

FY2012 Partnerships Report

OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST OVERVIEW

- 25 Agreements entered into with new partners
- 68 Existing Agreements continued or modified
- 186 Youth
- 293 Volunteers
- 25 AmeriCorps Enrollees
- 80 Community Justice Participants

PARTNERSHIP VALUE

- \$7,094,041 Cash and Inkind Contributions through Agreements
- \$86,440 In-Kind Value Volunteers
- \$550,000 In-Kind Value Youth & Public Land Corps Programs (Labor/ Administration)

PARTNERSHIP FOCUS: CRAZY CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION

The Paulina Ranger District of the Ochoco National Forest has partnered with Trout Unlimited (local chapter and Home Rivers Initiative) to help restore priority stream reaches within Deep Creek Watershed for native redband trout. One of the key coldwater tributaries in the lower watershed is Crazy Creek, which provides more than six miles of habitat; however a perched culvert blocked access to this important stream. Crazy Creek meets Deep Creek approximately three and a half



miles above the Wild and Scenic North Fork of the Crooked River. The Ochoco National Forest and partners focused on removing the culvert barrier as part of a larger effort to restore habitat for native redband trout in the upper Crooked River drainage. The Deep Creek Watershed has been a priority for the Ochoco National Forest since the early 1990s; it is also a Focus Watershed under the FS Watershed Condition Framework Strategy.

The impassable culvert located at the confluence of Deep and Crazy Creeks fragmented habitat and blocked fish movements between two important tributaries. Now, by leveraging limited internal funds with partner dollars from the Western Native Trout Initiative (USFWS), the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Orvis, the old culvert has been removed and replaced with a new bottomless-arch culvert that simulates the natural streambed. Redband trout and other aquatic organisms can now move up and downstream as the flashy flow of this stream allows reconnecting the pathway for important genetic interchange between populations.



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The culvert replacement was an important step in a larger effort to restore Crazy Creek and sustain the health of the area through monitoring, education, and action. The Deep Creek watershed is a moderately degraded system with redband trout populations surviving in cool, disconnected refuges.



Multiple problems need multiple solutions. Our solutions in Crazy Creek include the new fish friendly culvert, rehabilitation of old stream crossings, construction of a 500 acre riparian fence, in-channel habitat restoration including large woody debris placement, spring development, aspen stand enhancement and protection and the planting of hundreds of native plants. By improving channel conditions upstream of the culvert, the hope is to increase the density and quality of pool habitat and allow the stream to access its floodplain (improving water storage) for a greater distance; this will in turn allow the riparian vegetation (existing and planted) to expand further from the stream creating even more forage and habitat for a myriad of wildlife and riparian dependent species like the sensitive Columbia spotted frog.

The Forest Service has tackled this effort collaboratively with the help of TU and the local grazing permittee. Instead of ignoring the historic uses in this landscape and fencing out the rancher and his cattle, the FS and partners are working with the rancher to improve practices and habitat together. First, restored sites will be rested, while working on a new grazing plan for the stream's pastures. When the cattle return, we will have in place improved grazing standards and practices, using 'flash' grazing, increased monitoring, and working together to make sure our habitat goals are met. By reducing the impact of grazing on stream side vegetation and channel conditions, riparian areas will recover which will increase runoff filtration, lower water temperatures, generally improving water quantity and quality to enhance fish habitat. The district will also begin implementation of a large scale thinning project in the watershed that will improve forest health, close/decomm roads, enhance riparian vegetation and improve landscape resiliency in the in light of future disturbances (wildfire and potential climate change).

Actions like these are critical because the Deep Creek watershed supports what may be the most genetically pure redband trout population in the entire Crooked River Basin, and Crazy Creek provides some of the best coldwater refuge in the lower watershed for those fish when summer stream temperatures get too warm in neighboring creeks. The lower portion of Crazy Creek lies in a steep, walled canyon with dense riparian vegetation, stable stream banks, high habitat complexity (including large woody debris and pools) and provides cool water to Deep Creek. The perched culvert prevented access to a significant portion of habitat, thus reducing access to critical spawning and rearing habitat, as well as genetic exchange of the two populations.

In addition, this project is integral to a larger watershed restoration plan in the Deep Creek Watershed that includes stream channel and wet meadow/wetland restoration, revegetation of streamside habitats, more fish barrier removal/culvert replacements, and road decommissioning. Numerous projects have occurred throughout the watershed since the mid-2000's and earlier. These and additional actions are currently being planned with partners for a new round of projects in priority areas in the lower watershed for FY13 and 14. With a bit of collaborative investment, engineering and habitat restoration, redband trout will be more interconnected and thus more resilient to future threats and disturbances.



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While the on-the-ground restoration activities are critical for the long-term health of the Deep Creek watershed, it is equally important for citizens to understand and be aware of the value of these types of programs, and the importance of a healthy environment around them. This project provided opportunities to educate the public and engage volunteers and students in hands-on learning. TU hosted volunteer days and educational tours in the spring, summer, and fall to track conditions on the ground and help with restoration work that was needed. Activities such as planting trees, monitoring water temperature, studying fish populations (with the support of ODFW) and assessing habitat conditions, served to enhance their science skills, in addition to understanding the importance of a healthy environment in the communities where they live. With the help from our partners, funders, and volunteers, our efforts will sustain the health of Crazy Creek and the Deep Creek watershed for fish, wildlife and future generations.

