



# Coos Soil & Water Conservation District



Summer Newsletter August 2009

### COOS SWCD GOALS:

*Promote wise use of renewable resources through locally led voluntary conservation. Conserve, protect and develop natural resources for the economic benefit of the people of Coos County. Encourage measures for the protection of waters of Coos County. Assist local landowners in the developing and utilizing their resources to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality and support the Coos County economy.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Don Gray Receives Lifetime Achievement Award.....cont. pg. 3

Coos County Fair.....pg. 2

Coos SWCD "Know Your Water" Workshop.....pg. 4

Power's Landslide.....pg. 5

Myrtle Point's Drinking Water..pg. 6-7

Labrousse Culvert Replacement Project on Stock Slough.....pg. 8

Invasive Species Alert.....pg. 9

## Don Gray Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Steve Wickham with Plum Creek Timber Company presents Don Gray with a plaque at the Coos County Weed Board meeting in Coquille, Oregon on July 14, 2009, in recognition of a lifetime effort of managing noxious weeds on his properties as well as educating and helping countless others in Coos County.

### **DON GRAY: 95 years old** **Coos SWCD Director from:** **(1972-1998)**

Don Gray was born December 1, 1913 and moved with his family to Sumner, Oregon when he was four months old. Don and Ruby have been

married seventy-one years and have three children, Alice Rose, Gary Tim, and Michael George. There are thirteen grand children and numerous great-great grandchildren totaling 36 in the family.

(Continued on page 3)

## COOS COUNTY FAIR NATURAL RESOURCE TENT

The Natural Resource tent was donated by the fair to educate residents and children in all aspects of natural resources. The tent was well represented with many organizations taking part. Powers

High School students volunteered every day for pretty much every booth. The Coquille Watershed Association with the coordination from Dennis Wise, Director and Cassie Bouska organized a great educational event. There was an opportunity for children to go around to all the natural resources stations to learn about topics like noxious weeds, tree identification, water quality, watershed health, fish and wildlife identification, and recycling. Once the children went to at least 5 stations and got their watershed passport stamped they could make a button in which they had an opportunity to select what style and what colors they wanted.



There were a total of 169 passports turned in and probably well over 200 buttons made.



Thirteen organizations took part in the passport game and asked children a science question. Powers High School



concentrated on teaching about native plant identification. The Coos Soil & Water Conservation District talked about water quality and watershed health. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife had

animal skins and live fish to teach kids about fish & wildlife identification. The Coos County Weed Board, United States Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management talked about what a weed is and how you can identify them. Shoreline Education Association (SEA), U.S. Fish & Wildlife and the Coos Watershed Association talked about biodegradable material and the importance of recycling. The Coquille Watershed Association used the Curry South Coast Watershed Association stream trailer (pictured in the lower left-hand corner) to teach about what a watershed is. Oregon State University Master Gardeners asked a compost related question. The Bee Keepers Association taught kids about the importance of bees. The Oregon Energy Trust/United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development taught all about renewable resources and the Coos Forest Protective taught about fire prevention.

In the natural resource tent there were displays, animal skins, live invasive weeds, local fish in a large fish tank, and a stream trailer with a model of a typical watershed from the Curry South Coast Watershed Association.



Even Smoky the Bear came through the tent. I personally was at the Coos SWCD display every day of the fair (July 28-August 1<sup>st</sup>), and I saw a lot of people with smiles on their faces as they learned a lot of important information. It looks like something like this will be organized for next year so well done to everyone who played a part this year!

## Don Gray: A Lifetime of Conservation

(Continued from page 1)

Don and Ruby have had about seventeen different ranches over the years totaling around 4,000 acres. They raised beef and dairy cattle and also hay. Growing timber and logging were also part of his management efforts. While most of their operations were in Coos County, they also had property in Douglas County and forest land in British Columbia.



