



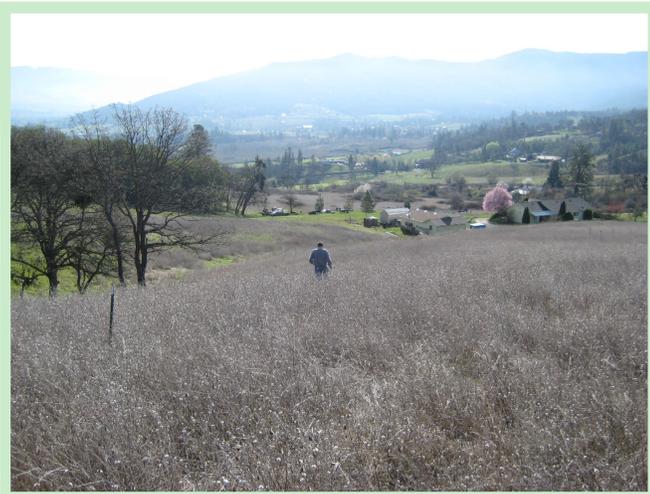
# THE CONSERVATIONIST

JSWCD NEWSLETTER

*Turning Natural Resource Concerns into Opportunities*

FALL 2011 VOLUME 8 ISSUE 2

## Beating Back Yellow Starthistle — *A Success Story*



Field with mature Yellow Starthistle.



Same area with healthy stand of planted grass species .

**T**here aren't many folks in Southern Oregon who don't know the sage green, spiny plant by name: yellow starthistle. It seems only goat brushers, who appreciate the weed for its high energy and protein content suitable for flushing does, and beekeepers, who like the golden honey-producing nectar, find anything good to say about the prickly plant.

It's a hard weed to fight. It comes from a Mediterranean climate similar to the one enjoyed here in Southern Oregon. By some estimates, it can produce up to 150,000 seeds per plant per year, with over 90% of those seeds viable. The seed is able to remain dormant in the soil for many years, and when it does finally germinate, the plant grows a deep taproot that allows it to access moisture and out-compete surrounding vegetation. Another reason for its competitiveness is its plasticity - the plant responds to early season (pre-flower) mowing or grazing by changing its growth form and producing many seeds very close to the ground.

*(Continued on page 2)*

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*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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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(e) (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.

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**Beating Back Yellow Starthistle**

(Continued from page 1)

This year, a determined Jackson County landowner put a halt to yellow star thistle's spread. They contacted Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District to learn what they could do with their property and how they could control the weeds.

In March 2009, district staff did a site visit with the landowners to determine the condition of the property and to discuss the landowner's goals. The property does not have irrigation rights, and was completely overrun with yellow starthistle. Those areas not occupied by the spiny thistle boasted medusahead, spreading hedge parsley (beggar's lice), and at best, shallow-rooted annual grasses.

After reviewing soil test results, Jackson SWCD staff recommended herbicide treatment, fertilization and planting. It has taken diligence, but a pasture walk in August 2011 found no yellow starthistle and no spread-

ing hedge parsley within the treated area. Only small patches of the medusahead remained in the field. Although non-planted annual grasses were still present, a healthy stand of the planted species (orchard grass, perennial rye and annual rye) had taken hold.

In consultation with JSWCD staff, the landowners have decided to overseed again this fall with tall fescue and a legume (still to be selected). The goal this year is to treat the edge areas that were not previously treated.

Although the project is not completed, Jackson SWCD is excited to celebrate this success story against yellow starthistle. Contact us to see how you too can win the war against weeds!

*Editor's Note:* The landowners ask to remain anonymous, and we respect their request.



Art by Paul Showalter

**Bear Creek Watershed Exploration Month**

The Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District was pleased to participate in Bear Creek Watershed Exploration Month, held mid-September through October 2011.

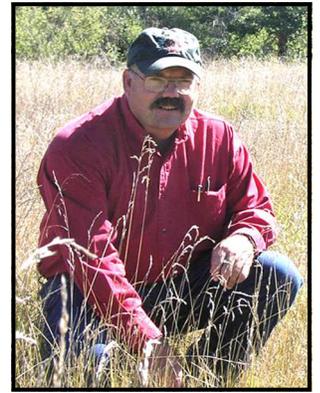
The shared vision of the 15 partnering organizations was to raise awareness about the Bear Creek

Watershed, which encompasses the towns of Ashland, Medford, and extends beyond Central Point. The month included over 25 fun activities such as hikes, tours, classes, and work parties that explored and celebrated the beautiful watershed we share. As part of the month's events, the JSWCD hosted workshops on Rainwater Harvest, Permitting, Soil Health and Horse Stewardship. The JSWCD also hosted the Farming Demonstration Area at Bear Creek Festival to showcase the role of agriculture in maintaining a healthy watershed. If you'd like to learn more about your watershed, contact the JSWCD today.



