

# The Confluence

Newsletter of the Rogue River Watershed Council

## *Beeson-Robison Dam is Removed on Wagner Creek*

Have you ever been driving somewhere but something blocks your way? Be it a flat tire, road construction, or just bad traffic? Did you feel frustrated? Angry? Impatient? Fortunately, those feelings probably didn't last long as the flat tire is mended, construction is completed, and traffic clears. However, for Rogue Basin steelhead and salmon who meet "stream blocks," that is usually the end of their travel, be it for spawning, rearing, or seeking refuge from high-water flows or warm temperatures.

An excellent example of this type of stream block is the Beeson-Robison dam located near Talent. Salmonids in Wagner Creek, a tributary to Bear Creek, have encountered this barrier since the early 1900s. The Beeson-Robison dam was a channel-spanning concrete dam that blocked juvenile fish from passing year-round and created an impediment for migrating adult fish during the winter. This dam blocked steelhead, and possibly Coho Salmon, from accessing three miles of additional spawning and rearing habitat, as well as essential cool-water

habitat in the summer as Bear Creek temperatures rose. And while the salmon can't call AAA, their needs were seen by the Rogue River Watershed Council, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), and the Rogue Basin Partnership, leading to the removal of the dam in September of this year.



Beeson-Robison dam with flashboards in place prior to removal

Photo by Jason Jaacks

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Removal plans for Beeson-Robison – listed as an ODFW high-priority fish passage barrier – had been in the works for nearly seven years. This fall, partnerships and funding aligned to allow the removal of the dam, replacing it with a roughened stream channel designed to steer flow toward a new irrigation intake system that will serve 18 water users. The new stream channel is made up of large boulders and “engineered stream bed material” – gravels and cobbles that are compacted by heavy equipment – that create an environment that mimics the pool that had been created behind the dam during earlier irrigation seasons.

*(Continued on page 3)*



## The Confluence Fall 2017

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*RRWC's mission: Stewardship of the Rogue River watershed through restoration, education, and community involvement.*

*RRWC is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and a recognized watershed council. Watershed councils were authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 1995 to promote and implement voluntary cooperative conservation actions.*

## Notes from the Executive Director's Desk

While Rogue River Watershed Council has only been an organization for 34 months, it has been an idea for many, many more years. Now that we are nearly three full years into this experiment, it is certainly high time that we celebrate, I mean really CELEBRATE! the accomplishments of the Council. We:



Photo by Justin Clifton

- received funding to increase staff to focus on fish passage restoration;
- kicked off the implementation of a 0.6-mile long effort to restore streamside habitat on Wagner Creek and received a grant to upgrade infrastructure on a large property on Neil Creek (projects to limit agricultural impacts to water quality);
- initiated a partnership to plan water quality improvement projects in Little Butte Creek and helped form another to develop source water protection plans throughout the basin;
- installed 14 log jams, restored 0.1 mile of side channel, and cleared 2.5 acres of blackberries along Sugarpine Creek to enhance Coho Salmon habitat;
- removed blackberries, planted native trees and shrubs, and maintained those plantings along 0.06 miles of Gilbert Creek with Grants Pass School District and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- started planning an event to celebrate World Fish Migration Day (scheduled for April 2018);
- replaced a diversion dam on Wagner Creek with a re-profiled stream channel to improve fish passage for salmon and steelhead;
- received a grant from Wild Salmon Center to develop a Coho Salmon Action Plan for the upper Rogue River; and
- celebrated our accomplishments and highlighted our future work plans with our Friends, supporters, and an opera-singing fish biologist, Gino Lucchetti.

Of course, we carried on lots of efforts like Kids & Creeks in Medford, the Upper Rogue Cleanup from the dam at Lost Creek Lake to the City of Gold Hill, WISE project monitoring on Bear and Little Butte Creeks, and snorkeling at old and future creek-restoration sites. But, for the first time since January of 2015 the bulk of our on-the-ground work was on projects that were “born and raised” with Rogue River Watershed Council.

I am proud of the work that was completed this year and just as excited at the projects we are developing for the next few years. And I think it was absolutely high time for us to kick up our collective heels and celebrate our successes!

