



April 11, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Rogue River Watershed Council

Re: SB 5539 (or 5540, or both) – Relating to the financial administration of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; declaring an emergency

Dear Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham and Members of the Subcommittee:

Wildfires throughout western Oregon in late summer of 2020 had devastating impacts on watersheds as well as the communities and wildlife that rely on them. Here in southern Oregon, four particularly large fires (Slater and Devils in Josephine County and South Obenchain and Almeda Drive in Jackson County) burned roughly 200,000 acres (some of the acres associated with Slater and Devils fires are in northern California), destroyed over 2,600 homes, and damaged large swaths of the cities of Talent and Phoenix.

Through House Bill 5006 of the 2021 Oregon Legislative Session, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has administered several grant programs to address the impacts of these fires through forest rehabilitation, floodplain restoration, and land acquisition with voluntary and willing sellers.

Five entities in Josephine and Jackson Counties received grants from OWEB addressing impacts from the 2020 fires (The City of Talent, The Freshwater Trust, Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, and Rogue River Watershed Council). The deadline for these grants is June 30, 2023, but these types of projects frequently require lengthy development, landowner engagement, and permitting; furthermore, construction within stream channels and on some floodplain areas can only occur during a narrow window in summer (to protect native fish). While the five projects our groups are administering are progressing, none of them are likely to be complete by June 30, 2023.

All five grantees are making great strides on their respective projects, which are efforts that will direct over \$3,360,000 total (~\$2,965,000 from OWEB) into the local economy. **We urge the legislature to include any unspent balances from these OWEB wildfire recovery grant**

programs in a reallocation in OWEB's 2023-2025 budget. The projects will provide community and environmental uplift to areas that need large doses of both.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian R. Barr", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian R. Barr, Executive Director
Rogue River Watershed Council
541-423-6187
bbarr@rogueriverwc.org
www.rogueriverwc.org

Attachments:

- 1) Jackson and Josephine County OWEB 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Funds Grant Recipient summary package
- 2) Letter of Support from Medford Water Commission
- 3) Letter of Support from the Jackson County Board of Commissioners.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Funds

The 2020 Oregon wildfire season was one of the most destructive on record in the state of Oregon. In early September, unusually high winds and continued dry weather caused the rapid expansion of numerous wildfires in Oregon. Over 1,000,000 acres burned, necessitating the evacuation of about 40,000 people (with another 500,000 people under evacuation warning). The cities of Phoenix, Talent, Detroit, and Gates in Oregon were largely destroyed by the Almeda Drive and Santiam Fires, respectively.

The Almeda Drive Fire was particularly catastrophic. On the morning of Sept. 8, 2020, it swept through the Rogue Valley of Jackson County within a matter of hours, destroying more than 2,600 homes in Ashland, Talent, Phoenix and Medford. It was the most destructive wildfire in Oregon's recorded history, and resulted in severe water quality degradation, including threats to the drinking water supplies for Gold Hill, Rogue River, and Grants Pass, and to aquatic and riparian plants and animals.

Nearby, the South Obenchain Fire burned more than 32,000 acres of public and private land in Jackson County. The fire destroyed homes, outbuildings and infrastructure, irrigated and dry pastureland, riparian vegetation, and upland habitat, resulting in large areas exposed to erosion and invasive species colonization, degraded aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat, and a loss of livestock and wildlife forage.

The Slater and Devil fires both burned in Northern California (Siskiyou and Del Norte) and Southern Oregon (Josephine County). The fires burned 166,127 acres, claimed two lives, injured 12 people, and resulted in national forest closures, highway infrastructure damage, and the loss of personal property.

During the 2021 Oregon Legislative Session and in response to these catastrophic events, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) received funding to provide grants to support natural resource recovery in areas impacted during the 2020 fire season. These grants are supported by General Funds and have an explicit Legislative intent, per House Bill 5006 (2021), to support on-the-ground implementation activities focusing on upland and riparian replanting and floodplain restoration.

