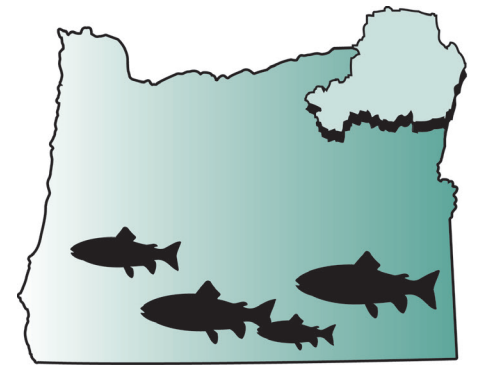


# RIPPLES IN THE GRANDE RONDE



SUMMER  
FALL  
EDITION 2024

RIVERS UNITING NEIGHBORS · NEWS FROM THE GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

## Working Together for Farms and Fish

by Winston Morton, *Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife*

In previous years at the beginning of irrigation season, local Wallowa County farmer John Vanderzanden did not look forward to dealing with the scabbed-together in-stream structure that diverted water into the ditch he shared with another producer. He inherited this push-up dam of sorts on the Wallowa River when he began leasing farm ground just outside of Enterprise, Oregon. Over many years of operation, materials such as hay bales, tarps, boards, and both metal and wood posts were added to the dam to get water into the ditch. This task was made more challenging by the lack of a headgate to assist

him in metering the flow to ensure he was within compliance with the diversion's legal water rights.

When Mr. Vanderzanden finally decided he had enough of dealing with it and started to think about how to repair or replace it, he made the wise choice to reach out to his local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) District Fish Biologist, Kyle Bratcher. The Wallowa River in this reach is home to many native species of fish, including Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook, Snake River Summer Steelhead, and Bull Trout listed under the Endangered Species Act. Oregon statute requires fish passage for these species and all native species that migrate at all of their life stages. This particular structure was identified as a partial barrier, and the pivot pump screen needed to be brought into compliance. Bratcher outlined the steps that would be

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**LEFT: The irrigation dam before removal. RIGHT: The push-up dam has been removed and replaced with a large wood structure installation in the channel and on the floodplain.** (Photos courtesy of the ODFW)

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needed to meet regulations if Mr. Vanderzanden chose to conduct the repair/replacement himself. The regulatory process can be challenging, and irrigation infrastructure is costly to replace.

Bratcher also informed him of opportunities to have the work completed with funding from Bonneville Power Administration's Fish and Wildlife Program for mitigation of the operation of Columbia and Snake River dams. Locally, ODFW's Grande Ronde and Umatilla Fish Habitat Program (GRUFH) is one of the entities that could assist with such a project. After some starts and stops, GRUFH and the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) agreed to co-sponsor the Green Valley Ranch Fish Passage Project.



**An aerial photo of the completed project showing the new roughened riffle, the installed headgate, utilization of the existing ODFW fish screen, and the relocated pivot pump and sump.** (Photo courtesy of GRMW)

## Collaborative efforts

In Wallowa County, local fish habitat restoration efforts are regularly completed through a partnership of local, tribal, state, and federal partners and the GRMW. For this project, it was important to work with not only the landowners and their representatives but also the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), the agency that regulates water use. Dave

Bates, the District 7 Watermaster, contributed technical assistance as a partner during the design phase to make sure the project would include elements that would comply with state rules governing irrigation withdrawals. Bates also was able to bring some OWRD funding to the project to pay for a new headgate. In coordination with water users and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bates assisted with farm improvements that complemented the Green Valley Fish Passage Improvement Project.



**LEFT: ODFW staff oversee riffle construction that replaced the irrigation diversion structure. RIGHT: Post-setting the new headgate.** (Photos courtesy of ODFW)

“This is a good project in that everyone benefits, and the fish get wet water into the Wallowa River above Enterprise,” said Bates.

