



# THE CONSERVATIONIST

## JSWCD NEWSLETTER

*Turning Natural Resource Concerns into Opportunities*

SUMMER 2010 VOLUME 7 ISSUE 1

### Weed Quiz:

*What plant grows up to seven feet tall with beautiful, showy purple flowers on long spikes and loves water?*

If you said Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), you are correct! And, if you happen to see such a plant here in the Rogue Valley, please take note of the location and give Jackson SWCD a call. Hopefully you have not planted it in your garden!

This former ornamental species came along with European settlement and has left the garden to establish itself along wetlands, stream banks, and shorelines of shallow ponds. Another name for it is purple lythrum. It is a perennial and blooms from June through early September, growing up to seven feet tall. It is an attractive upright bushy plant. The flowers are pink to purple, each with five to six petals and arranged along a spike. It has a habit of spreading by way of many tiny seeds that are relatively long-lived even after being submerged for two or three years. It also sends out rhizomes that form dense, woody

mats. These underground horizontal stems produce new roots, eventually creating a massive root system. If rhizomes are broken into pieces, each piece will give rise to a new plant.



Image courtesy of Eric Coombs, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

This plant has the distinction of being a “**B**” Designated Weed on Oregon’s noxious weed list. It is a weed of economic importance. In some counties, unfortunately, where it is abundant, its impact can be devastating to marshlands by crowding out vegetation required by wildlife for food and shelter. Decreased waterfowl and songbird production has been well documented in heavily infested marshes. It travels down waterways including irrigations ditches and establishes itself at pond edges, reservoirs, or any range of conditions with moist, high organic soil. It will clog up irrigation ditches slowing the flow of water.

Purple loosestrife is a plant you do not want to grow in your landscape, even though the flower is very attractive. It has been designated a noxious weed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and it is illegal for nurseries to sell plants in Oregon. If you have it on your property be sure to get rid of it. Herbicides and digging out young plants can be effective, however, controlling any noxious weed takes persistence. Agencies are using four biological control agents, two leaf beetles, a root weevil and a seed weevil, that have been approved for release and are becoming established in Oregon. Report any sighting--don’t let it get a foothold here in Jackson County.

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Image courtesy of Bonnie Rasmussen, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District is your gateway to natural resource assistance. Board members and staff work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to ensure educational and on-the-ground technical assistance opportunities take place which help the landowners of Jackson County.

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 Angie Boudro, Senior Planner  
 Dan Scalas, Natural Resource Engineer, EIT  
 Paul Showalter, Natural Resource Technician  
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**Tax Deductibility for  
Donations / Contributions**

Please think of Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) if you are interested in donating, gifting, granting, and/or bequeathing items, real or personal property, or monetary contributions for soil and water conservation efforts. Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government. IRS Code, **Section 170(c) (1)** states: Contributions or gifts to a state or any of its political subdivisions, i.e., conservation districts, are "charitable" contributions for tax purposes, and are, therefore, **tax deductible**. (See IRS Publication 526: *Charitable Contributions*).

Your help is greatly appreciated.

Contact: MarkieGermer

[markie.germer@jswcd.org](mailto:markie.germer@jswcd.org)

573 Parsons Drive, Suite 102, Medford, OR

541-776-4270 Ext. 3 FAX: 541-776-4295

Web site: [www.jswcd.org](http://www.jswcd.org)

# Horses and Wilderness Workshop

By Angie Boudro-Senior Planner

## Getting Ready for Exploring Oregon's Outdoors!

On Saturday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, horse and outdoor lovers came together to learn how to responsibly enjoy their horses in the great outdoors. The Horses and Wilderness course is a full-day workshop taught by Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District, and is a part of the Smart Horse Stewardship Certification Program.

Attendees learned how to navigate using GPS and maps, what to do if they get lost, emergency first aid for horses injured or sick in the backcountry, basics of packing, and Leave No Trace principles. Dr. Mitch Benson brought his mule and pack gear, and Dr. Kristen Mason brought 1st aid kits, so participants had an opportunity to practice wrapping legs as well as tying knots and packing the mule. Participants also used GPS units to follow a course developed by Ken Berg and Kevin Canty of Jackson County Search and Rescue. Other presenters included Carole Hopkins of the High Desert Trail Riders Back Country Horsemen (Certified Instructor for Leave No Trace).

The workshop was a great success and everyone left excited about going on pack trips and enjoying the wonderful backcountry we have in our backyard.