OWEB awarded five entities in southwest Oregon a total of \$2,964,882 Post-Fire Recovery Funds between September 2022 and March 2023. The grantees listed secured match of \$399,159. Each grantee is leading one project, and those projects are at currently at various stages of implementation. Typically, these types of projects require at least one year, preferably two, to develop, permit, contract, and implement. At this time, the grant award deadlines are all June 30, 2023, representing considerably less time than is typically needed to achieve the social and ecological objectives of these sorts of projects.

All five entities have informed OWEB they will not be able to complete their project before the deadline and are unified in encouraging the state legislature to extend the unused balance of awarded funds into the next biennium so that the projects can be completed and the benefits of these efforts are realized by the affected communities and natural areas.

Each project is unique in the associated objectives and their approaches to restoration and rehabilitation on the post-fire landscape. However, there is substantial societal uplift among all five projects. Collectively, these projects will contribute over \$3 million dollars into the local restoration economy and they will help communities continue to recover by building trust among public entities and the general public. Extension of this funding is pivotal to realizing both environmental and community uplift in areas that need much of both.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Funds

We, the undersigned, encourage the State of Oregon to extend the deadline of the awarded grants supported by General Funds and have an explicit Legislative intent, per House Bill 5006 (2021).

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Jordan Rooklyn

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City of Talent

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John Bellville

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Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District

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Randy White

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Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District

DocuSigned by:

Brian R. Barr

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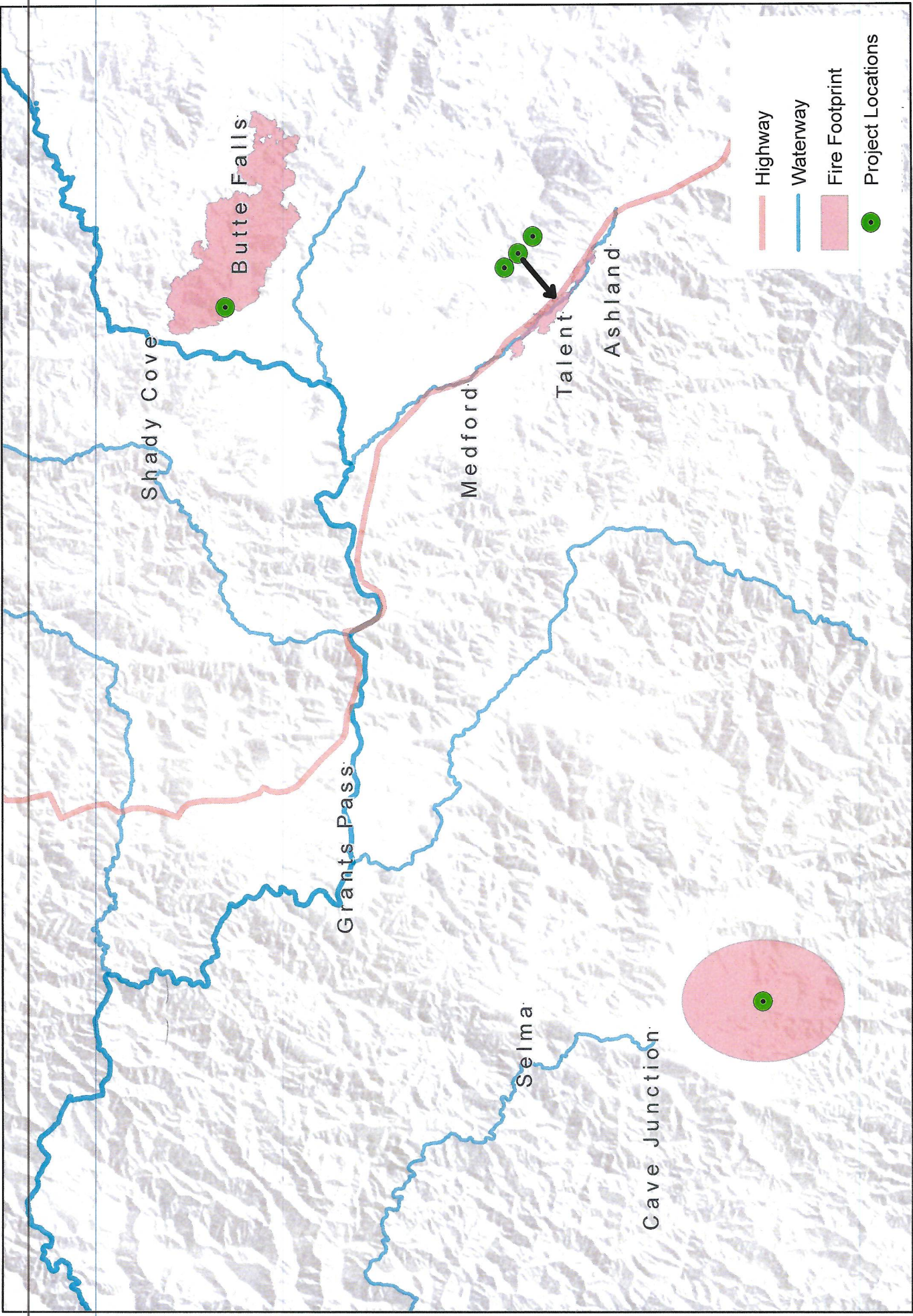
Rogue River Watershed Council

