COOPERATIVE riparian RESTORATION

Full Stream Ahead

May/June 2009

News and Highlights of Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration

Creeks and Communities Evaluation Update

One of the most pressing issues confronting rural communities in the American West today is the management of watersheds and riparian-wetland areas relative to the increasing demands for water. The problem is that the condition of many watersheds, riparian areas, and wetlands is diminished, and their ability to capture, store, and release water more slowly and for longer periods of time is far reduced from what it could be. The survival and well-being of communities depends upon addressing the long-term need for increasing water supplies, and as the population continues to increase, so will demands and additional causes of conflict. Because of the many values and benefits associated with riparian-wetland areas, the importance of building community capacity to navigate the complex and often contentious issues inherent in their management continues to be a focal point.

Oregon State University (OSU) is well positioned to conduct research relating to the development of such community capacity, due to wide-ranging faculty expertise in the both social and ecological aspects of riparian-wetland management. Furthermore, OSU recently identified six strategic initiatives for investment that will bring to the university new centers for research and outreach, one of which was the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative (SRCI). A central goal of the SRCI is to generate new knowledge about the challenges facing rural communities and what policies work best in rural places for achieving sustainability. The SRCI also aims to build capacity in rural communities to achieve economic and environmental sustainability and social and cultural well-being, and to inform state and federal government efforts to address the policy challenges in rural areas.

continued

Save the Date - 2010 Creeks & Communities Network Conference

The National Riparian Service Team will once again be hosting the biennial Riparian Coordination Network Meeting. The meeting is scheduled for March 2-4, 2010 at a location that is yet to be determined. These are working meetings designed to increase and enhance the ability of the Riparian Coordination Network to effectively implement the Creeks & Communities strategy. A portion of the meeting will be set aside for finalizing FY2010-2011 state work plans.

In an effort to ascertain the effectiveness of the Creeks and Communities strategy, the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) has recently partnered with OSU to conduct a program evaluation looking a several different activities and services. Hannah Gosnell, Oregon State University (OSU) Assistant Professor Department of Geosciences, Lena Eutk, OSU Social Demographer Extension Office, and Robyn Paulekas, OSU Master's Student OSU Department of Geosciences will be leading this effort. The NRST is currently working with OSU staff to design the study in preparation for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review process for information collection activities.

The proposed timeline is as follows:

Sept/Oct 2009 – submit the study proposal, including instruments, to OMB
Summer 2010 - collect survey and case study data
Fall/Winter 2010 - analyze survey and case study data
March 2011 - complete written report by March 2011

Between 1999 and 2003, the first formal evaluation of the interagency initiative for 'Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management' was conducted as part of a Doctoral Dissertation. In an effort to address evaluation findings, the strategy was revised in 2002. The revisions addressed the need to incorporate more of the principles and practices for dealing with the human and social dimensions of riparian management, and to improve the blend and balance of technology transfer and problem solving within activities. The main objective of this current research is to evaluate the socio-ecological outcomes of the revised Creeks and Communities strategy and provide recommendations to further improve service delivery.

The evaluation will be broken into two parts. The first will focus on large-scale, quantitative mail-back surveys of service trip and training session participants (both PFC and Riparian Grazing). The second will focus on in-depth, qualitative, field-based case studies of 5-7 NRST service trip sites (to be determined). Both the surveys and case studies (interviews) will provide information regarding the quality and effectiveness of various service trips and strategy implementers, program outcomes ranging from increased participant awareness and understanding to actual on-the-ground changes in socio-ecological conditions, and areas where improvements are needed to achieve the stated strategy goal. Survey results will be generalizable to the larger population of participants, while interview results will provide a fuller understanding of service trip implementation and allow for the capture of unanticipated themes or ideas that may emerge during the research process.

If you have any questions or comments about this effort, please contact Laura Van Riper, NRST Social Scientist at 541-416-6702 or by email at laura_van_riper@or.blm.gov.

