

Summer 2017

# The Confluence

Newsletter of the Rogue River Watershed Council

## *The Importance of Partnerships*

*By Chrysten Lambert*

Southern Oregon is an angler’s paradise. Here, we are blessed with multiple species of game fish—native redband trout, steelhead and salmon primary among them. As in many other parts of the West, many of these species—particularly those that require cold water with low turbidity—have been declining in numbers. Coho Salmon are but one of several species now listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The single greatest threat to most ESA listed species is loss or degradation of habitat. For fish and species that inhabit the riparian zone, habitat is often compromised by inadequate flow and water quality conditions. In this region, sub-optimal flow and poor water quality are mostly attributable to out-of-stream demands for water such as municipal use and irrigation.

Competing demands for water are only increasing as climate change shifts precipitation patterns in southern Oregon and extended periods of drought intensify crop and municipal water needs. Luckily, here in the Rogue Basin many people are working collaboratively to find solutions that can improve and protect instream flows for native species, while also sustaining water deliveries for municipal, agricultural, and other uses.

A great example of such solutions is the partnership Trout Unlimited and Rogue River Watershed Council have forged with the C2 Cattle Company. Salt Creek, a tributary to Little Butte Creek, flows through the C2 Ranch and provides critical habitat for coho salmon and other aquatic species. TU, RRWC, and C2 are working together to improve water supply and management on the ranch.

The principal tactic for doing this is to eliminate all water diversions from Salt Creek in order to protect critical habitat and instream flow, while shifting irrigation water supplies to less ecologically important sources. C2 has also agreed to retire irrigation of one pasture in order to sustain necessary flow and water quality conditions. Enhanced streamflow will also benefit Little Butte Creek downstream through the town of Eagle Point.



Photo by Brian Barry

This partnership is the kind of pragmatic solution that we need in southern Oregon to resolve our water supply and wildlife management challenges—a mutually beneficial collaboration that helps keep sustainable ranching on the landscape while improving habitat conditions for at-risk native fish.

Chrysten Lambert is director of Trout Unlimited's Upper Klamath River program.

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## The Confluence Summer 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

My daughter just graduated from high school. In our home, much of the last two years has been dedicated to thinking through, "What would Delaney like for a career?"

Though I certainly did not know "for sure" that I was going to try to make a career out of thinking about fish until I was a junior in college, my family sure must have known by the time I was about eight. Just a few years earlier, we moved across a nameless, faceless suburb of Chicago. The new neighborhood was just as loaded with medium-sized houses on really small lots as the last. But, there was this small, slow moving creek that ran along the park we all went to for Little League games and swimming lessons.

My friends and I spent every daylight hour from June through August pacing the banks on the lookout for garter snakes, frogs, and toads. What could be better? Well, a bait net to catch bullheads, crawdads, and the ever-elusive minnows that swam through those murky waters was better. So I bought one!

We had to be called away from our creek explorations for lunch ... then dinner ... and finally to sleep. At times, I wonder if the only difference between Edward Cope (look him up) and me were those calls that brought me in from the creek and away from some remarkable discovery.

Regardless, here I am, restoring habitat and asking endless questions about fish. And my plea to all of you is ... go out there and splash around. July and August are the best months here in the Rogue to go snorkel a stream on the lookout for a sculpin or young trout. And when your mom calls, spend at least a few more minutes to check around the next bend. You can blame me.

## ...and from the Board Chair

The Rogue River Watershed Council has been up and running for about 2 1/2 years now. To run a nonprofit organization, it takes both a dedicated staff and board of directors. In addition, the organization needs support from friends, donors, and volunteers.

The board is responsible for governing the organization, requiring considerable time of each board member. Over the last year and a half, we have said good-bye to four of our founding board members, but we've also welcomed two new members. Now it's time to welcome our newest board member.

Please join me in welcoming Jack Williams to Rogue River Watershed Council! Jack currently works as Senior Scientist for Trout Unlimited, overseeing their science programs. Jack has a doctorate in fisheries science from Oregon State University, and has been with Trout Unlimited since 2005. He has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Program, served as science advisor to the director of BLM, and been forest supervisor for the Rogue River National Forest. In addition to this professional expertise, he brings nonprofit board experience to the Rogue River Watershed Council.