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Kimberlee Abiland

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The Freshwater Trust



Southwest Oregon 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Projects



- Highway
- Waterway
- Fire Footprint
- Project Locations

Project: Water Quality and Upland Canopy Recovery

Grantee: City of Talent

Project Manager: Mike Oxendine, moxendine@cityoftalent.org

Date Applied: 1/5/2023

Grant Agreement Executed: Recommended for funding

OWEB Award Amount: \$549,823

Grant Match: \$132,736 Secured

Expected Amount Spent by 6/30/2023: \$200,000

Project Partners: Plant Oregon, Talent Urban Forestry Committee, the National Park Service Rivers Trails, Conservation Assistance Program, Casa of Oregon, and Green Top Planning

Project Summary:

The Almeda Fire on September 8th, 2020, destroyed 26.3% or approximately 3,477 trees within the incorporated area of Talent, Oregon. The fire burned 312 of Talent's 851.1 total acres, 36.7% of the city. The loss of the tree canopy has resulted in increased ground temperatures, increased storm water runoff, increased nutrient and sediment loads, and general degradation of the upstream drinking source water for Gold Hill, Rogue River, and Grants Pass. All of Talent's storm water flows into Bear Creek, a tributary of the Rogue River.

The ecological restoration of the riparian areas (Urban Riparian Forest Buffers) along Bear Creek, Anderson Creek, and Wagner Creek are primarily being addressed by partner agencies such as the Freshwater Trust and the Rogue River Watershed Council. The area that is not being adequately addressed is the upland area and its urban forest.

The primary goal of this urban forest replanting and wildfire recovery project is to begin the restoration process of the urban forest and the vast ecological services it provided. Restoration and enhancement of Talent's urban forest will improve downstream water quality through interception of precipitation and improved filtration and infiltration.

Objective #1

Plant 1,088 1.5-inch to 2.5-inch caliper urban trees selected from the Approved Talent Street Tree List within the 2023 planting season geographically dispersed throughout Talent's 312 acre burn scar.

Objective #2

Inventory all trees planted under this project.

Objective #3

Maintain and report on all trees under this project annually.

Talent was awarded the OWEB funds in February, 2023. However, it is unrealistic to complete an ecological restoration project within that timeframe for several reasons:

- 1.) Planting trees while they are dormant provides the highest opportunity for successful establishment (November - March).
- 2.) Establishing trees in Southern Oregon requires a minimum of 3 years of irrigation and maintenance. Preferably 5 years of monitoring and irrigation that can be reduced annually.
- 3.) Large scale recovery projects are logistically challenging, particularly post disaster. Municipalities have a long list of numerous, sometimes competing (limited resources) recovery projects/priorities. Ecological restoration typically takes a back-seat to human displacement and infrastructure restoration projects which tax local resources for several years post disaster.
- 4.) Requests for Proposals which are required on most projects have noticing requirements and follow a timeline that allows for fair and equitable access to these projects. In rural areas where resources are already taxed due to disasters these processes are slower and contractors are typically engaged in current projects that push out availability for scheduling - coupled with seasonal work windows creates a lengthened process.

