

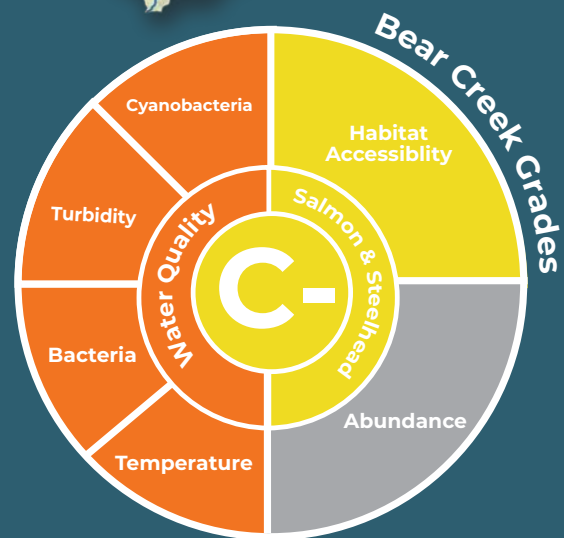
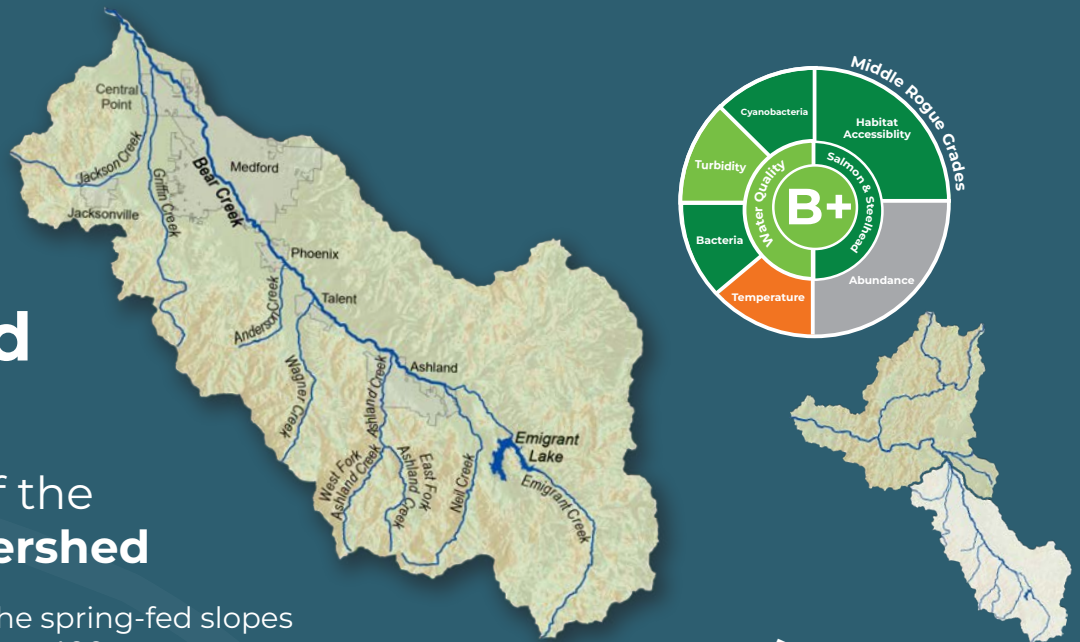
Bear Creek Watershed Report Card

Characteristics of the Bear Creek Watershed

Bear Creek originates on the spring-fed slopes of Soda Mountain and covers 400 square miles of the Klamath Mountain Ecoregion. It is the largest watershed in the Middle Rogue sub-basin. This stream (and the paved trail that runs along it) connects the communities of Ashland, Talent, Phoenix, Medford, and Central Point before joining the Rogue River. Bear Creek and its tributaries are home to diverse plant and animal life and are a natural resource to the densely populated areas in the region. As the most urbanized watershed in southern Oregon, it faces many stresses including impaired water quality, degraded aquatic and streamside habitat, and socio-environmental impacts from wildfire.