## District Manager's Message

### Soil and Water Conservation —A Team Effort—



**F**armers, ranchers and landowners, in general, are some of the best stewards of the land. They take great pleasure in working the land and in reaping economical, environmental, and social benefits. Each of these individual benefits plays an integral role in natural resource management. And, although they may vary in importance from one landowner to another, one cannot be accomplished without consideration of the other. It is very difficult to have long-term stewardship without production or long-term production without stewardship. It is also difficult to accomplish either production or stewardship goals without considering the social impacts upon your neighbors and community. Good stewards take into account all three of the above benefits when planning a natural resource stewardship project. It is not always an easy task and can become quite difficult to plan, initiate, and maintain natural resource stewardship projects on your property or property you manage.

Enter Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). SWCDs are authorized under Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 568, Sections 210 – 933. ORS 568 is very lengthy, but I want to paraphrase a portion that clearly states why SWCDs exist. ORS 568.225 Policy. (1)... provide for the conservation of the renewable natural resources, control and prevent soil erosion, control floods, conserve and develop water resources, and water quality, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, ... protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state. (2) Legislative Assembly authorizes SWCDs to cooperate with landowners, land occupiers, other natural resource users, other local governments, and state and federal agencies in projects, programs, and activities to complete the above. *(The complete ORS 568 can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/> or may be viewed at the District office.)*

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) acts on a **voluntary** basis, to help the citizens of Jackson County. JSWCD is **not** a regulatory agency. JSWCD helps landowners, at their request, develop **their** natural resource stewardship plan, which, hopefully, leads to on-the-ground projects for landowner implementation.

#### How does the planning process work?

*(A Condensed Version)*

1. The landowner or operator initiates contact with JSWCD through any combination of phone calls, walk-ins, e-mails, letters, etc.
2. The landowner receives a “Natural Resource Inventory” form from JSWCD. Filling out this form helps us have a better understanding of the landowners wants and needs, including lifestyle requirements.
3. An initial sight visit is set up between the landowner and one of JSWCD’s Natural Resource Conservationists (JSWCD has both a Rural and Urban Conservationist).
4. The planning process starts, which includes any necessary education or information needed to help the landowner develop a plan that fits their situation. *(This may take a few days to several months, depending on the scope of the project.)* The landowner will have access to our Senior Planner and Engineer, EIT, as well as our close partners Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, which make up the USDA Service Center.
5. Upon completion of the plan the landowner can initiate the project with their own funding or, if appropriate and needed, JSWCD can help secure funding through various sources, including but not limited to:
  - a. **JSWCD’s Landowner Assistance Program**
  - b. **USDA-NRCS Farm Bill Programs**
  - c. **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grants**
  - d. **Other Local Government and Agency funding Programs**

**NOTE: Funding from any source is not guaranteed.**

The next issue of this newsletter will have an explanation of some of the various funding programs. You will find more information on our website: [www.jswcd.org](http://www.jswcd.org). Until then, please give us a call. We are looking forward to helping you meet your natural resource stewardship goals.

*Randy White*

# Annual Dinner Celebration 2011

## *The Future of Alternative Energy*

The JSWCD celebrated another exciting year of conservation at their Annual Dinner Celebration, held at the Red Lion Inn on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2011. The evening's events included awards and project highlights, as well as, presentations on the *Future of Alternative Energy* in Southern Oregon.

Guest speaker Kelly Madding from Jackson County introduced the vision of the Regional Problem Solving plan and what this means for our region, and achieving greater energy independence. Her presentation "Now x 2" highlighted the challenges Jackson County will face as it is forecasted to double in population over the next 50 years. Proposed urban growth boundaries and the conservation of agricultural land were discussed.

Joshua Proudfoot of the Good Company, a consulting firm in Eugene, Oregon, delivered the second presentation, "Renewable Energy Opportunities in Jackson County". The presentation introduced the preliminary findings of the Renewable Energy Assessment (REA) study, a partnership project between JSWCD, RVCOG, the Geos Institute, the Energy Trust of Oregon, and the Cities of Ashland and Medford.

Alternative renewable energy strategies such as hydro, biomass, anaerobic digestion, and solar were compared. The project focuses on identifying renewable energy technologies and strategies for the Rogue Valley that support job creation, the environment, and energy security.