Project: Upper Illinois Watershed Post-Fire Restoration

Grantee: Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District

Project Manager: John Bellville, conservation@ivstreamteam.org

Date Applied: 1/6/2023

Grant Agreement Executed: Recommended for Funding

OWEB Award Amount: \$271,254 Pending

Grant Match: \$9,002 Pending

Expected Amount Spent by 6/30/2023: TBA

Project Partners: Illinois Valley Watershed Council (IVWC), Illinois Valley Fire Resiliency Oversight Group (IVFROG), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Pacific Ridgeline Forestry, Grayback Forestry, Oregon State University, Wilson Biochar Associates, Rogue Basin Partnership (RBP), Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (SOFRC), Takilma Community Association (TCA)

Project Summary:

The project is located within the rural community of Takilma, OR (Josephine County). Project work will occur on six private properties. The work will encompass approx. 96 acres of privately owned forestland burned in the 2020 Slater Fire, located in both the upland and floodplain segments of the Upper East Fork Illinois River Watershed. The Klamath National Forest to the southeast and Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest border the private woodlands surrounding the Takilma community. 62,293 acres of Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest-managed lands were also consumed by the 2020 Slater Fire.

The needs of the project are two-fold: 1) to mitigate soil erosion in burned-out areas to protect aquatic ecosystems and 2) to implement post-fire recovery with a holistic approach considering the area's extensive fire history. In 1987, the Long Wood Fire burned these same properties.

The post-fire recovery work being proposed includes silvicultural prescriptions, hazardous tree removal, site preparation, and comprehensive replanting with a mix of appropriate, fire-adapted site-specific species.

Objective #1

Conduct site preparation in project area.

Objective #2

Conduct replanting activities in project area.

Objective #3

Host a celebratory public engagement event once project work has been completed.

The burn scar of the powerfully destructive Slater Fire evinces aspects of environmental degradation at a landscape scale. Environmental threats in the aftermath of the fire remain persistent in the Illinois Valley well over two years after its containment, especially on privately owned lands where little restoration work has occurred. The most germane of these concerns, that the work of this project will aim to remediate, are erosion, post-fire stand replacement by species better suited to a warming climate, water quality degradation, and establishment of conditions favorable to successive catastrophic wildfires.

The Illinois Valley watershed is a wild Salmon Stronghold. Soil scorched by high-intensity wildfires can lead to problematic environmental effects such as soil structure alteration, hydrophobicity (water repellency), iron oxidation, and erosion. In areas of elevated soil burn severity, such as observable in the 2020 Slater Fire boundary, there is a concern for increased runoff from steep hillslopes, resultant increases in post-fire soil erosion (sheet, rill, and/or gully), and exacerbated debris flows following rain events. These attributes of environmental degradation are potentially devastating to the ecologically significant population of Coho salmon that spawns in this watershed.

The objectives of this project will not be able to be successfully achieved if 2023-2025 funding is not carried forward. The Illinois Valley is generationally impoverished, rurally isolated, and one of the highest-risk areas for wildfire in the country. Extension of this funding would not only provide environmental uplift but also community uplift to an area much in need of it. There is strong partner and community backing for this particular project.

Project: South Obenchain Fire Restoration

Grantee: Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District

Project Manager: Clint Nichols, clint.nichols@jswcd.org

Date Applied: 9/10/2022

Grant Agreement Executed: 1/17/2023

OWEB Award Amount: \$1,016,103

Grant Match: \$42,908 Secured \$13,200 Pending

Expected Amount Spent by 6/30/2023: \$335,000

Project Partners: Rogue River Watershed Council, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Medford Water Commission, and the Bureau of Land Management

Project Summary:

The South Obenchain Fire burned more than 32,000 acres of public and private land in Jackson County. The fire destroyed homes, outbuildings and infrastructure, irrigated and dry pastureland, riparian vegetation and upland habitat, leaving key natural resources exposed to erosion and invasive species colonization and establishment, degraded aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat, and loss of available livestock and wildlife forage. This project includes private lands affected by the South Obenchain Fire in Jackson County. We intend to build on the efforts begun with the South Obenchain Fire Recovery Project (OWEB Grant # 220-8011-19349) with continued assistance to landowners. This project has refocused our work on the Reese Creek Watershed due to its importance as aquatic habitat for threatened and endangered fish species and its potential impacts to source waters downstream.

