



OWEB Board to Meet in Hood River

Funding Decisions Made on Watershed Restoration Grants

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Note to editors/reporters: Inquiries on specific projects in your region are welcome.

Hood River, Oregon, March 15 — On March 16 and 17, 2010, The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) will consider proposals to award more than \$12.5 million for projects and programs that will benefit clean water and healthy wildlife habitats across the state. The meetings will be held in Hood River at the Hood River Inn, 1108 E. Marina Way. Both meetings begin at 8:00 am. For more information and the agenda, visit the OWEB Web site at www.oregon.gov/OWEB/, or call 503-986-0178.

The meeting's agenda includes discussion and presentations on dam removal monitoring, ecosystem services and steelhead conservation. Of local interest, the Hood River Watershed Group will be making a short presentation to the board on March 16, which will be followed by a tour of the new Middle Fork Irrigation District Coe Branch Diversion. The public is invited to join the board and staff at an informal reception to honor the local officials and watershed organizations who are OWEB's partners in supporting restoration activities through community action. The reception starts at 5:30 pm and will also be held at the Hood River Inn.

The board will decide to fund projects that will protect clean water and improve wildlife habitat across the state. Examples include:

North Coast - Opening up two miles of prime fish habitat

The Nestucca-Neskowin Watershed Council will improve fish passage to over two miles of pristine salmon and steelhead habitat in Fall Creek, a Neskowin Creek tributary that flows off the north slope of Cascade Head in Tillamook County. In 1958, when the new Highway 101 was built over Cascade Head, Fall Creek was put into a concrete culvert and buried under 75 feet of fill in order to pass under the highway. Downstream of the culvert, the creek was rerouted from its original meander into a straight line channel to Neskowin Creek. All those changes resulted in a variety of challenges for fish passage, challenges which were exacerbated over the decades until now, when fish passage is limited to only the most athletic individuals and only during extremely rare stream flow conditions. The planned restoration project will create a new streambed designed to facilitate fish passage by slowing water velocity during high stream flows, providing fish places of rest and refuge behind boulders, and reducing the height of any cascades to levels low enough for juvenile salmon to successfully navigate.

South Coast - Restoring one mile of stream habitat

The Illinois Valley Watershed Council and Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District propose to enhance nearly one mile of Sucker Creek, a tributary to the Illinois River. This project will restore a natural meander pattern to a mile section of stream that has been straightened and altered from historic conditions. This project will connect to and extend an instream restoration project located downstream which was completed in 2009, making the length of the restored stream over one and one half miles. The project will return the original

meander pattern to the creek, creating pools, flood-relief channels, large wood complexes, and reconnecting the stream to its floodplain. In addition, native trees and shrubs will be planted along the stream's bank and an unused road will be decommissioned. The efforts will help to improve critical coho, winter steelhead, and Pacific lamprey habitat as well as improve habitats for other native resident fish species and wildlife.

Willamette Valley - Returning a rare plant to its habitat

The Institute for Applied Ecology proposes a two-phase, four-year project that will reintroduce the rare Nelson's checkermallow back into where it used to grow in the Willamette Valley. The habitat this plant prefers, sunny areas along streams and wet meadows and prairies, has been greatly reduced in the past 150 years. This is one of the largest reintroductions of a rare plant in the United States.

Central Oregon - Teaching stream ecology to third- and fifth-graders

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs propose to involve students and parents of Warm Springs Elementary School in stream ecology lessons. Field trips to local streams will include studies of water quality and an opportunity to see spawning salmon. In the classroom, they will incubate salmon eggs and learn about the cultural history of the area and its resource issues.

Mid Columbia Basin - Fencing off riparian areas for clean water and healthy habitat

The Grant Soil and Water Conservation District, working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's John Day Fish Habitat Program, proposes to construct over 26 miles of riparian fence in both Grant and Wheeler counties. By fencing off sensitive riparian areas, native plants can re-establish, helping to stabilize the stream-banks, and providing shade and better habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Eastern Oregon - Stopping the invasion of leafy spurge and other weeds

The Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area proposes several activities which will lead to the control of invasive leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, yellow starthistle and meadow hawkweed. By removing these invasive plants and returning native grasses to the area, soil erosion will be reduced, leading to cleaner water in the Grand Ronde River. In addition, improved upland vegetation will improve habitat for a variety of wildlife.

About the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

OWEB is a state agency that provides grants to help Oregonians take care of local streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. Community members and landowners decide jointly what needs to be done to conserve and improve rivers and natural habitat in the places where they live. OWEB provides funds from the Oregon Lottery, federal dollars, and salmon license plate revenue. The agency is led by a 17-member citizen board drawn from the public at large, tribes, and federal and state natural resource agency boards and commissions.

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