### Conservation Awards

This year's conservation efforts could not have been made possible without the commitment of many dedicated citizens, partners and volunteers. Awards included the "Cooperator of the Year," an honor given to an outstanding landowner for their commitment to stewardship. This year's award was given to Dave Picasso, manager of C2 Cattle Company. Under Dave's management, the ranch has developed a master conservation plan that includes converting from flood to sprinkler irrigation to enhance water quality for the threatened Coho in Little Butte Creek, control erosion, manage invasive species, and enhance wildlife habitat.



### Cooperator of the Year

This year's award was given to

**Dave Picasso**

—for his implementation of a flood to sprinkler conversion project.

## Volunteer Awards

The Manager's Award is bestowed on an individual in the community that shows unparalleled support to conservation projects in our region. Bob Jones, of the Medford Water Commission, was this year's recipient due to his unwavering advocacy for protecting watersheds.

This year, two individuals were honored as 'Volunteer of the Year' for their outstanding commitment to Water Conservation.

The first award went to Melanie Dupuis, a dedicated intern from SOU that was the catalyst for the creation of the JSWCD/OSU Extension Rain Garden located off Hanley Road in Medford.

The second award went to Janelle Lane, a volunteer who was instrumental in organizing

the Natural Resource Day Camp, and taught elementary school classes across the area about Water Conservation.

The JSWCD recognized all of the volunteers that have helped this year by donating their time to teach at the Natural Resource Day Camp, Natural Resource Adven-

ture Tour, and Smart Horse Seminars. Thanks to everyone who attended for helping make this year's event a special celebration!

To find out more details on the event, or for video of the presentations, please visit our



### Managers Award

The Manager's Award is bestowed on an individual in the community that shows unparalleled support to conservation projects in our region.

**Bob Jones**

Larry Raines accepting award



### Volunteer of the Year

**Melanie Dupuis**

—a dedicated intern from SOU that was the catalyst for the creation of the JSWCD/OSU Extension Rain Garden



### Volunteer of the Year

**Janelle Lane**

—was instrumental in organizing the Natural Resource Day Camp, and taught elementary school classes across the area about Water Conservation.



## Across the City Fence

By Lori Tella, Urban & Community Conservationist

# Renewable Energy Assessment

### — a sustainable energy future for Jackson County

In recent years, there has been a lot of attention given to renewable energy and achieving greater energy independence on a local and national level. Cities, farmers, ranchers, and businesses have been finding new ways of thinking about energy and waste, especially in light of financial constraints, increasing population, and limited resources. As many have suspected for years, there is much that can be done to improve our energy efficiency, reduce waste, while protecting our air, water and soil.

*...there is much that can be done to improve our energy efficiency, reduce waste, while protecting our air, water and soil.*

**The Renewable Energy Assessment (REA)** for Jackson and Josephine Counties is a partnership project between the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, the Rogue Valley Council of Governments, the Geos Institute, the Energy Trust of Oregon, and the Cities of Ashland and Medford.

Joshua Proudfoot of the Good Company, a consulting firm in Eugene, Oregon, presented the preliminary findings of the REA study during the JSWCD's Annual Dinner. Kelly Madding, from Jackson County, also spoke at the annual dinner and emphasized that the population of our region is forecasted to double in size, placing even more demands on our resources and energy supplies. The right combination of renewable energy strategies will be critical to continue

*...the population of our region is forecasted to double in size*

developing in years to come.

The REA study takes a close look at what resources are available in our region and what alternative renewable energy sources, such as hydro,

biomass, anaerobic digestion, and solar, have the best potential. The project focuses on identifying renewable energy technologies and strategies for the Rogue Valley that support job creation, the environment, and energy security.

Luckily, the first step in achieving greater energy independence is something we can all begin to take action on today. The key is to first improve our energy efficiency--starting by reducing the amount of energy we consume at home, and in our businesses. This can be done by each one of us by making smarter consumer choices, such as purchasing energy efficient appliances and

products. Installing efficient lighting and having your home or business weatherized are also important actions. Producers can look at the efficiency of their agricultural practices, while commercial and industrial operations can consider manufacturing efficiency.

Reducing the energy we use

through greater energy efficiency will help us save what we have, but as we move forward and continue to grow in population, a combination of other strategies will be important. The REA study shows strong compatibility in our region for renewable energy, including hydropower and anaerobic digestion (turning waste into biogas).

Other types of renewable energy like solar, biomass, and wind, also show great potential. Each type of renewable energy is being compared across the board to investigate important variables, which include site location, environmental constraints, and economic benefits. It is hoped

- Potential Renewable Energy Sources**
- Hydropower
  - Anaerobic Digestion
  - Biomass
  - Solar
  - Wind

this study will provide the baseline information to help guide our decisions and future projects to help us make steps in the right direction.