Our outreach included 24 landowners within the Reese Creek Watershed that have property adjacent to Reese Creek or major tributaries of Reese Creek. Of those 24 landowners, we have successfully established contact and project plans with 12, totaling 71.5 acres of riparian forest and 3.2 miles of livestock exclusion fencing protecting 2.7 stream miles. Our work will focus on the following practices: - Invasive species control, specifically mechanical, hand crew, and continuing chemical control of Himalayan blackberry - Reseeding of native grasses and forbs to restore an herbaceous understory - Replanting native trees and shrubs to restore riparian forest function - Livestock exclusion fencing and alternative livestock watering systems to protect plantings and prevent livestock from damaging stream banks, stream beds, and impairing water quality

Objective #1

Obtain Jackson County approval via the OWEB Land Use Form and Jackson County Type 2 Land Use Application for our fencing activities

Objective #2

Out of our total project area of 71.5 acres, we will treat 50.3 acres of riparian forest using equipment and hand crews to remove blackberry and other stands of invasive herbaceous species.

Objective #3

Reseed 71.5 acres of riparian forest with native perennial grasses and native forbs to reestablish a riparian forest understory.

Objective #4

Treat 71.3 acres of recovering riparian forest for invasive species.

Objective #5

Construction of approx. 3.2 miles of livestock exclusion fencing within the Reese Creek Watershed.

Objective #6

Replant the remaining 32.1 acres of riparian forest with native trees and shrubs.

Objective # 7

Complete 2 years of invasive species control on 71.5 acres of riparian forest using licensed herbicide contractors and hand crews

Project: Bear Creek RM 19.0 Post Fire Restoration

Grantee: Rogue River Watershed Council

Project Manager: John Speece, jspeece@rogueriverwc.org

Date Applied: 5/27/2022

Grant Agreement Executed: 9/22/2022

OWEB Award Amount: \$675,307

Grant Match: \$ 110,000 Secured \$110,440 Pending

Expected Amount Spent by 6/30/2023: \$50,000

Project Partners: Rogue River Watershed Council, The Freshwater Trust, the City of Talent, Cascade Stream Solutions, Oregon Department of Transportation, Jackson County, and the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative

Project Summary:

The Almeda Fire was particularly catastrophic. On the morning of Sept. 8, 2020, it swept through the Rogue Valley within a matter of hours, destroying more than 2,600 homes between Ashland, Talent, Phoenix and Medford. It was the most destructive wildfire in Oregon's recorded history. That afternoon, the South Obenchain Fire, near Eagle Point and Butte Falls in Jackson County, burned another 33 homes and dozens of other buildings.

The Almeda Fire burned 300 acres of riparian area along Bear Creek. This resulted in severe water quality degradation, including threats to the drinking water for Gold Hill, Rogue River, and Grants Pass, and to the riparian and aquatic communities. Conditions at the project site have continued to degrade, highlighted by the return of invasive species, severe erosion along exposed banks, and the loss of the remaining overstory trees due to high wind events.

The goal of the Bear Creek RM 19.0 project is to rehabilitate the riparian conditions and restore stream physical processes by improving floodplain and side channel connectivity. To achieve this, we will work with local contractors and project partners to accomplish the following objectives:

Objective #1

Large wood placement at 34 strategic locations within the 0.26 miles of primary and 0.22 miles of secondary channels.

Objective #2

Secondary channel enhancement of 1,170 linear feet (0.22 mile) that is intended to create winter flow with the frequency and duration that is beneficial to over-wintering juvenile fish.

Objective #3

Riparian forest rehabilitation on 10.0 acres of fire-damaged floodplain and riparian area.

Objective #4

Engage the general public about post-fire restoration projects and watershed stewardship activities.