Bear Creek Watershed Impacts Middle Rogue

This Bear Creek Watershed Report Card is made up of indicators, or key aspects, of environmental health that, when analyzed and assessed, provide insight into the watershed's condition. This report card analyzes data from five indicators that were assessed with additional indicators in 2021's Rogue River Basin Report Card (<https://www.rogueriverwc.org/what-we-do/rogue-river-basin-report-card>). We chose indicators that reflect the condition of two categories: "Water Quality" and "Salmon & Steelhead." The data used to assess these conditions are widely and regularly collected using common methods. We evaluated the status of indicators within these categories by comparing data to scientifically derived thresholds/goals based on state standards or historical data in conjunction with expert insight.



A Very good (100%-90%)	C Moderate (80%-70%)	F Very poor (60%-0%)
B Good (90%-80%)	D Poor (70%-60%)	Insufficient data

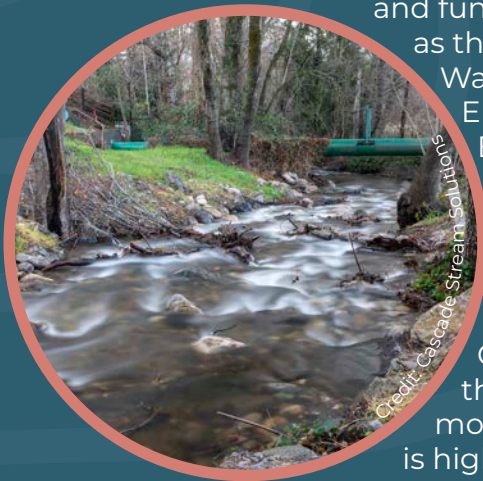
In the 2021 Rogue River Basin Report Card, the Water Quality category for the Middle Rogue had the lowest grade, C (74%). The Salmon & Steelhead category scored a B+, (88%). Further analysis revealed that the Bear Creek watershed had a substantial negative impact on the sub-basin grade. Bear Creek scored 73%, earning it a C-. This score was the result of a 67% (D+) and 78% (C+) in the Water Quality and Salmon & Steelhead categories, respectively. The *E. coli* data had the lowest score among all of the indicators, earning a D+ in the Bear Creek watershed. For comparison, the rest of the Middle Rogue (without Bear Creek data) scored 84% for Water Quality and 95% for Salmon and Steelhead. The majority of these Middle Rogue indicator data came from the Bear Creek watershed, highlighting additional monitoring needs in other Middle Rogue watersheds.

An Ongoing Need to Restore

Substantial work has been accomplished to improve Bear Creek's condition before and in the wake of the Almeda Fire. The report card results highlight the need for restoration focused on improving water quality and habitat accessibility for migratory fishes in Bear Creek. Future restoration should focus on improving riparian habitat along the creek to increase water filtration, decrease stream temperature, improve wildlife habitat, and contribute to public safety. Other restoration priorities include improving instream habitat and removing fish passage barriers. Across the rest of the sub-basin, improvement efforts focus on reducing water pollution.

Monitoring is a critical component of these restoration efforts. It enables restoration practitioners to measure progress towards achieving goals and adapt implementation as needed. While monitoring in Bear Creek does occur there are several key parameters that partners collect and there is a critical need for partners to monitor cooperatively and share data.

Partners involved in Bear Creek restoration are grateful to the community and funders, such as the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, for supporting the restoration and monitoring efforts in Bear Creek. While the need for more restoration is high, support ensures that progress toward achieving a healthy and resilient Bear Creek will continue for the people, plants, and animals that call it home.



Coming Together in the Wake of the Almeda Fire

In 2020, more than 3,200 acres and 2,400 structures in the Bear Creek watershed burned during the Almeda Fire. Streamside areas, dominated by non-native Himalayan/Armenian blackberry thickets, played a large part in fueling wildfire.



In the wake of the fire, restoration practitioners and community members came together to help put communities and natural areas on a path to recovery. Multi-sector groups planned a response, organized community work days, and implemented fire mitigation strategies to help the ecosystem and limit water quality impacts.

We All live Upstream

No matter where you live, the surrounding waterbodies near you flow into a larger system. Take some actions to protect the waterways in your backyard, and your neighbors downstream.

Volunteer your time and/or donate to support conservation organizations and community groups.



Use sulphate and phosphate-free detergents and soaps.



Regularly monitor irrigation systems, sprinklers, and faucets for leaks.



Always pick up animal waste and dispose of it properly.