PARTNERSHIP FOCUS: OCHOCO FOREST RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE

In early 2012 community leaders from local government, the forest products industry, environmental groups, and the Forest Service came together to launch the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC). The new Collaborative was convened by Prineville Mayor Betty Roppe and Crook County Commissioner Ken Fahlgren and builds on a number of past successful partnership efforts on the Ochoco National Forest. “I would like to see sustainable forest management to control catastrophic fires and create economic stability for our schools and road systems. With these partnerships I feel these goals can be achieved” said County Commissioner Ken Fahlgren.



**Sharing Lunch with Partners
Wolf Collaborative Project Area Field trip**

The primary purpose of the new Collaborative is to resolve past conflicts, forge new agreements, and develop a shared vision for forest restoration on the Ochoco to effectively restore the resiliency and health of forests, and to recognize the National Forest’s contributions to community stability and sustainable businesses.

For its first project, members of the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative assisted the Forest Service in completing a Watershed Analysis for the 25,000 acre Wolf Watershed Planning Area located in the eastern portion of the Ochoco National Forest on the Paulina Ranger District. The group was represented by nearly 30 members who met on a regular basis throughout the year. The stakeholders worked together to provide collaborative input about desired conditions in the planning area and potential management actions that could help to achieve those desired conditions. The stakeholders subsequently produced a document “Collaborative Input to the Wolf Watershed Analysis” which will be used to help provide the foundation for both NEPA planning in Fiscal Year 2013 and subsequent implementation of restoration activities in the Wolf Watershed area for years to come.

Financial support for the Collaborative group has come from several different sources. In early 2012, the Central Oregon Forest Stewardship Foundation obtained support for facilitation and technical GIS support for OFRC’s work from the National Forest Foundation through a Community Capacity and Land Stewardship grant. In the fall of 2012 Prineville Mayor Betty



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Roppe and County Commissioner Ken Fahlgren obtained additional funding that will be used in Fiscal Year 13 from a Title 2 grant obtained from the Deschutes-Ochoco Resource Advisory Committee (RAC).

OFRC will continue to use the collaborative experience and lessons learned from the Wolf Watershed pilot process to expand OFRC's scope to support landscape-scale restoration planning and implementation in other watersheds across the entire Ochoco National Forest. Stakeholders would like to see forests and watersheds restored to healthy and resilient conditions in the forest to support a range of values – late old structure, aspen stands, timber production, habitat for big game and sensitive species (especially primary cavity excavators), fisheries, and forage production.

“My hope is to see the continued successful convening of a collaborative group, that would bring together local, state, regional and federal partners, to provide input and recommendations to the Ochoco NF as we work together to achieve our mission to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Forest to meet the needs of present and future generations” said Forest Supervisor Kate Klein.

YOUTH FOCUS: MITCHELL AND WHEELER COUNTY JOIN COYCC

In the summer of 2012, the Ochoco National Forest formed a new partnership with Wheeler County to include a youth crew from the rural community of Mitchell in the Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps program (COYCC). Wheeler County Commissioners helped to fund and implement the summer work program by contributing supervision and a vehicle, while youth wages, transportation costs and equipment was provided by other partners. The new partnership offered youth in Mitchell employment opportunities that are otherwise unavailable to them given their remote location and limited local employment opportunities. Five of the eleven Mitchell High School graduating seniors worked on conservation projects in a remote region of the Ochoco NF for eight weeks, earning approximately \$2,400 each. The \$22,000 cost of operating the Mitchell COYCC crew was shared among Heart of Oregon Corps, Wheeler County Courts and the Ochoco National Forest.

For the last eleven years, the Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps has annually provided job skills training and paid employment to more than 100 youth in central Oregon. The Mitchell youth joined teens from four counties and fourteen in central Oregon, forming a total of 18 crews and accomplishing more than 26,000 hours of natural resource work on all ranger districts of the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests.



Rural Mitchell youth join Prineville crews to work on hazardous fuels projects on the Ochoco National Forest in the Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps program



Collaborative Convener and County Commissioner Ken Fahlgren, District Ranger Sandy Henning and Cooperator Phil Chang and the Crook County Kids Bus that provided transportation for Collaborative Group members to the field in June



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Work included noxious weed eradication, hazardous fuels reduction, trail construction and maintenance, wildlife enclosure construction or maintenance, rangeland improvements and other riparian and restoration projects.

This program offers a unique experience for local youth to better understand natural resource issues, develop land stewardship values and ethics, gain leadership skills and earn wages. The partnership with Mitchell and Wheeler County is expected to continue in 2013.

YOUTH FOCUS: FIN, FIRE AND FEATHER – AN OCHOCO TRADITION

Since 1992, this annual conservation education event has served more than 10,000 youth from Crook County elementary schools and rural outlying communities. Each spring 700 children in grades 1-3 participate in hands on activities to learn about fish and their habitat, wildlife and amphibians, native plants, migratory birds, and mammals.



Activity stations are staffed through a cooperative effort between county, state, and federal agencies and private partners. Youth spend the day going through each station where they create fish art, play the Salmon Life Cycle Game, listen to Tammy and XX Trout, learn to identify bird calls and create riparian areas and watersheds with models. Approximately 100 partners come together to make the annual event a huge success.

Partners include: Trout Unlimited, Oregon Hunter's Association, Crooked River Watershed Council, East Cascade Bird Conservatory, Bureau of Land Management, National Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Crook County School District, Crooked River Watershed Council & Volunteers.



For more information on the Ochoco N's Partnership Program, please contact Lynn Roby at (541)416-6542.



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