Stream Care - A Guide for Property Owners in the Clark Fork Basin

From Montana Water News April 27, 2009: The Clark Fork Coalition has introduced a new free resource for landowners and communities, "Stream Care - A Guide for Property Owners in the Clark Fork Basin". The full-color booklet contains simple tips for how watershed residents can protect backyard streams and home-town rivers. The booklet is available for download on the Clark Fork Coalition's website, http://www.clarkfork.org/publications/stream-care-guide-2009.html.

A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition for Fen Areas in the Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade Ranges in California

by Dave A. Weixelman and David J. Cooper

A new publication has been developed titled "Assessing Proper Functioning Condition of Fens Areas in the Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade Ranges in California – A User Guide. The document provides a checklist and supporting science and was the result of collaboration between Region 5 of the Forest Service and Dr. David Cooper, wetland ecologist at Colorado State University. The field assessment is designed to be done by an experienced interdisciplinary (ID) team composed of people with botany, range, soils and hydrology expertise. The items in the checklist are factors that can be estimated or measured directly in the field with a minimum of equipment. The fen checklist has been adapted from the Bureau of Land Management Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) checklist for lentic areas (Prichard et al.1999).

The user guide explains the major types of fens in the study area, both in terms of hydro-geochemistry and landform positions. Ten checklist items are used to rate the condition of fens, and for each, the purpose of including the item is given, as well as examples of what constitutes a functioning condition for that item. There area also color illustrations to help in understanding concepts for each checklist item. In the Appendix is a list of plant species including mosses commonly found in fens in the study area with attributes listed for each species and their wetland status rating, whether the species is considered a peat forming species or not, and whether it is considered an indicator of disturbance. Photos of common mosses and liverworts of fens, with short descriptions of each are also included.

Fens are an important and unique wetland type formed where the long-term rate of organic matter production by plants exceeds the rate of decomposition due to waterlogging (Vitt 2000). Peat accumulates very slowly, from 11 to 41 cm (4.3 to 16.2 inches) per thousand years in the Rocky Mountains. The integrity of peatland ecosystems is inherently tied to the hydrologic conditions that supported peat accumulation and there are a number of land uses and use features that can affect the maintenance of these special areas such as water diversions, improper livestock grazing, ditches and roads. Fens support a disproportionately large number of rare vascular and nonvascular plants species in the Sierra Nevada underscoring the importance of these habitats for regional biological diversity. In addition, fens figure prominently in nearly all scenarios of CO_2-induced global change because they are a major sink for atmospheric carbon. The fen assessment was created as a tool to help build understanding of these systems, determine current condition, and provide information that will inform management and monitoring decisions. Copies of this new document can be ordered from Dave Weixelman, email address dweixelman@fs.fed.us.

Citation:

Weixelman, Dave A, Cooper David J. 2009**.** Assessing Proper Functioning Condition for Fen Areas in the Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade Ranges in California, A User Guide. Gen. Tech. Rep. R5-TP-028. Vallejo, CA. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 42 p.

Springs and Communities Workshop – Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area, Nevada

The National Riparian Service Team (NRST) was asked to assist with fostering collaborative approaches relative to management of springs in the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area and Associated Wilderness (hereafter referred to as NCA) in Nevada. This effort is part of a partnership between BLM National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Office and the NRST to build individual and organizational capacity for collaboration and partnerships within the NLCS system. The NRST and the Creeks and Communities approach was selected as the venue for this partnership because of demonstrated success in fostering community involvement and collaborative resource management through the use of facilitated communication and conflict resolution techniques, joint fact finding, and learning while doing.