Floodplain and instream projects often require nearly two years of project planning, design, permitting, and contracting before construction can begin. Instream construction is limited to the in-water work period (July – Sept). For this project the in-water work period begins after the 6/30/2023 grant end date.

Community and partner support is strong for this project. If carry forward of grant funds into the 2023 – 2025 biennium does not occur the project objectives will not be achieved. Furthermore, an opportunity to inject restoration dollars into the local economy and a community ravaged by the fire will be lost.

Project: Bear Creek North Bank Fire Restoration Project

Grantee: The Freshwater Trust

Project Manager: Eugene Weir, Eugene@thefreshwatertrust.org

Date Applied: 1/6/2023

Grant Agreement Executed: March, 2023

OWEB Award Amount: \$452,395

Grant Match: \$ 113,515 Secured

Expected Amount Spent by 6/30/2023: \$324,395

Project Partners: Rogue River Watershed Council, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Jackson County, and the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative

Project Summary:

The Bear Creek North Bank Fire Restoration Project is located in the middle reaches of Bear Creek (River mile 16.6 through 23.5) between the cities of Phoenix and Ashland. This entire reach was impacted by the Almeda Fire of 2020. Although the fire was one of the most destructive disasters our watershed has experienced, it also resulted in a once in a lifetime opportunity to regain ecological function along Bear Creek. The opportunity window is narrow and efficiencies that can be gained by early action will be lost within the next 1-2 years as weeds and native vegetation regrow into each other.

The goal of this project is to improve ecological conditions and community safety at priority locations on the north bank of Bear Creek that were fire impacted and now have ecological restoration underway nearby. This effort will compound the benefits of riparian restoration projects on the south banks of Bear Creek on the same properties. The primary objectives for work to be implemented in spring 2023 include developing access and conducting site clean-up, invasive weed management, and safe snag creation on sites on the north bank, as well as conducting management and stewardship activities on south bank.

If the funding timeline allows, riparian planting would be implemented at north bank sites in fall of 2023. By improving conditions on both sides of the stream in large blocks at priority locations we seek to restore and enhance conditions post-fire and build blocks of anchor habitat in upper Bear Creek. Jackson County is the primary landowner of the proposed sites, though there are also private and municipal properties in the project reach.

Objective #1

North Bank Site Access Development

Objective #2

North Bank Site Clean-Up

Objective #3

North Bank Invasive Weed Treatment

Objective #4

North Bank Snag Management

Objective #5

South Bank Site Management and Stewardship

Objective #6

North Bank Riparian Revegetation

While the majority of the proposed project work is scheduled for completion by June 30, 2023 an extension of the funding would allow TFT to plant these project locations in Fall 2023. That additional planting work would help increase diversity and native tree cover within priority locations where the Post Fire Vegetation Assessment completed in 2022 indicated there is need.



April 4, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Re: 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Funds

The Medford Water Commission (Medford Water) and its customers were deeply affected by the September 2020 wildfires. Medford Water provides clean drinking water to 150,000 citizens of the upper Rogue River region, where the Almeda and South Obenchain fires destroyed thousands of homes and burned approximately 35,000 acres of watershed land. Medford Water operates a municipal drinking water intake on the Rogue River downriver of the confluences of Little Butte Creek and Reese Creek, which contained most of the South Obenchain fire footprint. Nearly all of Medford Water's customers live in the Bear Creek Valley, where the Almeda Fire burned. Medford Water is a member of the Rogue Drinking Water Partnership (RDWP), which serves drinking water to over 200,000 people from Grants Pass to Shady Cove, and including Cave Junction. Other fires throughout western Oregon similarly affected drinking water for over one million residents of Oregon.

In 2021, OWEB distributed funding for restoration of fire-affected areas. The Rogue Basin was the recipient of five such grants to address impacts of the Almeda, So. Obenchain, and the Slater and Devil fires, which created potentially disastrous impacts to the sources of drinking water for Medford Water and RDWP utilities. Most of the grantees will be unable to complete the needed projects by the originally legislated deadline of June 30, 2023. Complex projects like these require years to design and implement. Recent studies have shown that effects to water quality can continue and actually accelerate in the 3-5 years after large wildfires due to increased erosion and sedimentation. Restoration of source watersheds after widespread large fire is essential to ensure ample, clean drinking water in the future for all Rogue Basin residents and throughout Oregon.