(From right to left) Don Gray, his wife Ruby and his Daughter Alice

Don Gray has been practicing conservation and best management practices even when he was very young. He started his weed control efforts when he was six years old by cutting bull thistle (*cirsium vulgare*) on his family ranch on Boone Creek near Sumner. Don Gray remembers when planting Himalayan blackberries (*rubus armentiacus*) was popular. In the early 1930's an unusual cold snap froze the Coos River. Many native plants were injured or killed by the freeze and Gray noted that the Himalayan blackberries were especially damaged.

Don is quite proud of his efforts in purchasing properties that were run-down and then improving the land and buildings, therefore increasing productivity and land value. Many of Gray's ranches he purchased had serious Himalayan blackberry problems. Once he even found a single axle Ford log truck and trailer overgrown with blackberries.

Don is very proud of working with Lynn Cannon of the Coos County Extension Service and other local ranchers in the efforts of introducing the Cinnabar moth and especially the flea beetle that lead to effective control of tansy ragwort (*senecio jacobaea*). He saw the problems caused by tansy before it was controlled and remains vigilant and concerned about any resurgence.

Don spent several years on an ASCS committee that dealt with clearing debris from the Coquille River. At that time, debris would often catch on old pilings during flood events. At times the debris would dam and channel water causing accelerated erosion and the loss of valuable agriculture land. Over time the committee was very successful alleviating the problem areas.

Don has some vegetation management wisdom to share with younger generations:

- It takes 3 to 5 years of annual treatments (cutting or spraying) to really control Himalayan blackberries.
- He is worried about the spread of Canada thistle and the difficulty of controlling the plant.
- We must remain aware of the threat of tansy ragwort. Do not let it return!
- Neighbors need to cooperate in weed control. It is frustrating to control your weeds just to see a re-seeding of the problem plant from a nearby neighbor.
- He likes the Coos County Weed Advisory Board Cost Share Program.
- A very cold winter freeze helps control noxious weeds.

Don Gray has also been involved with the Coos Soil and Water Conservation District for over twenty-five years as a director and his contributions are well appreciated! Thank you Don Gray for your work, your input, and your legacy of conservation and weed control in Coos County!

**Article by: Steve Wickham - Senior Forester (Plum Creek Timber Company)**

## The Coos Soil & Water Conservation District's "Know Your Water" Workshop had a good showing on April 29, 2009



This free "Know Your Water" workshop held at the Coquille Community Building on April 29<sup>th</sup> was an opportunity for landowners and concerned citizens to actively get involved in learning all they can about our limited water resources. Topics that were covered by the six speakers included safe drinking water, water rights, The Allocation of Conserved Water Program, 2009 Farm Bill, non-point source pollution, and agriculture water quality rules. There were a total of 44 people in attendance and it was a very active and curious crowd. The speakers were very impressed with the level of knowledge and detailed questions that the audience provided.

Jackie Fern from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) went first and her 20 minute talk highlighted how important safe drinking water is, and what all of us as land stewards can do to improve our drinking water in this county. Her talk led right into a combined presentation by two members from the Oregon Water Resources department (WRD), Bob Rice from Salem and Mitch Lewis, District 19 Watermaster based in Coquille. This talk by both gentlemen went slightly over an hour because of all the questions they received. The public at this meeting had a lot of questions that they asked both Mitch and Bob. Mitch stressed that he is willing to talk to anyone about any water rights issues so please give him a call at (541) 396-1905. Tom Purvis, from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) did his talk following a 15 minute break on highlights from the

2009 Farm Bill. His talk emphasized the importance of conserving water and how NRCS can provide technical assistance and federal financial assistance in the form of a 50% cost share, if all of the criteria for the particular program they are applying for are met. Bryan Duggan from the Coquille Indian Tribe (CIT) did a 20 minute talk about non-point source pollution, which is pollution that enters a waterway from many different locations. Bryan talked a lot about ways to help prevent or minimize this type of pollution. This talk also led very well into the last speaker of the night, Eric Nusbaum for the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). He talked about how agriculture rules apply to every landowner and how landowners can get a lot of technical assistance by the Coos Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and all the other agencies represented at this workshop.