If you think you or someone you know would be a good fit for our board, let us know. At this time, we're especially interested in visiting with individuals who have nonprofit fundraising and/or legal experience.



Photo by Justin Clifton



## PROJECT PROFILE

## *Sugarpine Creek*

Rogue River Watershed Council just completed our first log jam installation project. What a hoot!

We teamed up with Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and US Forest Service to secure all the materials and the people power necessary to manage the project. And we hired Blue Ridge Timber Cutting to push, pull, drag, and prod the logs into place.

This picture speaks to the end result...lots of large wood in contact with the stream channel. These wood jams will create deep scour holes providing adult and juvenile salmon, steelhead, and other aquatic animals places to hide from predators. The deepest parts of these pools will be cool, important in the heart of the summer. In the winter, the jams will force the high flows up onto the floodplain where sediment can naturally fall out of the water column and side channels can form.

The effects wood jams have on stream channels lead to something fish biologists call “channel complexity.” This complexity is important for all fish. The wide variety of habitats available in areas with lots of channel complexity assure some part of the stream is providing good habitat conditions for all fish species under all weather and stream flow conditions.

All of this was pretty far from Brian’s mind as he watched the Blue Ridge Timber Cutting crew coax a giant tree into place. All he could think about as he surveyed their work were all the “log jams” he and his buddies created in the creek in which he spent his childhood summers. Ah, memories!

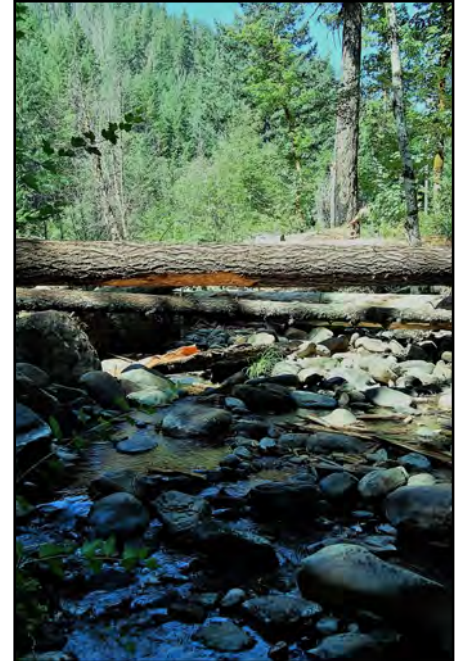


Photo by Brian Barr

## PROJECT PROFILE

## *Finding Refuge for Salmon in the Bear Creek Watershed*

The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that Bear Creek historically had more than 25 miles of high-quality juvenile rearing habitat for Coho Salmon. These days, degraded habitat and high water temperatures have rendered this urban stream system nearly inhospitable for the federally threatened species. Despite poor conditions, juvenile Coho Salmon have been documented on a few occasions. Coho Salmon, along with Chinook Salmon and steelhead, are able to survive the warm stream temperatures by taking cover in patches of cool water – also known as cold water refugia.

For the past few summers, RRWC’s Water Quality Program Manger Sarah Sauter has bushwhacked through the blackberries to map Bear Creek’s cold-water hiding places. This summer Sarah helped deploy 28 temperature data loggers (popsicle-sized devices that record stream temperature every 30 minutes) along Bear Creek between Ashland and Central Point. The loggers were placed near tributaries thought to contribute cool water. RRWC and our partners will use this information to protect, develop, and expand riparian and stream channel restoration projects near identified cold-water resources.

This monitoring project began in 2015. We have identified eleven potential summer cool water hiding spots along mainstem Bear Creek including five tributaries and six seeps/springs. Most of the sites are located in the upper half of the watershed with tributary inflows and seeps originating from both the east and west sides of the valley.