Thanks to all of you for helping us with these achievements!

## ...and from the Board Chair

What more can I possibly add to what Brian has noted above! As chairperson of the board, I can only echo his sentiments. I am proud of all that Brian and his staff have accomplished and am cheering them on to greater accomplishments in the future. Of course, in pure celebratory style, I also want to thank and congratulate all of our contractors, partners, funders, “friends,” volunteers, and other supporters who have made this work not only possible, but something that truly is worthy of celebrating! Let's continue this great work TOGETHER!

Dam removal, which was accomplished in just a few hours, and associated channel work was done by local contractor Todd Marthoski of M&M Services, LLC. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife helped greatly by leading fish salvage efforts before construction. Over 200 juvenile fish, including steelhead and sculpin, were rescued from the project reach along with about a dozen Pacific giant salamanders and several native crayfish. Wagner Creek now flows freely down the new channel, awaiting returning winter steelhead who will be able to access miles of new habitat for spawning this winter.

Rogue River Watershed Council is excited to announce the completion of this project, which represents a strong collaboration between private landowners and water users, agencies, and non-profit organizations working toward a common goal – improving fish passage while meeting private land management goals.

Photo by Jason Jaacks



ODFW's Ryan Battleson leads fish salvage



Pacific giant salamander rescued during fish salvage

Photo by Jason Jaacks



Newly constructed irrigation intake box

Photo by Jason Jaacks

Photo by Jason Jaacks



M&M Services, LLC begins demolition of the dam



Roughened channel created after dam removal

Photo by Alexis Brickner

# RRWC Celebrates the Rogue!

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, Rogue River Watershed Council threw a big party to celebrate the completion of our first instream construction season filled entirely with projects developed by the organization, and to kick off our next round of work to improve water quality, help migratory fish reach spawning areas more easily, and educate the local citizenry on stream and land stewardship.

The party – appropriately named “Celebrate the Rogue!” – featured fabulous food, even more fabulous entertainment, and a item-rich silent auction. Guests feasted on a gourmet dinner (complete with filet of salmon with lemon dill beurre blanc, of course!) and were entertained by a one-of-a-kind presentation that blended operatic arias, *The Element Song* by Tom Lehrer (go ahead, Google it!), and observations on fish, water pollution, and global warming. Guests – many having never attended an opera production before – were entranced by operatic performer-cum-fish biologist Gino Lucchetti’s performance. But the most fun they had was when Gino presented them with a chance to sing along to the lyrics of his song – *We Love the Rogue* – to the tune of *Funiculi, Funicula* (see following page for lyrics). Truly a night to remember!

Special thanks are due to our event sponsors, Cascade Stream Solutions, Plant Oregon, Medford Water Commission, River Design Group, Blue Ridge Timber Cutting, and M&M Services, as well as event photographer, Kyle Strauss.



A sampling of some of the event’s unique and highly sought-after silent auction items



A bravura performance by operatic singer and fish biologist, Gino Lucchetti



Special Thanks to our Generous Event Sponsors

# Images from Celebrate the Rogue!

All photos by Kyle Strauss



Funiculi - Funiculà.  
 We Love the Rogue Song!  
 (to the tune of Funiculi, Funiculà! by Luigi Denza\*)

Some say **The ROGUE RIVER** is a treasure  
 And so do **!! And so do !!**

It gives us habitat and lots of pleasure  
 Oh my, oh my! *Oh my, oh my!*

The trails, the farms, the mountains and the rivers  
 Where we can play! *And play and play!*

They give our beavers, birds, deer and salmon  
 A place to stay! *Hip-hip-hooray!*

Let's go! Let's go! Let's fish and play and run!  
 Let's go! Let's go! To a place that's really fun!  
 We love the Rogue it's plain to see!!  
 It's good for you! It's good for me!  
 Protecting special places is the thing we want to see!

