

**January 28, 2021 Park Views Column**

**Ashland Pond Update after the Almeda Fire**

**By APRC Forestry, Trails & Open Space Supervisor/Project Manager, Jason Minica**

Ashland Pond is a 22.05-acre open space that Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission (APRC) acquired in 1971. The land is adjacent to the Bear Creek Greenway, just minutes from the Ashland Plaza, sitting below Quiet Village on the northside of Ashland. The trailhead is accessible off of Glendower St in Ashland.

The pond was originally excavated as a quarry for a local road project in the late 1960s. The landscape was left scarred and invasive species moved in quickly. In 2008, the Lomakatsi Restoration Project, the Bear Creek Watershed Council and APRC came together to begin the restoration process. Helman Elementary School in Ashland adopted the site and thousands of students through the years have worked to restore the area for wildlife habitat and public enjoyment. In fact, from 2008 to recent years, two thousand native trees and shrubs were planted!

On September 8, 2020, the Almeda Fire burned most of the Ashland Pond open space area. The fire was human-caused and destroyed 3,200 acres and over 3,000 structures in Southern Oregon. Immediately after the fire, APRC staff started on clean-up of the site that began with putting out hot spots and removing hazardous trees.

Collaborative efforts are now focused on reseedling, erosion mitigation, establishing native plants and controlling invasive plants such as blackberries (blackberries are recognized as one of the primary accelerates of the Almeda Fire). The work is being coordinated between APRC, the Lomakatsi Restoration Project, The Freshwater Trust and the Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Project (ITERP). *(ITERP is particularly interested in Ashland Pond as areas long obscured by invasive plants are now exposed and can be explored to determine if there is historical significance for the tribe. The revegetation work will include plantings that are valued as part of the tribal eco-culture.)*

With Helman School still on board, our partners will once again coordinate with them to help plant native trees and shrubs. This is an opportunity to restore Ashland Pond to a more natural setting, and APRC is grateful to work with local and regional partners to preserve this open space.

Ashland Pond is currently closed to the public due to potentially hazardous trees. Rather than removing partially burned trees that may be hazardous if dead, staff will re-evaluate the trees in the spring to see whether or not they have survived. The trees that have not recovered from the fire by early spring will be removed and the area will then be re-opened to the public. This approach prioritizes preserving the maximum number of trees at the short-term expense of public access.

After APRC reopens this area, it is worth checking out. It offers an easy hike, mostly level, on a chipped trail that loops around the Pond and is less than a mile long. It's a great opportunity to view birds and other wildlife! Dogs are allowed at Ashland Pond, but due to its abundance of wildlife, it is critical that dogs be leashed at all times to minimize disturbance and disruption of the fauna.

While Ashland Pond is closed, be sure to visit the many other open spaces, trails and parks in Ashland. For more information visit [AshlandParksandRec.org](http://AshlandParksandRec.org). For questions email [ParksInfo@ashland.or.us](mailto:ParksInfo@ashland.or.us).