

Conservation Photo Winner



Jean Bennett, Heppner, received first place in a conservation photo contest sponsored by the Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District during this year's Morrow County Fair.

Bennett received a \$50 first place award for her entry depicting the conservation method of terracing.

Janet Greenup, MSWCD secretary, presents the award to Bennett.

DEAR program provides alfalfa seed to landowners

By Bob Krein, Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist

During 1986, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife signed cooperative agreements with landowners in Morrow, Gilliam and Wheeler Counties to assist with the cost of seeding cropland that had been accepted into the Conservation Reserve Program. To date, agreements have been signed for cooperation on approximately 28,000 acres of land in the three county area.

ODFW involvement with the CRP was made possible by funding that originated from the Deer Enhancement and Rehabilitation (DEAR) program. The DEAR program was initiated to enhance and rehabilitate deer winter range throughout Eastern Oregon. With some additional funding from another program, the total budget for the Northeast Region of the ODFW was \$60,000 (the NE region consists of

Umatilla, Wallowa, Union, Baker, Grant, Morrow, Gilliam and Wheeler counties).

As the number of acres of cropland that were accepted into the CRP program began to increase, it soon became apparent that the available funding from the DEAR program would not be sufficient to allow the ODFW to assist everyone. It was decided that priority areas needed to be identified to assure that the available funds would be used in the areas that would provide the most benefits for wildlife. The priority areas were identified using the following guidelines: 1) The area must be within the biological winter range of the animals, 2) There was a history of persistent game damage in the area, 3) High use of the area by deer and/or elk, 4) There is a potential to improve the habitat and 5) Damage problems would not be increased on adjacent areas. Using these criteria, a map was prepared, indicating those areas that would

receive the major portion of the funding.

However, the problem still remained, there were too many acres of land for the available funds. To assure that the most people would get some assistance, it was decided that the best approach was to offer 1 pound of alfalfa seed per acre to those landowners that had accepted acres in the identified priority areas. The available funds were offered on a first come-first served basis.

It was the opinion that the funding of the alfalfa seeding costs would be mutually beneficial to the landowner and the ODFW. The landowner would have a plant in his seeding mixture that would help add nitrogen to the soil, benefitting the other seeded grass species and the ODFW would have a source of alfalfa that would be utilized by deer and would help minimize the annual damage problems that occur in the alfalfa fields.

Fish habitat improvement underway

by Earl Fishburn and Robin Metz, U.S. Forest Service

The Heppner Ranger District in cooperation with the Bonneville Power Administration and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has embarked on an extensive program of fish habitat improvement for the anadromous fish streams occurring on National Forest land. In 1985 inventories of existing habitat were conducted on approximately 78 miles of streams on National Forest land. These streams drain into the North Fork of the John Day River and are considered important spawning and rearing habitat for Steelhead trout.

Based on information from these inventories two streams (Wilson Creek and Little Wall Creek) were selected for the initial habitat improvement work. The Bonneville Power Administration has agreed to provide funding for improvement work as part of their commitment to mitigate downstream fish losses resulting from the construction of dams on the Columbia River. In addition,

partial funding was provided from Forest Service appropriated money and through the timber sales Knudson-Vandenberg (KV) program where partial receipts from the sale of National Forest timber are used for reforestation and other resource improvement work within timber sale areas.

Work in 1986 consisted of improving approximately 1-1/2 miles of Wilson Creek habitat through the construction of 39 rock weirs and nine long weirs along with the improvement of 14 natural weirs and pools. The weirs are designed to funnel the stream flow and keep the pool scoured out and maintain their depth through the late summer period when a large portion of the streams would normally dry up and water temperature in the few shallow pools that remained would rise above tolerable levels for steelhead and native trout. In addition, tree rootwads and large boulders were anchored into some of the pools to provide hiding cover and shade for

juvenile fish smolts. Fifteen side channels were blocked and 17 rock or log deflectors were installed to direct the stream flow into rock outcrops or natural pools.

Vegetation in the form of poplars, willows, black cottonwood, aspen and alder were planted throughout the project area to provide long term shade to help maintain cooler stream temperatures and all disturbed soil areas were seeded with grass.

About 1/4 mile of Little Wall Creek experienced similar work with the construction of 25 log and 1 rock weir along with some channel cleaning and rock rip-rap to concentrate the stream flow and prevent bank cutting in some areas.

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