

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 September 2016

Contacts: Donna Chickering, Program Manager  
Rogue River Watershed Council  
541-423-6185; 541-441-6180 (cell)  
[dchickering@rogueriverwc.org](mailto:dchickering@rogueriverwc.org)  
[www.rogueriverwc.org](http://www.rogueriverwc.org)

Ryan Battleson, STEP Biologist  
Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife  
541-826-8774 ext 226  
[Ryan.D.Battleson@State.OR.US](mailto:Ryan.D.Battleson@State.OR.US)  
[www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us)

### **Grant Awarded to Restore Portion of Gilbert Creek**

*Grants Pass School District Partners with Rogue River Watershed Council and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to Remove Blackberries and Plant Native Trees along Gilbert Creek*

**Grants Pass, OR:** The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) recently awarded Rogue River Watershed Council a \$9,587 grant for a two-year restoration project on property along a portion of Gilbert Creek in northwest Grants Pass. The aim of the project is to remove and replace blackberry and other invasive weeds with native trees and shrubs, with a long term goal of increasing shade to keep the stream cooler in the summer and enhancing wildlife habitat. The property is owned by the Grants Pass School District; the stretch of creek affected lies between Gilbert Creek Park and the grounds of Highland Elementary and North Middle Schools. Blackberry removal and tree planting will be done by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) volunteers.

This project is the initial phase of a much larger effort planned for the entire length of Gilbert Creek that runs through the school district's property. Ryan Battleson, local STEP Biologist, is excited for the project to begin. "Despite being a heavily urbanized stream, Gilbert Creek still supports and produces steelhead. Projects such as this serve as an educational focal point to get residents and students of Grants Pass connected with one of their local streams and the fish and wildlife which make it their home."

Deb Berg, ecology teacher at Grants Pass High, originally approached the watershed council about the possibility of cleaning out the blackberries to make the creek more accessible for use as an outdoor classroom. "This is a really exciting and unique project for us," stated Donna Chickering, program manager with the Rogue River Watershed Council. "Our restoration work is usually done in rural settings; this project gives us a great opportunity to showcase for a larger audience the importance of urban streams to local fish populations, while also providing an ideal setting for getting kids outside the classroom to appreciate and learn about these streams."

Work will begin in October with mechanical removal of blackberry and other invasive weeds.

This project is one of many planned and managed by the Rogue River Watershed Council in Jackson and northern Josephine Counties. Landowners interested in similar habitat improvement projects – both instream and streamside – are encouraged to contact the Council at 541-423-6158 for information on what funding might be available for them.

### **About Rogue River Watershed Council**

The Rogue River Watershed Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works with local agencies, organizations, and private landowners to restore instream and streamside habitat, improve water quality, and encourage community members to become stewards of the Rogue River and its tributaries. We focus our activities on salmon-bearing streams in Jackson and northern Josephine Counties.

###