

Project Completion Report for OWEB Grant 221-6010-19038

Final Completion Summary

Henry Creek is a tributary to the John Day River approximately 8.5 miles north of Spray, Oregon. With the property encompassing both range and forest lands, it serves as great habitat for diverse wildlife species. Multiple restoration objectives were sought and completed through the process of this grant. The main objective in cooperation with funding from NRCS was to restore and enhance forest area bordering the Umatilla National Forest. With this objective completed, the forest area is now fire resistant and healthier by thinning the overstocked pine and removing all Western juniper in the forest. The other completed components and objectives were to protect and enhance two declining Aspen stands and development of a spring for a livestock watering facility. The two Aspen stands were protected with exclusion fence and sapling cages. A viable livestock watering facility was created by development and piping of a spring to a tire trough protecting the spring source from livestock.

Background

Historic logging practices and fire suppression have resulted in forest stands being overstocked, stressed, and presenting excessive fuel loads. The lack of post logging maintenance, such as thinning, has led to the crowded, overstocked patches that are currently present on the landscape. Fire suppression has further exacerbated the situation and allowed for the expansion of Western Juniper throughout the mixed conifer forest.

Quaking Aspen are a species highly dependent on disturbance, mainly fire, to be rejuvenated. However, humans have altered the fire regime by aggressively fighting and quickly containing most, if not all wildfires over the past 100 years. Grazing and browse by domestic and wild ungulates also contributes to the decline of these aspen stands as well. Mule Deer, Elk, and cattle are all attracted to the tender shoots and leaves of aspen suckers preventing them from growing into mature trees.

Work Done

With the use of OWEB funds and NRCS funds, 137 acres of forest area were per-commercial thinned using a feller buncher. This project component encompassed the majority of the project objective in restoring the forested area to a more natural and fire resilient state. Prior to thinning, the forest was surveyed by an ODF forester for perspective and guidance on prescription. Also completed in the forest thinning area, all Western juniper was removed, slash piles were burned, and broadcast reseeding over equipment tracks was completed.

Two declining Aspen stands were protected and enhanced. The Aspen exclusion fence was completed using NRCS specifications and 20 mesh cages were dispersed throughout exclusion areas around Aspen suckers to protect and promote young Aspen.

The third project component and objective was to develop one spring into a viable water source for wildlife and livestock. With this component a 700 gallon water trough was piped from the spring to protect the spring source and improve livestock distribution.

Changes from Proposed

There was one project change that required a scope of work amendment. This change was in spring development and stock water facility location. This change didn't alter the budget in any way and only required Wheeler SWCD staff to make a site visit to photograph and map the new spring location. Ultimately, the new spring location was a better choice than the originally planned spring location because it created better grazing distribution for livestock as well as created a viable watering facility closer to wildlife habitat.

Public Awareness or Education

This project was showcased at the 2022 Wheeler County fair on display. For the display, Wheeler SWCD spotlighted the completed forestry thinning to give visual representation to the public of a now healthy and resilient forest stand. With the high concern of wildfire, Wheeler SWCD felt it appropriate to promote forestry work to the public as project components the district has to offer.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson to be learned from this project specifically relating to upland restoration and water facility development is to identify, locate, and consider all possible springs during the grant planning phase prior to application. The initial spring identified in the grant application to be developed was later changed to a different spring due to preferred location and higher water output. Not only is this a lesson to be learned from a project planning standpoint but also from a landowner communication stance of getting a full picture of the project area and landowner goals while planning conservation practices.

Recommendations

This was a very successful project in the eyes of conservation as well as partnership. The one recommendation that I have from this project is to do more outreach from the success of this project. For one, the successful partnership with NRCS to expand on conservation practices and reduce out of pocket money from the landowner to show other landowners what kind of funding opportunities are available.

Aquatic Habitat

N/A

Funding Sources

Source	Identifier	Cash	InKind Type	Inkind
OWEB	221-6010-19038	\$84,577.00		\$0.00
USDA-NRCS		\$34,606.00		\$0.00

Totals

OWEB Amount	Non OWEB Cash	Inkind Total	Non OWEB Amount	OWEB Match	Total Project Cost
\$84,577.00	\$34,606.00	\$0.00	\$34,606.00	41.0%	\$119,183.00

Uploaded Files

Image Type	File Name	Description
Photo Point	Before1.jpg	Before 1
Photo Point	After1.jpg	After 1
Photo Point	Before2.jpg	Before 2
Photo Point	After2.jpg	After 2
Photo Point	Before3.jpg	Before 3
Photo Point	After3.jpg	After 3
Photo Point	Before4.jpg	Before 4
Photo Point	After4.jpg	After 4
Photo Point	Before5.jpg	Before 5
Photo Point	After5.jpg	After 5
Photo Point	Before6.jpg	Before 6
Photo Point	After6.jpg	After 6
Photo Point	Before7.jpg	Before 7
Photo Point	After7.jpg	After 7
Photo Point	Before8.jpg	Before 8
Photo Point	After8.jpg	After 8
Photo Point	Before9.jpg	Before 9
Photo Point	After9.jpg	After 9

Photo Point	Before10.jpg	Before 10
Photo Point	After10.jpg	After 10
Photo Point	Before11.jpg	Before 11
Photo Point	After11.jpg	After 11
Photo Point	Before12.jpg	Before 12
Photo Point	After12.jpg	After 12
Photo Point	After13.jpg	After 13
Photo Point	After14.jpg	After 14
Photo Point	After15.jpg	After 15
Photo Point	After16.jpg	After 16
Map	Photo Point Map (Henry Creek).pdf	Photo Point Map
Photo (other)	PCR Photo Report.pdf	Project Completion Photo Report
Grazing Management Plan	Grazing Management Plan_221-6010_19038_11032022.pdf	Grazing Management Plan
Exhibit B	19038_Conditions.pdf	