\* Words by Gino Lucchetti for the Rogue River Watershed Council 2017

# The BLM and You

By Jonas Parker

“We’re from the government and we’re here to help”: a phrase usually invoked to generate giggles and eye rolls. I’m not going to lie – we have our moments. But while many see our size as our weakness, I see it as our strength. You won’t find another entity with such a large workforce in charge of managing so much land. With that comes experience, tools, and an obligation to work with YOU, the taxpayer. And it goes beyond obligation; most of us are in this line of work because we have a passion for what we do. Most of us share that passion with anyone willing to lend us their ears.

So how can the BLM help you when it comes to watershed function? Let me list the ways:

Photo by Rachel Werling



Participants on a “Hike and Learn” outing with Jonas Parker

- We provide technical advice! Granted there has to be a federal connection, but it’s pretty easy to make – think water flows downhill and fish swim upstream.
- We provide material! Again, if there is a federal connection and we’re partnering with the Rogue River Watershed Council, we can provide logs, root wads, seed, mulch, you name it.
- Let us teach you! We love showing off our completed projects, ideas we’re thinking about, and we often work with schools and community groups to demonstrate principles and techniques. Public lands are our demonstration area.

What’s the best way to engage us? Contact the Rogue River Watershed Council and explain your situation. If there’s a way to bring the BLM into the picture, they know how to get ahold of us. Working together is the best way for you to get what you need while making the watershed a more ecologically sustainable and functional place to live.

Jonas Parker is the district hydrologist for the US Bureau of Land Management based out of Medford.



## UNDER THE SURFACE

### Chinook. Spring vs. Fall: The Fat of the Matter

by Jay Doino

Fat. That melt-in-your-mouth, song-in-your-soul, lick-from-your-lips, ecstasy-inducing fat.

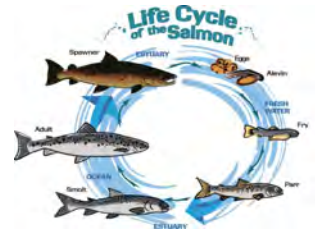
End. Of. Story. Not.

For those slow to catch on, I am discoursing the fat content of spring Chinook Salmon (aka springers). Both scrumptious and an excellent source of physician-recommended Omega 3’s, it’s more important than that. Not aggressive feeders during spawning runs, ocean-accumulated fat stores enable springers to meet metabolic needs and complete sexual maturation during their 120-plus mile upriver spawning migration beginning in, you guessed it, spring. Most individuals then spend several months holding in deep upper Rogue pools near spawning grounds until spawning begins in early September. Yeah. Fat does that.

Fall Chinook are a somewhat different beast. Of course, both runs share a lineage culminating in modern day *Onchorynchus tshawytscha* – the heady moniker for Chinook Salmon. But fall Chinook begin their spawning migration later – most around Augtember – when sexual maturation is closer to completion. Spawning begins in early October. That’s downright nigh compared to springers. Fall fish are generally a bit larger, having had a few more months of ocean feeding to bulk up. Strangely though, they have less fat. Also noteworthy is the spatial separation of their respective spawning habitats – springers favoring more upriver reaches of the Rogue than their fall brethren.

Lastly, there’s ongoing interest regarding genetic distinctions between the two that some believe warrants discussion. But fear not, readers. I’m totally not smart enough to write about that. And really, can’t we all just *tshawytscha*?

Jay Doino is a fisheries biologist and has been working in the Rogue Basin since 1999.



From Field Guide to the Pacific Salmon, by Adopt-a-Stream

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

## Torrent Sedge (*Carex nudata*) - Good Looking and Hard Working

By Rachel Werling

“Sedges have edges and rushes are round, torrent sedge on the banks of our rivers is found.” I have modified that child’s botanical ditty to highlight one of my favorite streamside plants. If you have been lucky enough to spend a day wandering or rafting the Rogue or another river in our area, you have likely noticed robust green tussocks of a grass-like plant perched Seussian-like along the shore and on rocks mid-stream. “Torrent sedge” is a poetic visual, and the plant lives up to its name, happily thriving along fast-flowing rivers from California to Washington. It is adapted to the disturbance often created by flood water. This sedge blooms early in the season in dense spikes of seeds that break apart and drop in the torrent when water levels are still high. As the levels go back down, the seeds are left on rocks and gravel banks, where they quickly set their tenacious roots.

