STELLAR Watershed Field Day

On May 19 about 100 students from Ferndale Elementary School attended the STELLAR Watershed Field Day at the South Fork Walla Walla Trailhead near Harris Park.

The weather was warm and sunny as the 1st and 4th grade students arrived on two school busses. They organized into groups, and visited a circuit of presentations on eight aspects of the Walla Walla River Watershed: fish species, stream habitat, riparian zones, macro-invertebrates, groundwater, water quality, physics of a flowing stream, and tree identification. Each station’s twenty minute presentation was delivered by a volunteer from the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council staff, Watershed Council Board, or the U.S. Forest Service’s Walla Walla Ranger District.

As students made their way to each of the eight presentation stations, they were exposed to models and demonstrations that help explain concepts like the sinuosity and grade of a stream, how water in our unconfined aquifer behaves, and examples of the types of bugs one can find in the riverbed using a net and a bucket. The students were taught to identify some of the more common trees in the area, like Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, White Alder, Cottonwood, and Willow. They also heard about the types of fish in the Walla Walla River and the importance of riparian vegetation, cool temperatures, and proper oxygen levels on their ability to survive. On viewing pictures of the different types of fish, several students proclaimed their high regard for the lamprey due to its “awesome mouth.”

Harris County Park was used to stage lunch for the students. They sat at the sturdy picnic tables and ate a short distance from the river. Afterward, the children were allowed some time to play in the grassy picnic area before returning to the trailhead for more educational activities.

Continued on next page
MFWCD Levee Update

The Milton-Freewater Water Control District is making progress repairing the levee. Vegetation management for the levee is moving forward in two ways. First, goats were used to clear about 1.5 miles of levee (see goat story for more details). Second, the Corps of Engineers, USFWS, NOAA, and other agencies met to discuss vegetation issues along the levee.

Bore holes were drilled in six different locations on the levee during May 10-12. These bore holes will help determine the composition of the levee, if the levee is settling and to determine if the levee is susceptible to seepage during high flows.

The MFWCD has put a number of projects out to bid including cleaning and videoing culverts in the levee, decommissioning culverts in the levee, repairing the drop structure at Nursery Bridge, and applying herbicide to the crown of the levee.

For more information please visit the MFWCD’s website: www.mfwcd.com

Watershed Field Day Cont.

The Watershed Field Day is organized each year by Bob Chicken of STELLAR, the education arm of the WWBWC’s outreach program. Funding for this year’s Watershed Field Day was provided by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Milton-Freewater Area Foundation, who together donated around $2,200. Volunteers help run the field day, which helps keep costs down.

Drilling a bore hole on the MF levee just below Nursery Bridge. Bore hole drilling occurred on the MF levee during May 10-12. Six bore holes were drilled throughout the levee system for Geotechnical studies.

Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study Update

The Walla Walla River Feasibility study is changing form. Recently the Corps of Engineers updated its cost for the Columbia River water exchange project to around 500 million dollars. Because of the large price tag, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation has requested the Corps and their contractor, CH2M Hill, start a price reduction study. The new price reduction study will involve looking at smaller water exchange projects and other potential cost saving measures. For more information regarding the Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study please visit the Corps of Engineers website.


UPCOMING EVENTS:

WWBWC Board Meetings
Rotary Room of the Community Building
505 Ward Street, Milton-Freewater, OR
- June 20 @ 7:00pm
- July 18 @ 7:00pm
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Donations
Employee Spotlight

Troy Baker
GIS/Database Analyst

Troy has been with the WWBWC since 2005. Before joining the Watershed Council, he was a co-owner of BAF Inc. and managed forest ecology projects in National Forests throughout Eastern Oregon and Washington. Troy leads the GIS program for the WWBWC and during his tenure, the GIS program has grown by leaps and bounds. Troy creates excellent visual outputs that display complex data in a format that conveys the information and is understandable to the laymen. He also leads the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Project, Seepage Assessments, and manages the Watershed Council’s website.

In his free time, Troy enjoys spending time in the wilderness and currently he is on a mission to climb the 100 highest mountains in Oregon. He started last summer and is already almost halfway done with the list. While exploring and climbing throughout the Northwest, Troy enjoys taking photographs of beautiful landscapes, sporting events, and other activities. For more info and updates about his journey to climb Oregon’s highest peaks visit his website: [www.troywbakerphotography.com](http://www.troywbakerphotography.com)
Goats Used for Vegetation Management on the Milton-Freewater Levee

To be eligible for the US Army Corps of Engineers’ PL 84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection Program, which provides inspection and rehabilitation of damaged flood control projects, the Milton-Freewater Water Control District is required to control vegetation on the levee. Unfortunately, this is far from an easy task. Some vegetation removal techniques that have been used in the past, particularly prescribed fire, have resulted in a substantial reduction in overstory trees that shade the river. The shade provided by these overstory trees is critically important to keeping river water temperatures in a range that is suitable for bull trout and steelhead. In an effort to control the lower foliage while still maintaining the taller vegetation, the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service to obtain a $7,000 grant to bring in 240 goats to assist with the levee vegetation issue.

