



# Full Stream Ahead

May/June 2010

## News and Highlights of Creeks and Communities: A Continuing Strategy for Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration

### “Field Season is Here!”

A message from  
Steve Smith, NRST Team Leader



Dear colleagues and friends,

Well, the 2010 field season is already upon us and it seems as though we went directly from winter into summer this year without pausing for spring. I only hope that doesn't mean we will skip fall and go right into winter in September!

Another field season brings with it yet another opportunity to learn more about how streams function. I very much appreciate the amount of learning I do each year and it truly is the thing that keeps me going. Since the Proper Functioning Condition Assessment (PFC) is one of the fundamental tools we use to implement Creeks and Communities, and many of you are PFC trainers, I would encourage you to seek out as many opportunities as you can to participate on teams that are conducting PFC assessments this field season. If you want to understand PFC better and be able to teach it more effectively, there's no substitute for doing it. Having used and taught PFC now for 15 years, I am amazed at how much I continue to learn about how to apply and use it effectively. As the late, great UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said: "It's what *you learn after you know it all* that counts." Some of you do a great deal of PFC each year while others do not. For those who don't regularly do many PFC assessments, please know that many opportunities are available if you can take the time to participate. Your agency or unit riparian coordinators are a great place to start. You can also contact us or your state riparian team leaders for ideas and opportunities.

So, make the most of your field season and thank you for your commitment to Creeks and Communities. As always, if there is anything the team or I can do to help, feel free to pick up the phone, send an email, or drop by. If you ever need us to provide letters of support or telephone calls on your behalf for your work in Creeks and Communities, please let us know. I can be reached at 541-416-6703 or [steven\\_smith@blm.gov](mailto:steven_smith@blm.gov).

That's all for now – off to the water! Thanks for reading and I hope to see you on the stream soon.

Sincerely,

*Steve*

## Texas Riparian Function Workshops – May 2010

The Nueces River Authority (TX) has been sponsoring riparian function workshops since 2008. The objectives of the workshops and the Nueces River Authority's Headwaters Riparian Network are to raise awareness and cultivate understanding among riparian landowners about the relationship between healthy riparian areas and abundant, clean water in the Nueces Basin. Another round of workshops was completed May 4-7, 2010. The instructors were: Janice Staats, National Riparian Service Team, Sky Jones-Lewey, Nueces River Authority, and Texas Riparian Team members from NRCS: Steve Nelle, Ricky Linex, and Ken Mayben. An additional May 3 workshop was sponsored by the South Llano Watershed Alliance (north of the Nueces Basin), which is evidence that the Nueces workshops are generating interest in riparian resources in other parts of Texas.



Steve Nelle leading a field discussion about riparian vegetation on Bullhead Creek

The May 2010 workshops were attended by 146 people bringing the project total to 556. Participants represented private landowners, NRCS, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, San Antonio River Authority, Upper Guadalupe River Authority, Real-Edwards Conservation & Reclamation District, local business owners, Dow AgroSciences, Helena Chemical Company, City of Junction, City of Corpus Christi, Medina County, Master Naturalists, and Hill Country Land Trust. In addition to riparian function, each workshop included an explanation of Texas Parks & Wildlife's Watershed Policy and Management Program given by Gary Garrett. This program helps fund watershed improvement projects in all three components of a catchment: uplands, riparian, and aquatic, as well as put

together technical advisory teams when challenging issues are identified. See the Texas Parks & Wildlife website for more information: <http://beta-www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/conservation/watershed-policy-and-management-program>.

Are these awareness building workshops having an impact? Several people mentioned they were just getting ready to spray and kill *Baccaris* in their riparian areas or mow their riparian area, and because of the workshop they would change their practices, or they will evaluate whether a fallen tree needs to be removed from their riparian area and not just remove every one that falls over. Nueces River Authority is working with Oregon State University Department of Geosciences on an evaluation of the effort to better understand the impacts of the project, and how it can be improved.

The next round of Nueces River Authority sponsored riparian function workshops are being planned for the week of October 4, 2010. The Texas Riparian Team has provided riparian expertise in this effort and they continue to be needed to instruct these workshops. For information on Nueces River Authority and this project, see their website: <http://www.nueces-ra.org/CP/LS/index.php>.



One of the workshops was held in the old Tarpley School, now a community center .

*"Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together"*

# **National Public Lands Day, Battle Mountain District BLM**

**Submitted by Bob Hassmiller, District Hydrologist**

On May 15, 2010, the Battle Mountain District BLM held an early National Public Lands Day at Fish Creek, in the Carico Lake Allotment. This Rosgen B stream type had experienced severe flooding in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and down cut to a new base elevation. Accelerated erosion had continued from its stream banks under an unsustainable livestock grazing regime. Tamarisk, a non native shrub, was introduced into the system in the 1970's to stabilize the soil. The tamarisk became prolific and expanded beyond control throughout the lower six mile reach. In 2005, a new permittee changed from cattle to sheep use. Old timers from the community remember hooking trout in deep pools that are now absent and are only alive in their memories.



