 15 photo Stephen Dimitrov takes a moment to give his son Harrison Dimitrov, 4, some positive reinforcement after falling while learning to ski at Mount Bachelor in Ben.

skiing and not by the terrain they have skied or the chairlifts they have ridden.

So me bragging about my son's skiing in the areas of Cloudchaser and Summit does not mean much if he is not skiing technically sound. And this season it has been a challenge to get him out of his wedge — "make a pizza" is what we call it — and straighten out his skis as he turns down the slopes.

Montoya notes that this a common problem with young skiers after their first season of lessons.

"That's one of the bigger challenges that we encounter, because that's where they're comfortable and what they know," he says. "Work on it on terrain they're comfortable with. There's a

variety of different drills we use."

Traversing along the runs — moving straight across the runs back and forth — on easier terrain can help, according to Montoya. Also, a practice called "thumper" — thumping the uphill ski while skiing across the run — will force skiers to balance on their downhill ski and thus straighten out their skis.

I plan to employ these drills next time on the mountain with Mason, with a minimal amount of bribery.

Montoya says that skiing and snowboarding students, like most any students, will learn in different ways. Some just need to be told what to do. Others need to see how to do it.

"We try to tell them, show them, and have them practice it," Montoya says. "Having them watch you might be more effective than telling them."

He adds that it is probably time for more lessons when they want to feel more comfortable on more advanced terrain or learn a new skill — for example, learning how to ski powder off of a groomed run.

"But getting out there and just skiing is just as important as instruction," Montoya insists.

Another question I posed to Montoya is how to know when your child is ready to ride the mountain with friends without parental supervision.

This is obviously a personal choice for every parent, and I start to sweat when I think about it.

Along with possessing the skiing or snowboarding skills necessary to venture off without an adult come other issues, including lift riding and safety awareness. Will your child know what to do if someone gets injured or they get separated from their friends?

"Educate them and know they're independent in navigating the mountain," Montoya suggests. "Tell them to ski on the runs, stay with friends, and make sure they stop regularly to ensure their friend is still with them. But even at 13 years old, it really bugs me when my son doesn't answer his phone."

I don't have to worry about that just yet.

This season my 6-year-old daughter is in the Ski or Ride in 5 program. Before I know it, she and her brother will be off skiing without me.

I might as well enjoy this time while it lasts. But I also want to make sure I am teaching them the right skills and giving them the best advice for a lifetime of skiing.

Reporting deadlines approach for 2016 hunt results

East Oregonian

947-6339.

Hunters who purchased a 2016 big game or turkey tag need to report their hunt results to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife by deadline, which is Jan. 31 for most tags.

There is a \$25 fine for hunters who fail to report 2016 deer or elk tags on time, which will be assessed when they purchase their 2018 hunting license.

Reporting deadlines are Jan. 31 for all 2016 hunts that ended by Dec. 31, 2016. The deadline is April 15 for all 2016 hunts that end between Jan. 1 through March 31, 2017.

As of Jan. 10, ODFW reports 53 percent of elk tags and 51 percent of deer tags have been reported for hunts with the Jan. 31 deadline. The department will be sending reminder postcards to hunters who haven't reported results yet later this month.

Hunters can report their results online at either www.odfw.com or reportmyhunt.com, or by calling 1-866-

They will need to have their hunter identification number; two-digit wildlife management unit number; total number of days hunted; number of days in the unit hunted most; and number of days in the unit where they harvested an animal, if successful.

"The information hunters provide is needed to evaluate the hunting season and tag numbers," said Tom Thornton, ODFW game program manager. "We really appreciate hunters taking a few minutes of their time to complete the report."

As a bonus incentive, hunters that do report on time are entered into a drawing to win a special big game tag. ODFW selects three names each year, and winners can choose between a deer, elk or pronghorn tag.

Penalty fees are used to increase Oregon State Police patrol and enforcement of winter range closures in Oregon, which helps deer, elk and other wildlife survive the winter by limiting disturbances from people.



Photo courtesy Mike Morehead

Bull watch

Mike Morehead of Pilot Rock took these photos Jan. 15 of elk near his home on McKay Creek.

BRIEFLY

Sprague River closes Jan. 23

KLAMATH FALLS, — The Sprague River near Klamath Falls will close to all fishing beginning Jan. 23 through April 21.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced the emergency regulation Thursday in order to protect spawning redband trout from the stress

and mortality associated with fishing pressure and handling.

Deadline to apply for spring bear hunt is Feb. 10

Hunters looking forward to spring bear season have until Feb. 10 to apply.

Applications can be found online at www.outdoorcentral.us/or/

license. Draw results will be announced by Feb. 20.

Otherwise, hunters can purchase a first-come, first-serve spring bear tag for southwest Oregon. As of Thursday, about 1,300 of those tags were still available.

More information about conditions for the season will be available closer to the opener in April.

SKI REPORT

Spout Springs
Tollgate, Ore.
CLOSED FOR SEASON

Anthony Lakes
North Powder, Ore.
New snow: 5" since Monday
Base depth: 56"
Conditions: Eastern Oregon Backcountry Festival, free music Saturday.

Ski Bluewood
Dayton, Wash.
New snow: 3"
Base depth: 58"
Conditions: Some fresh snow, machine groomed but soft off piste

Ski Fergi
Joseph, Ore.
New snow: Unknown
Base depth: 35"
Conditions: Open this weekend, cold and good coverage.

Mt. Hood Meadows Government Camp, Ore.
New snow: 2"
Base depth: 81"
Conditions: Groom is packed powder. Off piste it's a layer of fresh over hardpack.

Email your trophy photo to ttrainor@eastoregonian.com