This temperature mapping project is representative of how Sarah spends her time: working with partners to develop a study design, conducting field work, mapping the station locations, organizing, analyzing, and summarizing the data, and using technical data to develop reports, water quality improvement projects, and grant applications. This work requires attention to detail, love of the outdoors, understanding of water quality standards, data and mapping software, technical writing skills, and the ability to plan and manage projects.

PROJECT PROFILE

# Beeson-Robison Fish Passage Improvement Project

The Beeson-Robison dam, located on Wagner Creek, is a high priority fish passage barrier that limits passage for adult and juvenile steelhead. Upstream migrating fish are not able to migrate past this structure under most flow conditions, especially during the summer when warm water temperatures in Bear Creek drive fish to the cool, snowmelt-fed waters of Wagner Creek. The removal of this dam will provide access to three additional miles of upstream habitat. In late summer 2017, RRWC will remove the Beeson-Robison dam and replace it with a re-profiled stream channel and an upgraded irrigation intake system.

In order to accomplish a project of this size, Alexis, the project manager, must complete a series of tasks not unlike a fantastic adventure of Frodo Baggins in Lord of the Rings, complete with a fellowship of partners and funders. Once a project is identified, usually through a watershed assessment or landowner outreach, the project manager works



Photo by Alexis Bricker

collaboratively with the landowner to design a project that will restore watershed health. During this time, several things are happening simultaneously: funding sources and partners are identified, permitting agencies are contacted, and contractors are brought on board, such as an engineer. Once the project plan is completed and agreed upon by all parties, multiple grant and permit applications are submitted. For the Beeson-Robison project, funding was received from about 10 different sources and permits were submitted to seven different agencies. Design, grant writing, and permit applications can take years, depending on the size and complexity of the project. The Beeson-Robison project is a

culmination of over six years of work! (Yes, it predates the Council!)

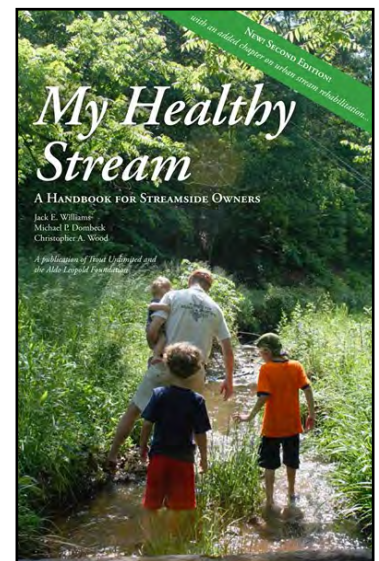
In the end, a restoration project of this size can take years to develop, weeks to implement, and have a lifetime's worth of habitat improvements for fish and wildlife. Hang in there with us, Alexis will have more to report in the fall edition of *The Confluence*!



OFF THE RESOURCE SHELF

## Getting Your Stream Healthy

What better way to highlight the expertise our newest board member, Jack Williams, brings to the organization than featuring one of his publications in this edition of *The Confluence*! A publication of Trout Unlimited and the Aldo Leopold Foundation, *My Healthy Stream: A Handbook for Streamside Owners* – co-written by Williams, Michael Dombeck, and Christopher Wood – is a straightforward, accessible read that's invaluable for anyone with streamside property, whether it's in Oregon, Oklahoma, or Ohio. Right around 90 pages, and filled with colorful graphics and photos, this is a great how-to book that covers both rural and urban stream rehabilitation. Chapters cover such topics as habitat mapping, monitoring stream health, identifying macroinvertebrates, designing stream protection zones, stopping invasive species, and even preparing your stream for that inevitable event – flooding! Although you can download the entire text from the Trout Unlimited website, you can order a bound version from their online store: <https://gifts.tumembership.org/store/my-healthy-stream>. At \$11, it's worth every penny!





SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

# Here's to Heartleaf

by Robert Coffan

Everyone who loves our beautiful, iconic monarch butterflies knows about two of our region's three native milkweed species: narrow leaf (*Asclepias fascicularis*) and showy (*Asclepias speciosa*) milkweed. Why? Because they know that milkweed is the ONLY thing monarch caterpillars eat; when the milkweed is gone, all monarchs are gone. Period.

