

Fertilization improves game habitat

A commitment to improve big game habitat on the Monument Winter Range by the Heppner Ranger District brought together private and federal individuals to develop a fertilization project. The objective was to increase both forage quality and quantity and to reverse a declining trend of big game winter use on the National Forest, while at the same time, evaluating alternatives to the traditional burning methods for enhancing forage.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation along with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Forest

Service joined forces to develop a multiyear habitat improvement program of which fertilization could become a key part. The first project implemented under this program occurred in October of 1989.

Approximately 600 acres on Elder Flat were aerially treated with nitrogen amonia and a sulfur additive. Vegetative response was dramatic and almost immediate following the first rains of the fall. ODF&W winter elk surveys demonstrated an increase in elk use from the historical average of 60 head to 400 this year.

This fall an additional project is scheduled for the Red Hill area.

Permanent wire cages were placed to prevent deer, elk and cattle from grazing small plots in order to provide information, and monitoring of vegetative response to the fertilization. Monitoring and evaluation is anticipated to last about 5 years.

New programs for ODF&W

The Heppner District of ODF&W has some of the most active cooperative habitat programs in Eastern Oregon. These programs have provided funds for us to work with private landowners and other agencies to develop wildlife habitat in those areas considered mutually beneficial. The result has been a number of forage enhancement, weed control, tree planting, and water development projects that have improved wildlife habitat for many species. At the same time these projects have increased livestock forage, reduced degradation on crops, and helped increase the value of these private lands.

A new program that was initiated this year is the upland bird stamp program. Funds derived from the new upland bird stamp (required to hunt upland game birds) will be used for improving upland game bird habitat, hunter access, and propigation. We already have several successful

hunter access programs in the area (Regulated Hunt Areas) and efforts will be made to improve upland bird habitat in conjunction with those areas. In the next year, we should see more cooperative habitat projects designed to improve upland bird habitat in Morrow County.

Another change in the Heppner District during this year is personnel. With the retirement of Glen Ward in June, Bob Krien has assumed the District Biologist position and Russ Morgan the Assistant District Biologist position. In addition, Mark Kirsch has taken the position at the north end of the county to administer the Boeing Boardman Regulated Hunt Areas.

In general, the future funding of cooperative habitat programs looks good. This is highly beneficial as the majority of the land base in the Heppner District is private. With continued landowner cooperation, effective management and a little help from mother nature, the future of our valuable wildlife resource looks bright.



Deer enjoy improved habitat.

District Manager gives report

The past year has been a busy one for the SWCD staff. The addition of an Information and Education Coordinator has increased the public awareness of the district. A Natural Resources Administrative grant in the amount of \$5500 and local matching funds were used to hire Cindi Doherty for the part time position.

Cindi compiled a Resource Guide, developed a Self Guided Tour and Teacher's Workshop and learned to film district projects and events using the video camera loaned to the district by SCS State Office.

Morrow SWCD received funds to hire 2 Oregon Youth Conservation Corp work crews consisting of 5 youths and a supervisor to construct a recreational trail at Willow Creek Dam with the cooperation of Army Corp of Engineers and Willow Creek Park District. In addition, trails were developed at City Park and Hager Park with City of Heppner participation.

The district continued the Range Utilization monitoring at the Navy Bombing Range in conjunction with the Department of Navy and Jim West.

The district worked with the Port of Morrow and SCS to develop a streambank erosion protection project and received RC&D funding to implement the project. Work has started by the Port and SCS personnel from Area 3 office in Baker City.

A Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board grant in the amount of \$27,700 was received to implement the LeFevre Prairie Rock Creek enhancement project in cooperation with Kinzua Corp., Campbell Livestock Co. and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. This project is part of the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan being developed by Andy Rose, Rock Creek Planner and Morrow, Gilliam and Wheeler SWCD'S.

The district participated with SCS in implementing the Conservation Reserve Program again this past year and has certified over 75 percent of the seeded acres. The 340 contracts total 111,111.8 acres. Approximately 300 acres remained to be seeded.

The Weed Control District has a new supervisor. Dave Pranger joined the district in January 1990.

District staff has been busy and looks forward to the coming year with enthusiasm and also some concern considering Measure 5.



RC&D funding was received to help stabilize streambank erosion at the Port of Morrow.

Bennett joins SCS

Tom Bennett joined the Soil Conservation Service staff in Heppner as the Soil Conservationist in January. Tom was raised in western New York and graduated from Cornell University College of Agriculture with a B.S. degree in agricultural technology in 1977. Before coming to Heppner Tom worked in Sherman County for eight years and Hood River County for one year as a technician.

District Conservationist hired

Loren Unruh has been hired as the new district conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service office in Heppner. He replaces Sharon Schneider, who resigned in August.

Unruh, 30, comes to Heppner from Republic, Washington, where he was also district conservationist. As district conservationist Unruh will assist the Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District in planning and implementing the 1985 and 1990 farm bills.

Unruh attended Washington State University at Pullman and graduated with a degree in range management in February



Loren Unruh

1984. While attending school he worked with the Soil Conservation Service as a cooperative education student and as a volunteer. Following graduation Unruh was employed at Ritzville, Washington, and then at Davenport, Wash., before moving to Republic.

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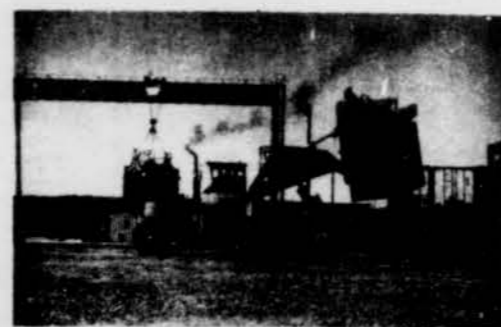
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