To provide understanding and assess stakeholder positions and perceptions of the issues, a situation assessment was undertaken during and after the week of March 30-April 3, 2009. This assessment included a review of existing documents, communications with the staff and management of the NCA, and a series of conversations with interested and affected members of the public and agencies. Most of the discussions were personal face to face conversations. If people were unable meet in person, discussions were by phone. NRST purposes were to learn from the people their perspectives of the situation with management of the NCA, hear about the issues with which they are concerned, begin the development of relationships between the potential future workshop participants and NRST members, and help with development of approaches and tools for best meeting the request from the NCA management for assistance.

The next step was a 2½ day workshop focusing the NCA's spring resources, held in Gerlach, Nevada June 15-17, 2009. The NRST presented the Lentic Proper Functioning Condition Assessment as a way to create a common vocabulary and an introduction to the attributes and processes of springs. Don Sada, Desert Research Institute, presented information on landscape and hydrology aspects of springs, and inventory/monitoring protocols developed from experience gathering data on springs in the western United States. A field exercise was included on McCartey Spring and McConnell Canyon Spring to demonstrate the physical function concepts in the field. On the last day, prioritization ideas for management and restoration were shared, and facilitated discussions held to ascertain specific outcomes and determine possible next steps. Many in the group expressed an interest in developing an inventory protocol for springs that volunteers from Friends of Black Rock-High Rock and other organizations can help accomplish.

The group was also introduced to the Desert Research Institute website that includes a page with papers from a 2002 springs conference held in Las Vegas, Nevada that provides a good source of information for learning about springs:

> Sada, D.W., and Sharpe, S.E. (eds). 2004. Conference Proceedings, Spring-fed Wetlands: Important Scientific and Cultural Resources of the Intermountain Region, May 7-9, 2002, Las Vegas, NV. DHS Publication No. 41210. Retrieved (date) from Desert Research
>
> Institute web site: *http://www.wetlands.dri.edu*.

Forest Grove, OR Seniors Interested in Riparian Function

Over one hundred seniors attended the Forest Grove United Church of Christ for their monthly Cabaret Lunch to keep learning and find out ways to stay engaged in their community. The Church is across the street from Pacific College and the audience contained several retired professors, natural resource professionals from State of Oregon, BLM, and Forest Service, along with people from the community. After one of the organizers heard Wayne Elmore speak at another venue, they invited him to present information about riparian areas at their April 14, 2009 luncheon. Wayne accepted the invitation, and spoke to them about the Creeks and Communities Strategy. He described key principles of the strategy and how they are applied to help build understanding of effective ways to work in their community and Oregon for healthy riparian-wetland areas. He taught them about riparian function attributes and processes using the PFC assessment, and dispelled myths about floods, droughts, riparian vegetation, and large woody material. Copies of the document; A Progress Report on the Creeks and Communities Strategy (February 2009) was available for people who were interested in additional information. After the presentation, a retired Forest Service employee was looking at one of the progress reports, shook Wayne's hand and said, "This is something the Forest Service can really be proud of." There was so much interest that 12 more copies of the progress report were later mailed. To the Creeks and Communities Network: Do you have an unconventional audience like this one of people who can make a difference for riparian-wetland areas to which you could present briefing type information or a workshop.

Your Remarkable Riparian – A field guide to riparian plants within the Nueces River Basin of Texas

In the November/December 2008 issue of Full Stream Ahead, we told you about Nueces River Authority's program to share riparian function information with the landowners who own Nueces River and tributary frontage. In May 2009 they published a field guide to riparian plants within the Nueces River Basin of Texas to cultivate awareness of native riparian vegetation and appreciation for its role in riparian function. Check it out at - http://www.nueces-ra.org/CP/LS/literature/yrr.php

Full Stream Ahead

Is there something you would like to see in a future issue of *Full Stream Ahead*? If so, send an email to nrst@or.blm.gov. The NRST utilizes this newsletter to share highlights, news and hot topics that pertain to the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This newsletter is for the entire network and we encourage you to send in ideas, questions and articles for us to publicize.

The National Riparian Service Team can be contacted at:

COOPERATIVE riparian RESTORATION

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