## Large Scale Stewardship With Small Scale Landowners (A different approach?)

I have been working in Jackson County in the Natural Resource field for over 31 years. In that relatively short period of time I have seen the demographics of this county drastically change. I can remember driving into Medford on Highway 62 and thinking it was a busy day if I saw 20 cars—now I can see 20 cars lined up in front of me at any and all of the numerous stoplights. With that change, I have also witnessed an increase in the number of small rural landholdings. This gave me cause to really analyze how the District could better serve Jackson County Citizens, both rural and urban.

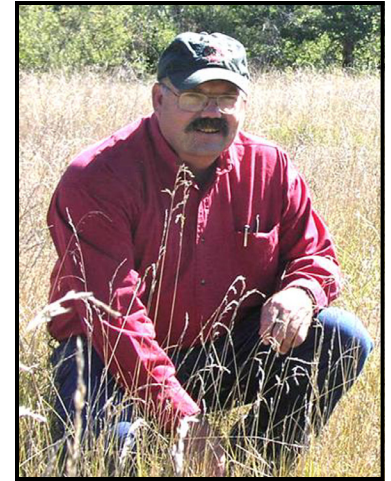
Almost 70% of private, rural land holdings consist of 49 acres or less. Of these holdings 41% are less than 9 acres. These “small scale” landowners account for a large portion of open space and a sizeable portion of the “farm gate value” of agriculture in Jackson County. Many of these properties are located along one or more of the various streams throughout the landscape. As this trend continues and larger parcels of land become segmented, it becomes increasingly hard for these small scale landowners to individually affect basin wide stewardship activities that have a positive, long-term impact. Additionally, over the past 31 years Jackson County went from

a rural county to an urban county and the District has a great obligation and desire to provide technical assistance to this segment of the county population.

With that in mind, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) has launched a pilot Watershed Prioritization Project with the intent of bringing many of these small scale landowners together to work at a basin-wide landscape level instead of on an individual basis. This project can be utilized in both rural and urban settings.

A brochure has been sent out announcing a meeting to a small group of landowners within the target basin. Our first group meeting is set for Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at the Chuck Roberts Park in Talent. During the **FIRST** meeting we will provide a light BBQ lunch, briefly explain who we are and what we do, ask a couple of questions, and then **LISTEN** to what their collective concerns are regarding soil and water issues in their basin.

After **LISTENING** the intent is to set up a series of educational classes, workshops, and tours centered on their concerns in lieu of us putting on workshops based on what we think they should be hearing. With landowner input, we will hopefully gather some baseline information prior to any



stewardship activities i.e. water quality and quantity, soil erosion concerns, nutrient management, etc. Doing this will hopefully garner landowner ownership of any forthcoming stewardship projects. Additionally, we hope that these projects are of large enough scale that we can monitor positive impacts of any applied best management practices and implement stewardship projects.

Please call or e-mail if you believe you have a group project to work on. We have a very talented staff that is eager to help, including a Senior Planner; Natural Resource Engineer, EIT; Administrative Secretary; Natural Resource Technician; and an Urban and Community Conservationist (we just hired a new Urban and Community Conservationist and she will be starting work on September 13, 2010).

Note: We will continue, as always, to work with landowners on an individual basis and your phone calls or e-mails are always welcome.

Expecting the best,

Randy White, District Manager



# Natural Resources Day Camp--2010

By Paul Showalter, Natural Resource Technician

Attention Jackson SWCD friends and family—

**THANK YOU** for supporting our annual day camp for local students that took place this summer, June 21-25, 2010. A special thank you goes to the Siskiyou Chapter of the Society of American Foresters for providing financial support. The students that participated will be entering the 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades this fall with a pack of stories to share about farming, ranching, and living in Jackson County. The students are, no doubt, future producers, landowners, and leaders in the making!

We all enjoyed some great weather while exploring life skills dealing with sustainable rural and urban living. What started out as a collection of individuals gathered to learn each others' names, became a wonderful group of friends exploring the natural world: producers and landowners, community

leaders and volunteers, local agency professionals and JSWCD staff, students and parents. Fun was had by all!

Soil and water, trees and wildlife, poultry and livestock-- what a week!



Landowners, producers and hosts: thanks for the great work you have always done within our region of the Rogue River! Much gratitude to all for finding a way to produce our food and fiber AND STILL cherish and respect the land during your tenure. And a special thanks for showing interest in helping us with the important (and hopefully enjoyable) exercise of enriching the life experience of local youth. In short, thanks for practicing sustainable management of natural resources upon your land and sharing your know-how with us. Well done!

Volunteers: You have always been essential to our success, and this years' camp was no exception.