Jackson

Soil and Water Conservation District will continue to be a part of envisioning a sustainable energy future for Jackson County, one that will protect our air, soil and water, while enhancing the quality of life and economic security of the residents.

If you would like to find out more

**"Weed of Distinction"**

**MEDUSAHEAD**

In Greek mythology, there is general agreement that the goddess Medusa had snakes for hair and an evil face that could turn onlookers into stone. The weed of distinction for this issue is a noxious grass that shares the name and has some of the same attributes.

Medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) is an aggressive winter annual growing from six inches to two feet tall with slender and wiry stems. At maturity the flower is a long awn spike. The one to four-inch long twisted and minutely barbed awns are key characteristics. [an awn is either a hair- or bristle-like appendage on a larger structure] Medusahead is evil in that it is a very competitive plant with a fibrous root system that crowds out other plants by robbing soil moisture and dispersing seeds efficiently to infest new areas thus significantly reducing grazing capacities.

Medusahead is not hard to identify, but is often confused with other grasses. The common wild barley, Hare Barley (*Hordeum murinum* ssp. *leporinum*), sometimes referred to as common foxtail, is an annual grass with a spike inflorescence and awns one quarter to one inch long. It too is an introduced species from the Mediterranean area and is a common weed of croplands and waste areas here in the West. Grazing animals will eat the young shoots in the spring, but once it goes to seed the awns on mature plants can cause injury to eyes and mouth and dried plants are usually avoided.

Cheatgrass or Downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*), is another 'look-a-like' winter annual grass that reproduces by seed, but the leaf



**MEDUSAHEAD**



**COMMON FOXTAIL**



**CHEAT GRASS**

Upper & lower photos by: by Steve Dewey, Utah State University, Bugwood.org  
 Middle photo by: Jack Kelly Clark, courtesy University of California Statewide IPM Program

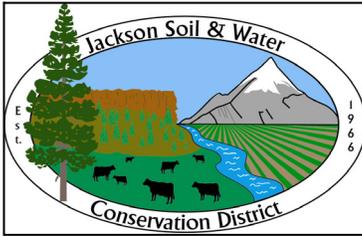
blades are densely covered with soft hair at all growth stages of the plant. The inflorescence of this plant tends to droop and be one-sided. Spikelets are nodding with awns turning purplish at maturity. Cheatgrass is

invasive, and competitive with other spring forage, but offers some green feed for livestock on misused pastures.

Medusahead or medusahead rye has the distinction of being one of Oregon's 'noxious weeds of economic importance' in some regions. In some instances, rangelands have been reduced by 75 percent because of medusahead infestations. Its introduction and spread began in the 1880's and by the 1950's appeared throughout the U.S. and Canada, especially taking hold in the western states.

It grows well on clay soils with deep soil moisture--taking over disturbed habitats, overgrazed pastures and displacing native vegetation in grasslands. The awns on the seed head latch on to passersby--animal's fur or hiker's socks, easily moving seed to a new location. The plant is not palatable at any stage of development because of its high silica content. In addition, the seeds are viable for two years and the plant litter is slow to decompose creating a fire hazard.

The best control measure for medusahead is prevention! In permanent pastures avoid overgrazing, preventing bare ground where weed seeds can invade and become established. Mechanical methods of digging or hand pulling, disking and plowing, or a slow hot fire in early spring before the flower goes to seed can reduce medusahead by 90 percent or more. A fall application of a herbicide can be effective in some situations. Be safe and use the product as the label directions indicate. At present a biological control agent is not available. Call JSWCD for help with preventing and controlling this evil weed.



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JSWCD is



on the Radio!

Listen to JSWCD staff members participating on topical discussions regarding conservation, special projects, and timely news. **The Real Estate Show** airs on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. on KMED AM 1440.

**November 12** Angie Boudro  
**'Winter Planning for Spring Projects'**-- As Senior Planner for JSWCD, Angie will be discussing the planning process, the role of permits in some project types, and the importance to planning ahead.

**December 17** Paul Showalter  
**'Winter Chores in the Woodlands'**-- Listen in to find out how Paul prioritizes work on his own property during the wetter months of the year. He'll discuss his favorite things to do outside in the rain, as well as the lunch menu cooked over a nice burn pile.

### Enjoy A Fall Harvest Treat

1 spaghetti squash  
Salt and pepper to taste  
4 tablespoons butter  
Touch of cayenne  
Parsley  
Cottage cheese

Cut squash in half and scoop out seeds--do not pierce shell if you plan to serve in them. Bake at 400 deg F for 30 minutes. Brown butter, then fork cooked spaghetti 'noodles' into butter. Toss, and then add spices. Toss with cottage cheese, then top with parsley and serve immediately. Serve on shells if desired.

