

CHAPTER 14. RESTORATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It is sometimes assumed that watershed assessments are necessary because there are ecological problems that no one is doing anything about. This is certainly not the case in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin, where many management changes and restoration projects have already been implemented. Yes, there is more work left to do, but progress is already being made. This chapter summarizes some of the restoration and management work that has been done in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin in recent years. This work has, in most cases, been done collaboratively through partnerships involving private landowners, government agencies, advocacy organizations, community groups and everyday citizens. It is especially important to acknowledge the significant amount of work done by private landowners, which is oftentimes difficult to document or quantify.

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

After conducting personal interviews with landowners of the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin for this Assessment, there is no doubt that support for restoration efforts has increased among landowners over the last 15 years. With the help of local restoration and watershed education groups such as the Klamath Watershed Partnership, Water for Life Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust, and Oregon State University Klamath Basin Research and Extension Center, landowners are able to find answers, advice, and direction quickly on how they can proceed with habitat restoration projects on their properties.

Measuring the exact number of projects is difficult because the sources of funding and monitoring are so diverse. There is, therefore, a data gap for which further research is needed to summarize projects by private landowners that are funded both independently and with financial assistance from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations.

It is known that many landowners are doing projects without any local, state or federal assistance. Cliff Rabe has conducted rotational grazing and noxious weed control for the past 20 years with private funds (Cliff Rabe, pers. comm. 2008). Bruce Topham has managed cattle grazing to avoid sensitive riparian areas along Whiskey Creek and springs, and has conducted extensive noxious weed control (Bruce Topham, pers. comm. 2006). There are many other examples of private projects that were completed with private funding and labor.

For example, erosion control to repair head cuts has been conducted at Dam's Meadow by the Bartell family with private funds and some assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The erosion was controlled in a straightforward manner using wool bales to stabilize the stream channel and hold water later in the season to allow vegetation to reestablish (Edward Bartell, pers. comm. 2006).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) estimates that over 200 projects on private lands in the assessment area have been reported to NRCS, Oregon Watershed

Enhancement Board, USFWS Klamath Falls Office, USFS Resource Advisory Committee, or the Klamath Watershed Council between 2000 and 2006 in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin. This number does not include those projects that are not reported to one of the above agencies, or those that are reported but for which permission has not been granted by the landowner for inclusion in these statistics. Many landowners have multiple projects and multiple funding sources for these projects, making estimates even more difficult.

Projects include but are not limited to riparian fencing, upland juniper removal, reconnecting river to floodplain, remeandering, wetland restoration, wetland fencing, riparian stabilization, willow planting, in-stream fish passage improvements, improved road crossings, improved irrigation water management, sprinkler installation, fish screens, new head gates and noxious weed treatments.

KLAMATH WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Klamath Watershed Council (KWC) serves the entire Upper Klamath Basin from the Headwaters of the Klamath River to the California border. The Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation (KBEF) aims to protect, conserve and restore the natural resources of the Klamath Basin and to promote long-term sustainability of the region's economy. KBEF is made up of members representing the diversity of culture and lifestyle in the Upper Klamath Basin. In 2008 these two organizations merged to form the Klamath Watershed Partnership.

Sprague River Working Group

There are eight working groups within the Klamath Watershed Partnership that are primarily composed of landowners and community members. The Sprague River Working Group is the most active, with nearly 30 to 40 participants at each of its monthly meetings. These meetings are designed to encourage sharing among landowners concerning progress on agricultural lands and management strategies; inform landowners of opportunities from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations; and educate landowners on current issues such as endangered species and policy changes.

The Sprague River Working Group has helped members to better understand the process of obtaining restoration support on their properties, and as a result, the number of projects taking place in the basin has increased dramatically.

As part of the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson River Assessment Field Season in 2006 and 2007, Klamath Watershed Partnership worked with the landowners, the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) and the Working Landscapes Alliance (WLA) to perform a site-specific assessment of riparian and upland conditions. The recommendations from this assessment focused on enhancing streamside forage and vegetation conditions by managing livestock access to riparian areas.

USDA AND KSWCD RESTORATION PROJECTS

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies, NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) have performed environmental restoration work in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin in partnership with the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD). A variety of federal programs are available to assist farmers and ranchers with conservation efforts. Such programs may provide cost-share and/or land leasing funds to accomplish certain tasks. The major programs are described briefly below.

Active Restoration Programs and Projects

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with federal, state, and Tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement. The program is funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). CRP is administered by the FSA and the KSWCD, with NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, conservation planning and practice implementation.

Goals of the CRP are to reduce soil erosion, protect the ability of the United States to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat, and enhance forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multiyear contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices (NRCS 2006).

An offspring of the CRP, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Unique state and federal partnerships allow landowners to receive incentive payments for implementing specific conservation practices. Through the CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on eligible land (NRCS 2006). Within the subbasin, there are currently portions of eight properties enrolled as CREP riparian buffer projects. The acreage these encompass is approximately 432 acres (J. Outlaw, pers. comm. 2008)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered through the NRCS that was re-authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. The program supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals.

Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive financial and technical help, in the form of cost share, with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land. NRCS administers EQIP based on locally identified natural resource needs consistent with national EQIP priorities. Local Working Groups (LWGs) convened by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide advice to NRCS about local priorities within their area. With this advice, NRCS evaluates applications for funding EQIP contracts consistent with these local priorities as well as national priorities.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost-share to implement selected conservation practices. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP activities are typically carried out according to a conservation plan, developed in conjunction with the producer, that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address landowner- and agency-identified resource concerns. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions (NRCS 2006).

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

The Oregon WRP is focused on addressing the following issues on private and public lands: restoration of the functional role of wetlands in agricultural ecosystems; development of habitat for migratory birds; restoration and preservation of ancient crop areas for traditional, cultural practices and subsistence; and restoration and connectivity of aquatic and riparian habitat for endangered species.

In Oregon, projects have been funded from the coastal estuaries to the mountain meadows. Through WRP, significant investment has been made in the Klamath Basin. The goal of this investment is to restore wetland hydrology and help aid riparian and wetland function in this area (NRCS 2006). Within the subbasin, there were eight properties enrolled as WRP projects between 2000 and 2008. The acreage these encompass is approximately 7,700 acres (J. Outlaw, pers. comm. 2008).

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is working to restore the Williamson River Delta. In the 1950s, a 7,500-acre property that encompasses the Williamson River Delta was diked and drained for agricultural use, particularly to raise seed potatoes and alfalfa. As a result, the Williamson River in this reach was redirected and channelized. Since 1997, TNC has restored the course of the Williamson River and broken down the dike barriers. The breaching of the dikes has restored the delta area to hydrologic influences of Upper Klamath Lake. In time, wetland vegetation and hydrologic functions should restore the Williamson River Delta to its former function as a delta and lake fringe marsh.

Craig Bienz, TNC, believes that the primary issues in the Upper Klamath Basin appear to be with water quality and water quantity. TNC uses an approach that quantifies the extent of various threats and develops strategies to abate those threats, which it calls “Conservation by Design.” TNC continually monitors its management, which then allows for making changes to better meet the conservation objectives, a process known by some as adaptive management.

USFWS (KLAMATH FALLS OFFICE) PROJECTS

The USFWS Klamath Falls Office is involved in a variety of restoration projects in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin, including restoration of river function by reconnecting the river to the floodplain by breaching levees, remeandering, and in-stream work; fence construction for livestock management; streambank stabilization to reduce sedimentation and erosion; restoration of wetlands; habitat restoration for native species; irrigation tailwater return systems; off-stream livestock watering; and planting of vegetation for stream shading and erosion control. Funding for restoration has been available through programs such as Partners for Wildlife, the Hatfield Restoration Program, Jobs-in-the-Woods and the Bureau of Reclamation Restoration Program. Since 1994, over 200 projects involving nearly 14,000 individuals have been undertaken in the Williamson River and Sprague River watersheds by the USFWS Klamath Falls Office. Many of these projects are on private lands and include the help and support of the farmers and ranchers of the community. Active USFWS projects in the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin are presented in Table 14-1 (Sue Mattenberger, pers. comm. 2008).

**Table 14-1 Active habitat enhancement projects through USFWS
 (Data Source: S. Mattenberger, USFWS, pers. comm. 2008)**

Watershed Name	Project Description	Funding Year	# of Projects
Sprague River below Beatty	Channel Restoration	FY1996	1
	Channel Restoration	FY2001	1
	Channel Restoration	FY2003	3
	Channel Restoration	FY2004	2
	Channel Restoration	FY2005	2
	Channel Restoration	FY2006	1
	Channel Restoration	FY2007	2
	Channel Restoration	FY2008	1
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY1995	4
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2001	6
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2002	1
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2003	1
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2004	1
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2005	2
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2006	4
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2007	2
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2008	4
	Wetland Restoration	FY1996	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY1999	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY2001	2
	Wetland Restoration	FY2002	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY2003	4
	Wetland Restoration	FY2004	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY2005	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY2007	3
	Wetland Restoration	FY2008	2
	Fish Passage	FY2002	1
	Fish Passage	FY2003	1
	Fish Passage	FY2007	1
	Spring Enhancement	FY2001	2
Spring Enhancement	FY2004	1	
Dam Removal	FY2006	1	
Upland	FY1998	1	
Upland	FY2001	1	
Williamson River below Kirk	Channel Restoration	FY2001	1
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2000	2
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2001	1

Watershed Name	Project Description	Funding Year	# of Projects
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2001	4
	Riparian Restoration, Fencing	FY2002	2
	Wetland Restoration	FY2000	1
	Wetland Restoration	FY2008	1
Total			75

REFERENCES

Bartell, Edward. 2008. Personal communication.

Mattenberger, Sue. 2008. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Personal communication.

NCRS (Natural Resource Conservation Service). 2006. Website. <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/programs> (accessed June 2006).

Outlaw, J. 2008. Personal communication.

Rabe, Cliff. 2008. Personal communication.

Topham, Bruce. 2006. Personal communication.