What could possibly summarize the substance of volunteers? What if the

district turns out to be defined by the embellishments woven upon unique homegrown texture that builds momentum each time paths



Potential Urban Resource Managers.

join into what could be called modern day inhabitants, unique to southwestern Oregon? You chip in, with no more reward than personal satisfaction. You might gain insight for your own land management, meet incredible people and lifelong friends, or simply stay connected with



Looking for those soil microbes.



Learning about fire fighting—possible career!



“other” generations. Maybe you are getting an inside look at how real folks are dealing with real natural resource issues with a positive approach and outcome. It very well might be the “resting well at the end of the day” from all the activities. Is that why you do it? No matter the reason, you have enhanced the credibility of our program. You have chosen to enjoy some of your valuable time, and share just a little bit of it, with all of us. Thanks.

Through the week, we were instructed and entertained by several local professionals from different agencies and organizations. I’m pretty sure they cracked a smile and received some training from our students as well. In the world of missions and motto’s, you have to admit that

it’s nice to take a break from the usual suspects and remind ourselves why we do what we do in the field of natural resources and the so called management thereof--the next generation. It’s been said many times and many ways, from long, long ago. In some fashion, we still say it today.



*“The diligent farmer plants trees, of which they themselves will never see the fruit.” -Cicero*

So to those of you who presented this year, thanks for being diligent with your charge and consistent in your delivery. Thanks for

joining us and hopefully getting a slight recharge that can be stored in reserve for the vital role that you fill in our basin. What you did was great!

It was our hope that the Natural Resources Day Camp would bring together educators, natural resource agencies and specialists, community organizations and citizens from throughout Jackson County to share stories and methods of work. And to that end, we have arrived. The last round of thanks must



**Future “roping aficionados”.**

undoubtedly go to the parents who chose to enroll their children, and the students themselves who will inherit whatever it is that we choose to leave them.

Students—thanks for your diligence, energy, and upbeat yearning to learn more. Hopefully we have left you with some stories to tell around the table at supper, and maybe even some guidance to follow when the waters get a little muddy.



**Up-to-date farmers using wheel-line irrigation.**



## *Home Again— And Appreciating What I've Learned*

*By Vicki Simpson—Urban & Community Conservationist*

It has been my pleasure to be the Urban and Community Conservationist for Jackson Soil and Water District for the last year and three quarters.

I feel that it has been a productive time in getting the word out about stormwater management techniques, greywater use, alternative energy sources, and the general care and understanding of one of our primary resources--soil.

I have enjoyed the people I have met during rain barrel workshops and have appreciated and enjoyed the volunteers. Those who have helped us staff exhibit booths, worked in the office, and have assisted with the children's

day camp.

As someone who has lived in the Rogue Valley for 30 years, I value the connections I have made with people who work for our county, cities, agencies, and councils protecting and restoring the natural resources which we as citizens rely on everyday for our viability.

I value what I have learned from local farmers and ranchers about what it takes to raise our food. I think that our communities are learning that supporting local agriculture by buying locally and encouraging positive code changes are the keys to a successful future for all of us.

I also like what I see in every-

thing from the power bill enclosures to the newspaper, television, magazines, and the blogosphere about how it takes each one of us becoming aware of our water use and how we take care of our soil in order to restore our landscapes to health.

I, personally, am turning to other enterprises: more sailing and building shelves for my kitchen and perhaps more handy-person classes in my shop. Eventually, there will also be a series of small greywater ponds appearing in my yard!

Thanks to Randy and the staff at JSWCD for the camaraderie and cooperation.

### *Urban Conservationist Intern*

Jackson Soil and Water is fortunate to have SOU student, Melanie Dupuis interning with us for eight weeks during August and September. Her goal while based in our office is to initiate plans with area schools to install rain gardens on their campuses.

Melanie's background in horticulture and sustainable landscaping is a perfect fit for the project. She also has experience leading children's educational workshops and farm tours and has owned her own gardening business. Currently, she is a Bachelor of Sciences candidate in Environmental Studies and Biology at Southern Oregon University.

At JSWCD we have been getting more phone calls and inquiries about rain gardens from people from all walks of life as they become more aware of the importance of replicating nature's way of managing stormwater onsite.

We met Melanie as the result of efforts by a local church congregation to redo their parking lot for better water infiltration and for enhancing the aesthetic value and function of the property. Melanie was one of three Environmental Studies students who counseled and provided conceptual design guidance for integrating Sustainable Stormwater Management Practices on their site.

We hope to have Melanie return to work with us in the winter as she fills out the requirements for her capstone project for graduation from SOU.