There was a lot of interest from the people that attended and a lot of people have contacted me letting me know that they wanted to attend, but couldn't make that time and date. Therefore I will try to arrange a similar educational event in the near future. Do to the fact that there was so much interest, I decided to record, and tape this event thanks to the students from Myrtle Point High School that volunteered to help me for four hours. If you have any questions about this event or what the Coos Soil and Water Conservation District can do to help you personally please call Eric Himmelreich at the office at (541) 396-6879.

# **POWER'S LANDSLIDE!**

**“Landowners are justifiably concerned over possible disastrous effects this winter to their properties and the South Fork of the Coquille River.”**



**Located ¼ mile below 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge in Powers, OR**

This slide occurred in early May and according to landowners and eye witnesses it all came down in a short period of time, one to two days. This slide is highly visible from the bridge in Power's, but so far the only people truly concerned are the landowners that are located on top of the slide and directly downstream of the slide. The Coos Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) with the help of Director Jim Maitland and Watershed Technical Specialist, Eric Himmelreich have taken an active approach to addressing the concerns of the people that are most likely to be affected. The Coos SWCD has taken employees from Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), geologists, PBS engineers, and concerned residents to viewing areas below and above to properly address the slide. The Coos SWCD set pictures of the slide to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the Army Corps of Engineers quickly after the slide was reported. These agencies both agreed that it is currently not a great concern and they felt the likelihood that this slide could block the river was really low. ODFW and Army Corps were more concerned about the effects of getting into the creek to try to fix the slide which would disrupt sediment. The amazing thing is the slide is even bigger than this photo shows ~ 250 ft wide at the top, with cracks and depressions up to 15 ft high, and the drop from the top of the slide to the river is well over 200 ft. When

you see the slide from up on top the slide looks even worse, because you see large cracks and steep drops. It doesn't matter who you talk to, the truth is there is a lot of material that most likely be washed downstream this winter that will in turn effect fall Chinook Salmon and Pacific Lamprey habitat. No one knows exactly how the stream will behave this winter, but the slide has already come into the river a good 30-40 ft and the large boulders (some as large as small cars) will sharply move the river to the left and remove acres of soil from landowners properties in a very short period of time.

Due to the fact that addressing these concerns can be very lengthy, difficult, controversial, political, and expenses the Coos SWCD has tried to move this project to a successful long-term solution as quickly as possible. The Coos SWCD would like to help pay for this project, but like a lot of others is currently strapped for financial funds; therefore the Coos SWCD is turning to others for help. The first step in trying to get others on board was to find out what really is going on with this site. The Coos SWCD turned to PBS Engineering to get a free proposal for a geotechnical assessment, which they did conduct in early July. The proposal outlined the problem and gave a detailed proposal of how PBS can do a proper geotechnical survey to really assess what this slide is capable of. This is the first step in fixing the problem, but just to do this risk assessment it will cost just over \$13,000 in engineering expenses. The hope is once we have this risk assessment the Coos SWCD can go after larger amounts of money from sources like Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) in the form of grants to properly address this slide.

Currently the Coos SWCD is starting to build momentum, they have gotten cooperation from the Port of Coquille, and have talked to the Coquille Indian Tribes, and the Coos County Road department might get involved. There are a lot of private landowners that have erosion problems and concerns and the Coos SWCD is trying to look into finding solutions for their issues also. The slide is an opportunity to try to do something positive that will have lasting effects for the environment and comfort landowners that the Coos SWCD hears their concerns.

**Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Coquille Watershed Association (CWA), and Coos Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) team up to improve Myrtle Point's drinking water by addressing water quality issues on the North Fork and East Fork of the Coquille River through education and on the ground projects by using funding from a DEQ Grant**



Myrtle Point's drinking water intake point with fish screen located on the North Fork of the Coquille River a 1/2 mile up Weekly Creek Road and the Cooper Bridge.