2010 Public Lands Day Kickoff



2009 Boy Scout Willow Planting Event

The Invasive Weeds Specialist and seasonal Fire Crew have begun removing old growth Tamarisk from the system. Follow up activities in these removal areas include planting colonizing coyote willow and stabilizing yellow willow cuttings into the stream banks. A total of 10,000 willow cuttings were prepared for the National Public Lands Day event and 90 volunteers from the communities of Battle Mountain, Winnemucca and Elko came together to accelerate recovery of riparian function by increasing willow densities. These volunteers were transported from Battle Mountain to the work site and back on coach buses donated by Newmont Mining Company. Managers from Battle Mountain BLM worked preparing lunch including barbecuing donated chorizo, hamburgers, and baked beans to keep the volunteers going. Objectives for the day were to provide a learning experience about rangeland and riparian ecology,

particularly riparian attributes and processes, and increase overall public awareness with hands-on projects to improve riparian condition for present and future generations.

The weather was perfect with approximately 7,000 of the 10,000 willows being planted in the project area. Kids, adults and grandparents were all exuberant with enthusiasm towards the end of the day; they just didn't want to stop. The only complaint overheard was that they wanted to plant more willows! I believe that all we need to do is facilitate and encourage an event for the public, and particularly the youth, to be connected with nature and they will come and have a great time. It's always a mystery what can be encountered while walking creeks; we need to share that experience with the community.

**Note:** Last year Battle Mountain BLM helped the community by implementing an Eagle Scout Project. This project involved Derrick Tanner, who developed a logistical plan to plant willows throughout stream reaches where tamarisk had been removed. In 2009, Derrick and 20 of his peers, planted approximately 4,000 willows that can be observed with full leaf development right now. We observed about 80-90% success with last year's planting!



2010 Public Lands Day with a young man planting willows with his grandfather (Note the cut tamarisk stump in the back right corner.)

*"Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together"*

## ***Grazing Management Processes and Strategies Workshop - Ontario, OR***

A Grazing Management Processes and Strategies for Riparian-Wetland Areas Course was held May 18-20 in Ontario, OR. Over 85 students attended the course. This was an exceptionally large class because it included 45 Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) students. Participation by the TVCC students came about because of the NRST involvement on the Malheur National Forest. One of the permittees' son, Levi Harris, was so impressed with what he learned and how the team conducts assignments on federal land, that he pursued the possibility of the NRST providing training for TVCC students. One of the primary reasons was the opportunity for the students to deal with real world situations in natural resource management and more directly, on riparian-wetland areas. This was also an opportunity for the TVCC students to interact with people from local, state, and federal land agencies, ranchers, and other stakeholders about riparian-wetland resource issues and how a grazing management strategy can be designed to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas.

Participants had the opportunity to spend time in the field discussing potential alternatives for the Jonesboro Ranch. The ranch is owned by the Paiute Tribe and their priority is developing and maintaining wildlife habitat for mule deer, yellow throated warbler, and waterfowl. It was emphasized in the workshop that specific information needs to be provided to planners and livestock managers. It isn't enough to say "We want to improve wildlife habitat." It is important to provide specific requirements so that land managers know what to shoot for in landscape appearance, cover, etc.

- What kind of wildlife?
- What habitat requirements (cover, shade, food, water)?
- Where are those requirements needed?
- What are the specific requirement needs – what kind of vegetation, etc.
- What is the potential for those habitat requirements?

The TVCC students were expected to participate in the group activity by asking for pertinent information and developing goals and objectives, alternatives, and monitoring requirements. Each group presented their plan to the class. Neal Lunt, Jonesboro Ranch Manager listened to all of the presentations and is going to think about what they could do to improve their management plan on the ranch to fulfill their resource objectives. He said "I am going to take all of this information and digest it and think about what we could do differently."

For more information on the Riparian Grazing Course contact Sandy Wyman, Rangeland Management Specialist on the NRST at [swyman@blm.gov](mailto:swyman@blm.gov) or 541-416-6886 or go to the NRST website to download a copy of the grazing course sponsorship documents.



One of the groups discussing their options along the Malheur River.



Steve Christensen (BLM Range Mgt. Spec.), Shaney Rockefeller (BLM Wild Horse & Burro Program Mgr.) and Neal Lunt (Jonesboro Ranch Manager) answer the group's questions on specific issues and opportunities on the allotment and the ranch.

*"Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together"*

## ***Two Months, Three State Teams***

During May and June, members of the National Riparian Service Team attended PFC training sessions conducted by three State Riparian Teams in the Creeks and Communities Network – New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. This provided the opportunity to give feedback on presentations and field discussions for the purpose of fostering consistency within the Network. To further Network consistency, this article highlights several effective practices for teaching riparian function and PFC assessment to diverse audiences.

***Gain Experience by Performing PFC Assessments*** - One of the best ways for individuals in the Creeks and Communities Network to improve their ability to teach PFC assessment is to join an interdisciplinary team that is assessing riparian condition. Performing PFC helps instructors gain the experience that will increase their ability to describe the assessment process and answer questions that arise during workshops. Experience is gained by going through all the steps, including gathering and using existing source information prior to and during assessment, stratification of reaches, determination of potential and capability, walking whole reaches, and deciding on the minimum conditions required for function for each checklist item. The interdisciplinary team experiences should continue so that assessment observations are used to identify riparian issues, management goals and objectives, and monitoring needs.

