



13 December 2018

To: Kevin Caldwell, Senior Project Manager
Julie Smitherman, Water Conservation Specialist
City of Ashland

and, Ashland Canal Advisory Group members

From: Michael S. Parker, PhD
Professor of Biology
Southern Oregon University

Re: Wildlife and Canal Piping

After meeting to discuss the canal piping project and walking the length of the affected section of the canal on 13 November 2018, I concur with the Siskiyou BioSurvey report (Carey and Vos, July 2018) that the canal, which is largely devoid of riparian vegetation, does not represent important wildlife habitat. Instead, the canal, as an artificial water source, may actually serve as an attractive nuisance. The City of Ashland adopted an ordinance prohibiting wildlife feeding, specifically to prevent artificially increasing the local abundances of potential nuisance species, such as deer (but also racoons, bears, turkeys, opossums, skunks, and rats). By providing an artificial water source, the canal increases local abundances and influences the movement patterns of many of these species, much as illegal feeding does, and has other negative impacts such as increasing the potential for disease transmission.

In addition, the canal does not represent a resource for native aquatic species, but instead harbors a number of undesirable non-native species, like the invasive ringed crayfish, Himalayan blackberry and English Ivy. Enclosing the existing open canal should reduce the local impacts of these non-native species. Moreover, water currently lost via seepage (and to a lesser extent evaporation/transpiration) that can be conserved and made available to instream and riparian habitats along streams from which it is withdrawn has potential benefits to natural habitats that far outweigh any impacts of enclosing the existing canal.