## **BACKGROUND**

The North Fork Coquille River drains 154 square miles and joins the mainstream Coquille River near Myrtle Point. The river provides drinking water to approximate 2,500 residents in the City of Myrtle Point, and is also an important waterway for fish habitat and recreation.

Agricultural practices, past timber harvest practices, and associated land management activities in the North and East Fork Coquille River drainages have resulted in changed hydrologic conditions that have degraded watershed conditions. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) lists the North Fork Coquille as water quality limited for flow, habitat modification, temperature, and dissolved oxygen. During monitoring of raw drinking water in 2008-2009, Myrtle Point Water Treatment Plant reported *E. coli* counts that exceed the recreational contact standard of 406 counts/100 ml. Organic pollution from sources such as manure, decomposing plant and algal matter, and pesticides, also pose a threat within the drinking water source area because they can lead to the formation of unsafe levels of disinfection by-product chemicals during the water treatment process.

Myrtle Point's Source Water Assessment (DEQ and DHS, 2002) identified potential contaminant sources with the watershed. Higher risk potential contaminant sources include: grazing animals, stream bank erosion, forest management, steam crossings, transmission line right-of-ways, and mining/gravel pits. The Coquille Watershed Association has successfully completed habitat restoration work throughout the watershed, and will use this DEQ grant to assist in developing projects that improve drinking water protection.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The focus of this project is to educate landowners about best management strategies to help prevent bacteria, nutrients, sediment, and organic pollutants from entering waterways within Myrtle Point's drinking water source area, and in turn, help improve overall water quality conditions for beneficial uses. The work will directly address a number of higher risk potential contaminant sources that threaten drinking water. Possible long-term improvements include a reduction in risks associated with bacteria exposure, reduction in the formation of disinfection by-products, reduction in water treatment plant operating costs, and improved riparian habitat and in-stream conditions for aquatic organisms. Actions may also help ensure that local water quality meets the State's recreational contact standards. This project will increase community awareness about water pollution issues in the East Fork and North Fork Coquille watersheds, as well as educate residents and landowners about ways to restore water quality and riparian health. An important outcome of this project will be a list of landowners who are interested in implementing riparian improvement projects on their properties. The list will be used by the Coquille Watershed Association and the Coos SWCD to prioritize areas and seek additional funding for on-the-ground restoration and implementation of best management practices. This work may lead into writing and finalizing a "Myrtle Point Drinking Water Management Plan" in the near future.

## **THEPROJECT**

This approximately \$15,000 grant consists of three parts: identify geographic priority areas (areas closest to the intake system shown in the photo above), conduct outreach and education in priority areas, and site evaluation and project development. The goals of the restoration project would be to address one or more of the following objectives:

- 1) Increase shade to a minimum of 70% canopy cover.
- 2) Reduce area of active erosion throughout project reach and stabilize banks.
- 3) Increase native plant species diversity and density; reduce invasive plant species.
- 4) Improve manure management, irrigation, forest management, or other applicable practices to reduce transport of bacteria, sediment, nutrients, or organic contaminants to nearby waterways.

## **TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LANDOWNERS**

This project is an opportunity for landowners who live in this watershed to get answers and assistance to any concerns about your property. Agencies like the Coos Soil and Water Conservation District, Coquille Watershed Association, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are all here to help the concerned landowner financially and with technical advice. Just because you may not live in this part of Coos County doing best management practices on your land will help improve not only your property but your watershed as a whole. The Coos SWCD understands that this attention to these areas may concern may landowners, but these agencies involved are here to help. So please contact Eric Himmelreich from the Coos SWCD at 396-6879 or the Coquille Watershed Association at 572-2541 or the NRCS at 396-2841 or Jackie Fern (DEQ Drinking Water Education at (541) 686-7898 for more information.