***Time Well Spent*** - It is time well spent for instructors to meet the day before the workshop to review the agenda and associated existing source material for the field sites, then go to the field sites and work through the PFC checklist as an interdisciplinary team. This provides the entire team with some familiarity with the field sites, and the opportunity to come to a collective understanding of the physical functionality of the sites. Interdisciplinary discussions allow the team to identify and examine issues that will likely arise during the training field exercises.

***More Guidance on Stratification*** - Many people attending PFC workshops do not understand stratification of stream reaches in preparation for assessment. Participants need more than just a verbal explanation of what stratification is and the criteria used to stratify reaches. Participants will learn more if there is a class exercise using topographic maps and aerial photographs, or if the field reaches are shown on a map with an explanation of why the reach breaks are made and where they are, or, if provided an explanatory handout about stratification with examples.

***Use of Existing Source Materials and Management History for Field Sites*** - Demonstrating the use of existing source materials, including management history to better understand current condition and riparian recovery at training field sites, will help participants better understand the importance of this step in the PFC assessment process. Learning how to interpret existing information as well as what is observed on the ground is a critical skill for PFC assessments. As stated in TR 1737-12 (revised 1999): “Any existing source material should be gathered prior to beginning the interpretive process. The knowledge of individual team members about an area under investigation is a valuable component of the assessment. Existing inventory data aids in the interpretation and adds another dimension to the interpreters’ abilities to assess accurately an area’s condition and subsequent trend. Ancillary source material may take several forms.” If there are field sites available that have a functionality rating of PFC, use them as the first training field sites so participants can see what functional attributes and processes look like in that setting. Although not always possible, for better correlation and comparison, try to have training field sites with similar valley bottom and stream types, yet in different conditions. Taking participants new to assessing riparian areas through this type of process provides them with the foundation needed to learn to read the land and understand and evaluate the different valley bottom and stream types they will encounter.

***Continued on next page***

## ***Two Months, Three State Teams - continued***

**Information to Aid in Determining Checklist Item Responses** – Since the PFC technical references were published, additional guidance has been developed to use in conjunction with them. Provide participants with copies of the paper titled Vegetation Checklist Clarification (Wyman et al, 2008) and also Estimating Percent Vegetative Cover on Streambanks for the Proper Functioning Condition Assessment for Lotic Area Item 11 by Elmore and Winward, revised 2009. These papers can be accessed from the following website: <http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/index.php>.

**Demand for Lentic PFC Training** - The majority of PFC assessment training focuses on lotic systems; however, the demand for lentic PFC assessment training is increasing. The Wyoming Riparian Team successfully included both through using a 3-day format with classroom instruction the first day and then one field day focused on lotic assessment and one field day focusing on lentic assessment.

### ***FY2010 State Team Training Schedule***

#### **Idaho**

MIM—Challis July 26-29 Contact: Faith Ryan (208) 756-5562  
fryan@fs.fed.us

#### **Nevada**

PFC - Carson City July 26 or Aug 2 - TBD Contact: Sherm Swanson (775) 784-4057  
PFC - Owyhee Aug 23 or Sept 6 - TBD sswanson@cabnr.unr.edu  
RGM - Eureka November 1  
PFC - Lovelock October - TBD

#### **New Mexico**

PFC - Taos August 23-25 Contact: John Sherman (505) 438-7683  
John\_S\_Sherman@blm.gov

#### **Oregon**

PFC - Vale August 9-13 Corey Parsons (541) 523-6418  
PFC - Baker City August 30-31 Corey.Parsons@oregonstate.edu

#### **Texas**

PFC - Lubbock Sept 21-23 Contact: Russell Castro (254) 742-9982  
Helotes Creek Workshops Sept 24-26 Russell.Castro@tx.usda.gov  
Nueces River Authority Workshops October 4-8

#### **Utah**

MIM—Richfield August 3-5 Contact: Justin Jimenez (801) 539-4073  
Justin\_Jimenez@blm.gov

#### **Wyoming**

MIM—Rock Springs September 14-16 Contact: Dennis Doncaster (307) 352-0207  
Dennis\_Doncaster@blm.gov

**PFC = Proper Functioning Condition**

**MIM = Multiple Indicator Monitoring**

**RGM = Rangeland Grazing Management**

## ***Full Stream Ahead***

Is there something you would like to see in a future issue of *Full Stream Ahead*? If so, send an email to **[nrst@or.blm.gov](mailto:nrst@or.blm.gov)**. The NRST utilizes this newsletter to share highlights, news and hot topics that pertain to the Creeks and Communities Strategy. This newsletter is for the entire network and we encourage you to send in ideas, questions and articles for us to publicize.

---



***The National Riparian Service Team can be contacted at:***

NRST  
3050 NE 3rd Street  
Prineville, Oregon 97754  
(541) 416-6700  
Email: [nrst@or.blm.gov](mailto:nrst@or.blm.gov)  
<http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/nrst/>

*“Healthy Streams Through Bringing People Together”*