More than a year ago Don Butcher, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, suggested goats as a simple way to take care of some of the overgrowth along the levee. Although people chuckled at the suggestion, it turned out to be a vegetation removal method that all parties could agree on. While there is still a great deal of disagreement between Federal agencies about what overstory vegetation needs to be eliminated and what needs to stay, the goats were a viable option for the lower level vegetation that everyone agrees needs to be regularly removed. Using the goats for vegetation removal is easier and more environmentally friendly than burning or using herbicides. In addition, the goats are better able to get in between rocks and under trees – places where people and machines have a difficult time accessing.

After exhausting the option of finding someone local who could provide goats for the project, Wolcott contacted Craig Madsen, Owner/Operator of Healing Hooves from Edwall, Washington. Madsen and his goats arrived in Milton-Freewater on May 4th and worked on the levee for over nine full days. Originally, WWBWC hoped that the 240 goats would be able to clear the levee from Nursery Bridge to Grove School Bridge, a distance of about two miles. However, at the end of the contracted nine days, the goats fell short of that goal by about half a mile. That being said, the areas the goats did reach showed a significant amount of clearing. Vegetation removal was documented by taking before and after pictures of GPS located points along the levee.

While the goats did fall a little short of the goal of two miles, the project was a success on many levels. First, the sections of the levee treated by the goats are in great condition for further engineering inspections. Second, WWBWC and MFWCD were able to see the potential of using this type of vegetation removal on a more permanent basis. Third, the attention the goats brought to the levee issue was of great significance. Newspapers from Seattle to Boise picked up the stories published by the East Oregonian and Union Bulletin. While these articles won’t solve our levee situation, the public’s awareness of levee issues affecting communities across the nation can only help in finding an ongoing resolution to the problems we and other communities are facing.
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Did you know that the bathroom accounts for 75% of the water use inside the home? Remember, if you aren’t using the water, turn it off. Together we can protect our water.

WORD LIST
AQUIFER  HABITAT  TURBIDITY
BASIN  RECHARGE  WATER
DRAINAGE  RIPARIAN  WATERSHED
ENVIRONMENT  RIVER  WELLS
GEOLOGY  STREAMS  WETLANDS

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Troy taking cross section measurements in the Walla Walla River as part of the Levee Assessment grant.

Oregon’s 100 highest peaks. Troy has climbed about half of them. He hopes to finished the rest by fall 2011.

Troy relaxing near an alpine lake in the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area in the Wallowa Mountains.
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Troy Baker, WWBWC GIS/Database Analyst, teaches students about temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen. The students measured water from the Walla Walla River for all three characteristics.

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Board Members:
John Zerba - Chair
Ed Chesnut
Vern Rodighiero
Clark Lampson
Malcolm Millar
Ray Williams
Kat Brigham
Stuart Durfee
Hulette Johnson
Ron Brown
Larry Widner
Steve Irving
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Brian Wolcott
Executive Director
Rick Henry
Hydrogeologist
Troy Baker
GIS Analyst
Wendy Harris
Program Manager
Bob Chicken
STELLAR Director
Will Lewis
Hydrologic Tech
Steven Patten
Hydrologic Tech
Chris Sheets
Fiscal Tech

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What is a Watershed Council?

Watershed Councils are local, volunteer groups established to improve the condition of watersheds in their area. Oregon legislation authorized the creation of non-regulatory watershed councils. They offer local residents the opportunity to evaluate watershed conditions and identify cost-effective and acceptable opportunities for improvement. Watershed councils help residents, local, state and federal agency staff and other groups implement scientifically informed restoration and education activities.

WWBWC Mission

The mission of the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council is to protect the resources of the Walla Walla Watershed, deal with issues in advance of resource degradation and enhance the overall health of the watershed, while also protection as far as possible the welfare, customs, and cultures of the citizens residing in the basin.

For more information please visit our website:

www.wwbwc.org

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations are welcome to support our efforts and are tax-deductible as allowed by law.