Medford Water asks that the grant funding be reallocated in the next biennium to allow these critical projects to be completed, not only for our customers and those of the other RDWP water utilities, but also for the social, environmental, and ecological integrity of the Rogue Basin.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Smitherman
Water Resources & Customer Service Manager

Craig Harper
Watershed Administrator

Copies: Rep. Pam Marsh
Sen. Jeff Golden
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

Board of Commissioners

Rick Dyer (541) 774-6118
Dave Dotterer (541) 774-6119
Colleen Roberts (541) 774-6117
Fax: (541) 774-6705

10 South Oakdale, Room 214
Medford, Oregon 97501

March 30, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE, S-213
Salem OR 97301

Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE, H-273
Salem OR 97301

RE: Jackson County's Support to Carry Forward Unspent 2020 Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Post-Fire Recovery Funds to the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

The 2020 wildfire season was one of the most destructive on record for the State of Oregon. A particularly dry summer, coupled with unusually high winds in early September 2020, caused numerous wildfires across Western Oregon to expand rapidly. Over 1,000,000 acres burned, forcing the evacuation of approximately 40,000 individuals. In Jackson County, the Almeda Fire largely destroyed the Cities of Phoenix and Talent, and the South Obenchain Fire burned over 32,000 acres in a rural area between the communities of Butte Falls, Eagle Point, and Shady Cove.

These wildfires destroyed over 2,600 homes as well as places of business, outbuildings, farmlands, and upland and streamside forests. Aside from disrupting communities and leaving thousands of Jackson County residents without homes or places of business, the ensuing and continuing impacts to water quality are affecting drinking water supplies for the Cities of Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Talent, Grants Pass, Gold Hill, and Rogue River. The burned areas are susceptible to erosion and the establishment of invasive weed species.

During the 2021 Oregon Legislative Session, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), received funding to provide grants in support of natural resource recovery in areas impacted by the 2020 wildfires. These grants are supported by the State General Fund and have an explicit legislative intent, according to Oregon House Bill (HB) 5006 (2021), to support on-the-ground activities focusing on upland and streamside forest rehabilitation and floodplain restoration. Through HB 5006, the grants have a spending deadline of June 30, 2023.

In late 2022, and early 2023, OWEB awarded four grants in support of post-fire recovery in Jackson County. Three of the grants supported projects associated with the Almeda Fire, and the fourth supports a project associated with the South Obenchain Fire. Each project is unique in their objectives and approaches to post-fire restoration and rehabilitation; however, they all provide societal uplift in addition to natural systems recovery.

Co-Chair Steiner
Co-Chair Sanchez
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
March 30, 2023
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Collectively, these projects will contribute \$2,693,628 of OWEB funding, along with an associated \$522,799 of matched funds, into the local economy and help impacted rural and urban communities continue their recovery by restoring habitats, decreasing erosion, improving the quality of source water for drinking, and reduce the impact of invasive weed species along streams and farm/pasture lands.

Due to the complexity of developing, designing, and permitting these types of projects, as well as the constraints regulating instream construction, all four grantees have informed OWEB that they will not be able to complete their respective projects before the June 30, 2023, deadline. The City of Talent, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Rogue River Watershed Council (RRWC), and The Freshwater Trust are unified in encouraging the State Legislature to extend the unexpended balance of awarded, post-fire recovery grants to the 2023 to 2025 biennial budget. The grantees estimate that the unexpended balance will be approximately \$1,784,233. We, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, support carrying the unexpended balances forward to the following biennium, so that the grantees will have the opportunity to complete these important projects. This will help ensure that the social and environmental benefits can be realized by the communities and natural areas of Jackson County, and the other impacted regions in Western Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Colleen Roberts, Chair



Rick Dyer, Commissioner



Dave Dotterrer, Commissioner

:bb/kk

By: Email Only to Brian Barr, Executive Director, RRWC, bbarr@rogueriverwc.org