Established tussocks are seldom dislodged by floods and their dense stems and leaves trap sediments and create habitat for other plants to take root. Mature clumps have long gracefully overhanging leaves and can be three feet tall and several feet wide. This species provides more than interesting scenery, however. Mathew Goslin, working for the University of Oregon, has taken to calling torrent sedge a botanical “ecosystem engineer” and an agent of passive restoration. His work along the John Day River has documented that torrent sedge populations can increase “complexity” in stream morphology, expanding islands and promoting side channels and pools. This improves fish habitat, providing cover and important habitat diversity. Torrent sedge is a good-looking and hard-working member of the riparian plant community.

*Rachel Werling serves on the Rogue River Watershed Council board. She is a botanist and on faculty at OSU’s Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center where she coordinates the Land Steward Program.*



Torrent sedge (*Carex nudata*) growing along the Rogue River

Photo by Rachel Werling



## OFF THE RESOURCE SHELF

### *A Front Row Seat to Fish Passage Barrier Removals*

Watching the removal of the Beeson-Robison dam (see cover story) and the attendant channel construction was VERY cool! Thanks to Resources Legacy Fund that process has been recorded by award-winning videographer/photographer Jason Jaacks. But as that video is not yet available, here are some easily accessed YouTube videos recording the three major dam removals on the Rogue River (Gold Hill Dam, Savage Rapids Dam, Gold Ray Dam) as well as barrier removal projects on Jones Creek done by one of our predecessor watershed councils. Grab a comfy seat, pop up some popcorn and enjoy!

[Removal of the Gold Hill Dam](#) (2008); 2:40; produced by Rogue Valley Council of Governments

[Removal of Gold Hill Dam Stop Motion](#) (2008); 2:05; produced by Rogue Valley Council of Governments

[The Removal of Savage Rapids Dam](#) (2009); 9:41; produced by WaterWatch

[Gold Ray Dam Removal](#) (2010); 4:31; produced by River Design Group

[Gold Ray Dam Removal Project in Time-lapse](#) (2010); 2:41; produced by Jackson County

[Jones Creek Restoration \(Roughened Channel Construction on Jones Creek\)](#) (2011); 15:47;

produced by Stream Restoration Alliance of the Middle Rogue

[Jones Creek Restoration](#) (2015); 10:12; produced by Stream Restoration Alliance of the Middle Rogue





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## Support Our Work!

### Make a Donation

All donations are greatly appreciated, put to good use, and are tax-deductible. Donate online at <http://www.rogueiverwc.org/get-involved/donate/>.

### Bottle Drop Redemption

Open a Bottle Drop account at an Oregon Redemption Center, drop off your cans and bottles, then transfer your donation to RRWC [online](#).

### Fred Meyers Rewards

Help RRWC earn donations by shopping with your Fred Meyer Rewards Card. Link your card to us at <https://www.fredmeyer.com/topic/community-rewards-4>. Search for us by name.

### AmazonSmile

Online shoppers can go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), click on your account and select RRWC as your charity of choice at no cost to you.

The map shows the Rogue River Watershed Council's territory in Oregon, covering Curry, Coos, Josephine, and Jackson counties. It highlights various sub-watersheds like Lower Rogue, Rogue River, and Upper Rogue. Three callout boxes are overlaid on the map:

- Top-left callout:** "Are you a 'Friend' of RRWC? Get a cool RRWC decal when you become one!" Below this is an image of a decal featuring the RRWC logo and the text "Promoting stewardship of the Rogue River watershed".
- Top-right callout:** "Would you like to help us by distributing RRWC newsletters or 'friendship' brochures at your place of business? Give us a call!"
- Bottom-right callout:** "Stay connected! E-mail us to be added to our e-mail list for the latest RRWC news and announcements. And don't forget to like us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/RogueRiverWatershedCouncil/>"

The map also includes a legend for "Rogue River Watershed Council" (green) and "Other Watershed Councils" (grey), a scale bar (0-10 miles), and a north arrow.