

# Ashland Watershed Update

a publication of the Ashland Forest Resiliency Partnership

## Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project

### Field Trips

Join a field trip to learn about AFR work, Ashland forests, and monitoring in the watershed. To register, contact Anne at 552-2286 or e-mail to [taylor@ashland.or.us](mailto:taylor@ashland.or.us).

### Volunteer Opportunities

Citizens can volunteer on watershed projects as opportunities develop. Use the contact info above to become a volunteer in the watershed.

### Public Review

Each stage of the project has a built-in opportunity for public review of work units and plans. The next opportunity will take place in the spring/summer of 2011. Check [www.ashlandwatershed.org](http://www.ashlandwatershed.org) for updates, or get on the e-mail list (see below).

### AFR E-mail List

Keep up to date on what's up in the watershed by visiting [www.ashlandwatershed.org](http://www.ashlandwatershed.org) and signing up on our e-mail list. Click on the "NOTIFY ME BY E-MAIL" link on the left menu to register, or call Anne at 541-552-2286.

## Spring/Summer 2011 AFR Project News

**Work Update**—forestry crews from Lomakatsi Restoration Project have completed ecologically-based thinning and fuels reduction work on over 300 acres in the Ashland watershed. Workers thinned trees and brush to reduce fire hazard and have burned some of the resulting brush piles as well. Crews will resume work to thin smaller trees in the coming months and, as weather allows, will continue pile burning through the spring, along with the first controlled underburn to be used to mimic the natural and historic role of fire. The next phase of tree thinning to reduce unnaturally dense forest conditions is being planned in anticipation of a light touch helicopter thinning in 2012. This phase of work will further create less dense, healthy forests and promote the development of older forest conditions.

**Controlled Underburning**—spring 2011 will mark the first controlled underburn in the Ashland watershed since 2007. The intent of underburning is to mimic the natural role of fire in the ecosystem by using a "cool burn" to begin reintroducing fire's important ecological influence on our forests. Fire will be applied under conditions carefully selected for safety, while allowing fire to consume accumulated needles and branches to reduce wildfire hazard and preserve precious soil cover and large trees. Weather and air quality will be closely watched before and during the burn to prevent impacts to town.

**Density Management/Tree Marking**—there are many unique and largely untouched areas in the watershed, but also many acres influenced by past events such as severe wildfires and logging, as well as widespread ingrowth from fire suppression. Large, old trees still survive, but many have died in recent decades (as many as 40% in one area), and others are weakened and susceptible to insects and disease, not to mention fire. To put forests back on a path toward resiliency and sustainability, tree thinning will be used to decrease competition between trees and leave a more open, vigorous, and less fire prone forest. Helicopters will be used to air-lift trees that need to be cut for ecological reasons and have commercial value as well, but only after forest needs for down wood have been met. We expect the cost of this "light on the land" process to exceed the value of wood being removed. The deficit will be offset by Federal Stimulus Funds.



**Interpretive signs**—volunteers are meeting regularly to develop a set of interpretive signs to be located at integral sites in the watershed. Signs will include maps of the existing trails and other features of the area, and will be accompanied by messages to inform visitors about wildfire, fire history, water and the role of the watershed, and AFR project work. Site-specific signs will include additional messages about recreation, sedimentation, monitoring, fire prevention, forest ecology, restoration jobs and wildlife. The challenge is to create signs that are sturdy, but can be changed to reflect seasonal and yearly pertinent topics.





Ashland's forested landscape  
© Sean Bagshaw

## More info about the partners on the Web:

[www.ashlandwatershed.org](http://www.ashlandwatershed.org)

[www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/projects/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/projects/)

[www.nature.org/oregon](http://www.nature.org/oregon)

[www.lomakatsi.org](http://www.lomakatsi.org)

[www.ashland.or.us](http://www.ashland.or.us)

## You're also welcome to contact:

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**Youth Education**—Lomakatsi Restoration Project is facilitating educational opportunities with classroom sessions and field trips focusing on the forested watershed and AFR.

*In-class presentations*—will include an overview of forest and fire ecology, forest restoration, and fuel hazard reduction work. Biologists will share their experience studying local wildlife, while scientists will introduce the concept of soil composition, soil types, and the effects of land management interactions with water quality and ways to protect it.

*Field events*—on guided hikes students will perform surveys to learn about native tree and shrub identification; discuss forest developmental stages; and learn to assess current and desired conditions. They will assist in measuring water quality to assess sedimentation rates. Students will look at different soils in treated and untreated areas, conduct surveys of “effective ground cover,” and learn to recognize landslide hazard zones and the forest structure and conditions that support local wildlife. Students may also visit controlled burn units before and after burning, observe burn operations, and meet workforce members.



**Community Dialogue**—over a 12-week period partners and volunteers met one-on-one with local people from businesses and government agencies, industry and environmental groups, and non-profit organizations as well as with the homeless community, students and teachers, and hikers and bikers. The focus of the work was to learn about community interests and issues and broaden dialogue about our forests. The interaction process emphasized the many community values and uses that are centered around the watershed, as well as concerns about those values and uses. Results will be used to inform AFR partners and explore ways to minimize impacts, foster community understanding, and explore opportunities for residents to participate in the care of the forested watershed.

**Ecological Monitoring**—monitoring for the project and effects on water quality, aquatic habitat, birds, vegetation, wildlife and fire history has been truly multi-party. The results help inform the partners and the community about the effects of ongoing work. High-lights include:



*Water quality*—staff and students from Southern Oregon University (SOU) are measuring water flow and sediment movement to create a model of sediment delivery in the watershed.

*Aquatic habitat*—partners, SOU students, and staff from the National Park Service collected aquatic macroinvertebrates (water bugs) in five branches of Ashland Creek.

*Birds*—staff from Klamath Bird Observatory recorded birds captured in mist nets last year to set up a network of bird-count locations across the watershed. Populations were monitored prior to work, and will be observed again afterwards.

*Vegetation*—shrubs, young trees, herbs and grasses have been recorded on numerous permanent plots in the watershed: to date 168 native and 22 exotic plant species have been found.

*Wildlife*—the Forest Service, partners, and volunteers have cooperated in tracking the habitat use of the Northern Spotted Owl, Pacific Fisher, and Northern Flying Squirrel.

*Fire histories*—The Nature Conservancy won a half million dollar Collins NW Fund grant to help reconstruct the history of fire on the structure and function of the local and regional forests.

**The Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project** is a collaborative partnership established between the US Forest Service, the City of Ashland, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, and The Nature Conservancy. Staff involved from other organizations include Southern Oregon University, Klamath Bird Observatory, Oregon State University Extension Service, The National Park Service, the Rogue Basin Small Diameter Collaborative, the USFS Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest Research Stations. and local citizens.