## *Labrousse's Culvert Replacement Project*

**COST FOR PROJECT:** \$21,422.00  
**OWEB SMALL GRANT:** \$10,000.00  
**AWARD DATE:** 10-28-08  
**PROJECT COMPLETED:** 7-10-09

The Labrousse's live approximately one mile up Stock Slough Road which is approximately 2.5 miles up Catching Slough Road and located in the Coos Watershed Association boundary. Their driveway crosses Stock Slough at a known Coho fish way, and their culvert was no longer functioning properly. The culvert was undersized, damaged, and is at least 95% plugged on the inlet side. The banks on either side of the road were completely vertical due to erosion caused by high winter flows. The culvert was a potential fish passage barrier to adult salmon.



Before Photo



After Photo

The existing 36 inch culvert was replaced with a 96 inch round corrugated metal culvert that was approximately 40 feet long. The culvert was installed in the same location and at the same slope as the current culvert. The replacement culvert was designed to meet current Oregon State regulations and rules for fish passage. This now opens at least two miles of suitable Coho salmon habitat.

This project became an example of how some projects can get approval from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to receive permission to work outside the summer in-stream work window. Due to the fact that the culvert was most likely a fish barrier and the road had a high likelihood of failing during a severe weather event the culvert was scheduled to be done during the winter if the stream flows were low enough. Due to the fact that the contractor was busy with other commitments, and the weather didn't cooperate the project was postponed until late June 2009.



## INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT



**Brazilian Elodea** (*Egeria densa*) - Brazilian Waterweed seen here on a surveyor's boot.

### SPECIES AT A GLANCE

Brazilian elodea (*Egeria densa*) is a rooted and submersed freshwater plant found in lakes and slow-moving rivers and streams. This fast-growing perennial is adaptable to diverse climatic and chemical conditions, often forming dense, single-species patches when introduced to new regions.

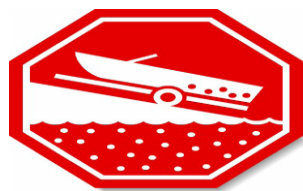
### HOW THIS SPECIES SPREADS

Widely introduced around the globe as a popular aquarium species, it becomes established when released from personal aquariums. Range expansion occurs through plant fragmentation. Pieces of Brazilian elodea can be carried by water currents or become introduced to new waterways via attachment to boats, trailers, or fishing equipment.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This plant often forms dense, single-species stands that outcompete and displace native vegetation and reduce the water quality of fish habitat and alter aquatic community composition. Dense stands of Brazilian elodea increase sedimentation, decrease sunlight penetration and dissolved oxygen levels, and reduce navigation and recreational opportunities. An example of this infestation problem can be found locally at Tenmile Lake.

### PREVENTION



## **STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!**

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.  
[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

Boat Rinsing Spreads Invasive Species!  
*Flush your motor at home away from storm drains, ditches or other waterways.*

- **Clean** all aquatic vegetation, shellfish or other species from hull, motor, trailer and fishing gear after each use.
- **Drain** all interior compartments (bilge, livewells, etc).
- **Dry** your boat thoroughly before next use

For more information visit the Oregon Marine Board website at [www.boatoregon.com](http://www.boatoregon.com)

On the Lookout for Aquatic Invaders *Identification Guide for the Pacific Northwest* Sea Grant Oregon



Coos Soil & Water Conservation District  
371 North Adams Street  
Coquille, OR 97423

### **COOS SWCD UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS**

- **Regular Meetings:** 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month
- **Landowner Resource Guides available at office**
- **Conservation/Farm Planning**
- **Technical & Financial Assistance**
- **Weed wrenches:** for extracting noxious weeds on your property ex. gorse and scotch broom are available at the Coos SWCD (396-6879) and NRCS (396-2841) offices in Coquille.