## Introduction to Holistic Management— 2010 JSWCD Annual Agricultural Tour

By Ralph McKechnie

The 2010 Agricultural Tour is now history! FARRM members left Medford on the morning of August 5 and returned late in the evening four days later, after an full schedule of class sessions and site visits.

The tour was designed to be an “Introduction to Holistic Management” with side trips to successful ranches near the border of Oregon and Washington. Class presentations were by Doug Warnock and Craig Madsen of Managing Change Northwest.

The Warnock/Madsen team met with FARRM members over dinner on Thursday evening, tackling the ever-illusive question of “sustainability.” From there they moved into principles of effective resource management then to creating Holistic goals.

Early the next morning the presentation continued at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. The Warnock and Madsen presentation was a tag-team approach with valuable information. The morning session was followed by a visit to Thundering Hooves ([www.thunderinghooves.net](http://www.thunderinghooves.net)) where rancher Joel Huesby explained his escape from conventional practices to a successful Holistic operation. Many times during the visit, Huesby referred to “quality of life” as the paramount issue in his decision making process. Thundering Hooves markets beef, lamb and fowl throughout Washington.

FARRM members dug into grazing management principles and assessment of land health and productivity during the Saturday morning session at the college.

Following classroom time, the group visited the Cosner Ranch just across the border into Oregon.

This seemed to be the highlight of the tour for most members.



Cheryl and Robert Cosner have taken an underutilized piece of ground consisting of high, steep hills and deep ravines and coached the land into a very productive state. They spend a great deal of time on horseback, analyzing the effects of their management. During their tenure, the land has rebounded from its former state, and they now produce beef and lambs in numbers former owners could not envision.



Cosner Ranch in Weston, OR

Utilizing strategically placed fencing, and paying strict attention to detail, they have used livestock to successfully harvest and improve forage stands in the hills. Of particular interest is that they have used the animals to protect and preserve soils on lands that approach a 50 percent grade. They have developed springs

and installed water tanks for the livestock throughout the property to keep animals from bunching up in smaller areas so that more of the forage is more uniformly utilized.

All that is of no use unless the livestock they produce goes somewhere. They successfully market beef and lambs by the half and a lot of the beef goes to high-end restaurants as far away as Portland.

The final classroom session on Sunday morning was the financial portion of the Holistic lifestyle. Madsen suggested that members adjust their thinking from conventional methods that says “gross revenues minus expenses equals profit” to “gross revenues minus profit equals expense.” In other words, plan for a certain amount of profit rather than accept what is left over as the portion on which you live.

His suggestion was that if the profit is not there, then the operation must either generate more gross revenue or cut expenses to realize the desired profit.

This session generated interest amongst attendees, especially a desire to take part in more financial planning as it relates to Holistic Management..

FARRM members returned with valuable information and gleanings that will help in personal operations. As usual, planning for next year’s tour has already begun.

**THE CONSERVATIONIST**

can be seen in **color** on the web  
at: [www.jswcd.org](http://www.jswcd.org)



**Jackson Soil & Water  
Conservation District**  
573 Parsons Drive, Suite 102,  
Medford, Oregon 97501  
Telephone: 541-776-4270 Ext 3  
Fax: 541-776-4295

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### UP-COMING JSWCD OPPORTUNITIES

- \* **Special FARRM Meeting:** September 9<sup>th</sup>  
speaker is Michael Murphy from Ireland
- \* **Soils Class:** September 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>
- \* **Horse Health:** Date TBA
- \* **Rainwater Harvest:** September 11<sup>th</sup>  
at the Rogue Tree School
- \* **Water Permits Workshop:** October 9<sup>th</sup>
- \* **Annual Celebration:** November 4<sup>th</sup>

## Water Dilemma Quiz

[Which answer would you choose?]

**A:** You've changed the oil in your car. You know the hazards of oil seeping into ground water, yet you are in a hurry to attend a meeting. How will you discard the used oil?

1. Put it in the back of the garage.
2. Place it in a garbage can for disposal in the city/county landfill.
3. Pour it on the ground somewhere out of sight while no one is looking.
4. Burn it.
5. Take it to an approved oil-disposal facility in your area.

**B:** You are the mayor of a city which has an area known to flood. A developer wants to build houses on the floodplain. These houses will have a great view of the river, will be conveniently located near the business district, and will entice prosperous people to move to your struggling community. You must make the final decision on the developer's request. Which option will you choose?

1. Inform the builder that no building will be allowed.
2. Let the developer build in the flood area.
3. Insist the developer elevate the houses on piles of gravel in hopes of avoiding flood damage.
4. Instruct the developer to find an alternative building location out of the floodplain.

A: 5, B: 4