

North Fork John Day Watershed Council

North Fork Currents

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Visit us on the web at www.nfjdw.org

October-December 2011

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For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad.

~Edwin Way Teale

Landowners Get It Done

With our field season drawing to a close, the NFJDWC's list of on-the-ground accomplishments has grown considerably. But before we go taking too much credit, we want to thank all the landowners whose commitment to conservation and love of the land is what enables us to see each project through to completion.

Farming, ranching and caring for the land is a way of life here, supporting a culture that is highly valued by all of us who live, work and play in this special place. Conservation-oriented agriculture helps restore and maintain biodiversity, protect native wildlife and preserve our wide open spaces -- all while producing food, fiber and jobs.

Despite hard times and public grazing uncertainties, local landowners and land managers looked to the future and undertook a variety of projects in 2011 that will benefit the entire watershed for generations to come. Here's just some of what landowners got done this year:

21 miles of fencing: Research has shown direct control of livestock distribution and grazing intensity to be an important component of successful cattle production. Riparian fencing can help provide this control and improve forage conditions.



Upcoming Events

- Oct. 18** NFJDWC meeting 6pm at Long Creek Office
- Nov. 7—11** Councils & districts joint conference
- Nov. 15** America Recycles Day
- Nov. 15** NFJDWC meeting 6pm at Long Creek Office
- Dec. 20** NFJDWC meeting 6pm at Long Creek Office



380 acres of juniper treatment: Removing waterhogging juniper helps increase native plant diversity, resilience and abundance; enhance avian and wildlife habitat; improve infiltration of precipitation; increase groundwater potential, and reduce the risk of wildfires.

3 culvert replacements: These undersized, malfunctioning culverts were causing road and stream damage. Replacing them with culverts designed for all life stages of migrating fish restored more than 9 miles of spawning and rearing habitat.



135 acres of weeds treated: Invasive plants reduce the amount of available forage for livestock and wildlife. The spread of weeds has a direct economic impact on the entire watershed, so individual efforts to fight infestations benefit all of us.



10 Upland Water Developments: New upland watering sites help reduce livestock concentrations and encourage more dispersed grazing. These water developments can also decrease the need for water gaps in riparian areas and thus lower fence construction and maintenance costs.

Partners and Funders included: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, NRCS, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Grant Weed Control, Morrow County Parks, and numerous private landowners and managers.

Umatilla Forest Collaborative

Looking for Local Solutions

The NFJWC has taken on coordination of a stakeholder's group that will work with the Umatilla National Forest to help resolve forest vegetation management issues and develop projects of benefit to the forest as well as the local economy.

A meeting held last month in Pendleton brought together timber interests, grazing permittees, environmental groups, the Forest Service, along with other state and federal agencies, local civic leaders, and interested members of the public. The Governor's office and Senator Ron Wyden also had representatives present. A number of potential projects were discussed. Because the Umatilla Forest has both dry forest types and a high percent of cool, moist forest types, the group decided to tackle a project in each type.

The dry forest project will work on fuels reduction and forest restoration in the Heppner Ranger District. The moist forest project, in the northern part of the National Forest, involves managing tracts that were clear cut 30 to 50 years ago, and are now mature enough for commercial harvest.

With roads already in place, these single-age stands could be logged with minimal impacts. The group thought it was an opportunity for environmental and timber interests to join in a common vision that harvest and restoration can go hand-in-hand to provide local jobs, help maintain existing logging infrastructure and supply much needed wood to eastside mills.

The next collaborative group meeting is planned for mid-November. Please contact us for exact date and time.



Bringing diverse interests together in a diverse forest

Weather Outlook — La Niña, Weaker or Stronger?

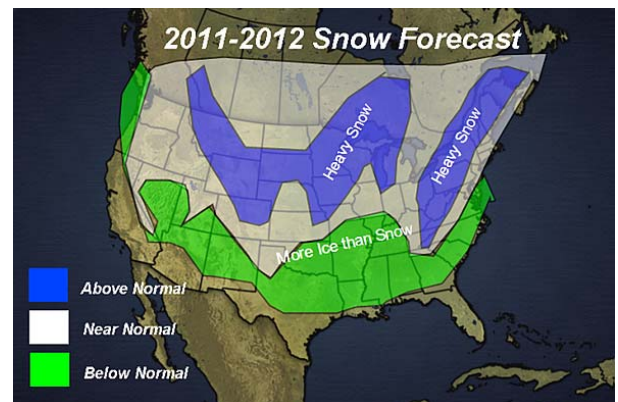
Weather forecasters are as bad as politicians when it comes to making a decision. This year they can't seem to settle on what the return of La Niña means for our 2012 winter weather outlook. The strong 2010-11 La Niña contributed to record winter snowfall and flooding this spring in northern parts of the country, followed by record heat and drought conditions in the south.