However, there is a third, somewhat elusive native species that is perhaps even more beautiful – *Asclepias cordifolia*, or heartleaf milkweed. Look for yourself at those lovely heart-shaped leaves, bright pink blooms, and unusual seed pods. Unlike narrow leaf and showy milkweed that commonly grow in open fields near the valley floor, heartleaf grows in somewhat harsher locations, sometimes at higher elevations, often on sunbaked, grassy, or rocky slopes, and in openings in oak woodland and mixed-conifer forest. Though it's not rare, you likely won't find it for sale, and you may need to go for a hike to find one.



Photo by Suzie Savoie

Heartleaf milkweed may be more important to monarchs than initially thought because of some of the areas it occurs. Higher up in our watershed, amidst the thick stands of conifer, there are small rocky outcrops with grasses and a scattering of oaks where heartleaf can be found. It appears that our migrating monarchs use these "sunny milkweed oases" heavily for laying eggs, breeding, and a sip of nectar as they pass on their way northward. We are learning more about the importance of these "heartleaf rest stops" in southern Oregon for our western monarchs!

Robert Coffan is the President/Principal Hydrologist for Katalyst, Inc. and cofounder of Southern Oregon Monarch Advocates.



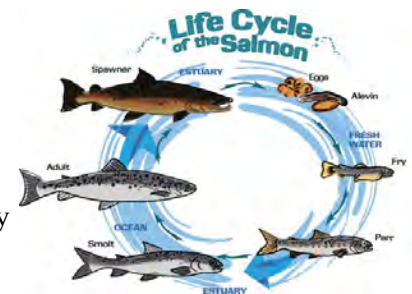
UNDER THE SURFACE

# Hug an Alga

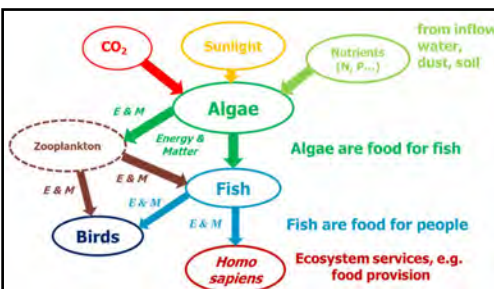
by Jay Doino

Bookended by Memorial Day and Labor Day barbecues with a slab of Independence Day consumed in between – summer means grilled meat! And you know what they say about consumers of grilled meat, right? You guessed it! Top trophic level baby! (OK, maybe you weren't thinking trophic levels, but it's not that easy to segue seamlessly).

Trophic level describes an organism's place in a food chain or food web (a complex food chain). Since this column is called "Under the Surface," we should probably discuss aquatic food webs. Summer is a good time for this because it's when primary production is at its peak and primary producers form the foundation of food webs. Primary producers are plants and in our fish-bearing streams, they're often algae. Like terrestrial plants, algae make delectable foodstuffs for those of a higher trophic status – specifically bugs. Many bugs specialize in grazing algae from stream substrates. But not all bugs graze – some are shredders eating decomposing organic matter using specialized mouth parts, some are predators, others different still.



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



And moving around the food web – lots of stuff eats bugs, but most notably fish. And consider the myriad consumers of fish – birds and bears and bigger fish. These feeding relationships between organisms constitute the "web" part of trophic dynamics. It's all connected and each part of the web is dependent on its other parts – and that can make some food webs fragile. So, as you're grilling your wild, sustainably harvested, locally sourced, never-ate-a-pellet salmon whose name you knew but forgot, take a minute to appreciate the algae that helped create it.

Image by Luca Marazzi

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



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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 service area, including Curry, Coos, and Josephine counties. It features the RRWC logo, a legend for other watershed councils, and a scale bar. Three callout boxes are overlaid on the map:

- Top Callout:** "Would you like to help us by distributing RRWC newsletters or 'friendship' brochures at your place of business? Give us a call!"
- Left Callout:** "Are you a 'Friend' of RRWC? Get a cool RRWC decal when you become one!"
- 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/>"

At the bottom left, there is a decal image with the RRWC logo and the text "Promoting stewardship of the Rogue River watershed".