La Niña typically occurs every three-to-five years, and back-to-back episodes occur about 50 percent of the time. Forecasters agree this is a back-to-back year, but they can't seem to agree if it will be weaker or stronger than last year. Normally the second La Niña year is milder. This year, the National Centers for Environmental Prediction says the returning La Niña may become as strong as last year's.

"La Niña is not as strong now as it was in September 2010," the center reported. "But roughly one-half of the models predict La Niña to strengthen during the Northern Hemisphere fall and winter."

So what do they say this means for the Pacific Northwest?

- ◆ Placid weather will likely continue well into October.
- ◆ Look for an abrupt transition to "quite stormy" weather in late October; with a good chance of significant early-season mountain snows.
- ◆ November is the month most likely to have warmer-than-normal conditions. Although stormy periods are likely, the month may end up being slightly drier-than-normal.
- ◆ Extremes are possible, in any direction, in December, with the eventual strength of La Niña playing an important role.



Source: Accuweather.com

Flora and Fauna

Torrent Sedge

A Natural Streambed Stabilizer

After profiling so many invasive plants with all their negative impacts, let's move from the bad and the ugly and take a look at the good for a change. As the primary producers in all healthy ecosystems, native plants are the main factor determining the quality and quantity of goods, services and enjoyment we derive from the land. From livestock forage and wildlife habitat to erosion control and fire resistance, these plants perform vital ecological functions.

Torrent sedge (Carex nudata) is one such hardworking Oregon native. This bright green sedge grows in mounds below the high-water mark in marshes and on river banks. It germinates on gravel bars and forms tussocks with dense, tough root masses that are very resistant to erosion and serve to stabilize the streambed. Since it is only moderately palatable to cattle, and water often inhibits access early in the grazing season, livestock generally avoid it until later when it may become the only greenery available. Overuse can change streamside vegetation from protective sedges such as this, to open, non-protective forbs. This contributes to streambank erosion and diminishes the filtering and sediment reducing actions that torrent sedge performs.



Sandhill Crane Time an excerpt from the nature journal of Rene' Harmon, Ritter



We are fierce watchers, many of my neighbors and I. This easy familiarity with the natural world around (and above) us comes from close observation. In Practice of the Wild, Gary Snyder writes, "Bioregional awareness teaches us in specific ways. Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience." In sharing, personally and within our neighborhood communities, we can have direct involvement in "the web of the wild world."

For a time, both spring and fall, we share our place with Sandhill Cranes. Navigating a migration course between the ridges of our watershed community and following its waterways, they are among us. We can share what they sound like, their comical aerial flailing catching those thermals, and note arrival dates. Collectively and individually we can be mindful. My neighbor emails me, "It is truly humbling to think the cranes have been flying over this very spot since long before anyone was ever here, and with luck will continue their journeys long after we have all departed."

I look up this day's date one year ago in my journal. Yep, they should be here. Two years ago, ooh.. a few days later, more toward the end of the month. Well, waiting and watching is half the fun...

Tax-Deductible Donations

The North Fork John Day Watershed Council brings varied interests together in a non-regulatory setting and gives local residents a voice in the future of their watershed. Your tax-deductible contribution will help us continue these efforts and can be used as match funds when we apply for grants to protect water, wildlife and working farms & ranches in our area.



THANK YOU!

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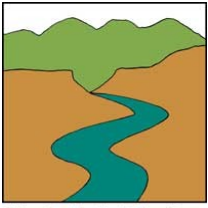
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About the North Fork John Day Watershed Council

The North Fork John Day Watershed Council was formed by local citizens in 1995 and incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization in 2006. Our mission is to plan, fund and implement programs that protect the health of our watershed, honor tribal treaty rights and provide long-term stability for the individuals and communities that rely on the watershed's natural resources. Through restoration, monitoring and outreach, we seek to foster an understanding that upland and riparian habitat improvement, weed management and other conservation efforts are vital to the social and economic fabric of the area.

Projects sponsored by the Council include, but are not limited to, upland watering system developments; irrigation diversion and efficiency projects; riparian improvements; removal of fish passage barriers; water quality monitoring; noxious weed control; educational outreach and technical assistance.

CONTACT

Phone: 541 421-3018
Fax: 541 421-3019

Elaine Eisenbraun, Executive Director (elaine@nfjdw.org)

Bryan Vogt, Project Manager (bryan@nfjdw.org)

Valeen Madden, Business Manager (valeen@nfjdw.org)

Erik Rook, Monitoring & Data/GIS Specialist (erik@nfjdw.org)

Patti Hudson, Outreach Coordinator (patti@pattihudson.com)

Crish Hamilton, Education Specialist (crish@nfjdw.org)

BOARD

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MEETINGS

NFJDWC meetings are open to the public and held the third Tuesday of every month at 6pm. Contact us for agendas and locations.

Visit us on the web at www.nfjdw.org