**A**s completed, the dam is no longer present, and a riffle weir with a headgate now allows Mr. Vanderzanden to effectively manage water inflow. A pivot pump was relocated behind an existing ODFW fish screen, and a new sump was also installed. Fish habitat features such as large wood were incorporated to improve the habitat. The new infrastructure is now in compliance with ODFW fish passage rules, will require little maintenance, and will provide for correct water delivery. These improvements have direct benefits to the fish, allowing all native species to migrate freely. ■

# MEET AMANDA!

by Alexandra Towne, *Grande Ronde Model Watershed*

Meet Amanda Coffman, our new Union County Project Coordinator. Amanda is a dedicated individual with a strong background in ecological biology and a deep-rooted passion for community engagement in natural resource management. Her journey into the field of ecological restoration began with her studies at Eastern Oregon University (EOU), where she majored in ecological biology and minored in communications and natural resources. During her time at EOU, Amanda discovered her enthusiasm for the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the importance of effective communication in fostering community involvement in environmental stewardship. Although she pursued a science-focused degree, she also found unexpected joy in a ceramics class, reflecting her appreciation for the natural world.

Growing up in Weiser, Idaho, Amanda was immersed in outdoor activities from a young age. Her upbringing was marked by participation in 4-H, FFA, and High School Rodeo, which instilled in her a love for the rural landscape and a commitment to hard work and community values.

Amanda's professional journey has been deeply influenced by her experience as a Biological Field Technician in the summer of 2022. This role provided her with hands-on experience in restoration and monitoring fieldwork and introduced her to the Grande

Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) team. She was drawn to GRMW because of not only the important work being done in stream restoration but also the dedication and passion of the team members. She was particularly impressed by GRMW's ability to bridge the gap between various stakeholders, fostering collaboration and creating a shared vision for restoration efforts. This collaborative approach and the opportunity to contribute to meaningful watershed restoration projects excited Amanda and motivated her to return to GRMW as soon as the opportunity arose.

Amanda's personal life is as adventurous and grounded as her professional endeavors. She moved to La Grande in 2015 to attend EOU, where she met her husband, Seth. In 2021, they eloped in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and spent the first year of their marriage living in a 6x10 trailer while working as guides out of the Minam Store and later at Anthony Lakes, a true testament to their adventurous spirits. On December 26, 2023, their family expanded with the arrival of their daughter, Clara. Even though she is not quite a year old yet, Clara seems to have an adventurous spirit like her parents. She has even already been grouse hunting with her dad!

In her free time, Amanda enjoys activities such as rafting, hiking, camping, and foraging for mushrooms and huckleberries. As new parents, she and Seth have enjoyed starting to share these hobbies with Clara.

As she steps into her new role with GRMW, Amanda is eager to collaborate with multiple agencies and landowners to strengthen the community's knowledge of natural resources. She is passionate about

enhancing communication and education efforts within the community, aiming to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of ecological restoration. Amanda also hopes to expand her expertise in stream restoration; she is particularly interested in the reintroduction of native species and holistic, sustainable efforts that support both aquatic life and overall biodiversity.

Amanda Coffman embodies a blend of scientific knowledge, practical experience, and a passion for community-driven ecological restoration. Her commitment to bringing stakeholders together and fostering a collaborative approach to landscape stewardship makes her an invaluable addition to the GRMW team. ■



**Amanda and her dog, Carver, rafting on the Grande Ronde River.** (Photo courtesy of Amanda Coffman)

# Leave it to Beaver

by Ian Wilson, *Grande Ronde Model Watershed*

No, I am not talking about the American sitcom from the 1950s! I am referring to the North American Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*). Ever since we nearly trapped them out of existence in the 19th century, they have struggled to occupy their once-impressive range. However, the times, they are a-changing. Did you know in Oregon, new laws now classify beavers as fur-bearer animals on private lands? This shift emphasizes learning to live with our state animal, as one of two beaver states in the nation.



**Aspens with a wire tree wrap to protect against beaver and other animals' browsing.** (Photo courtesy of Ian Wilson, GRMW)

So, what does this mean, and how will it impact you?

I recently completed an online training from The Beaver Institute to find out, which included completing online lessons and exams (even a final exam!) as well as installing four mentored flow devices or beaver dam analogs.

If you own property and beavers show up or are already there, then you have options to live with beavers and their behaviors, even if this does not align with your goals. After all, they are just doing what is natural to them and what provides many benefits to the land they occupy and the animals and people that call these places home. Let's start with some examples of what I learned:

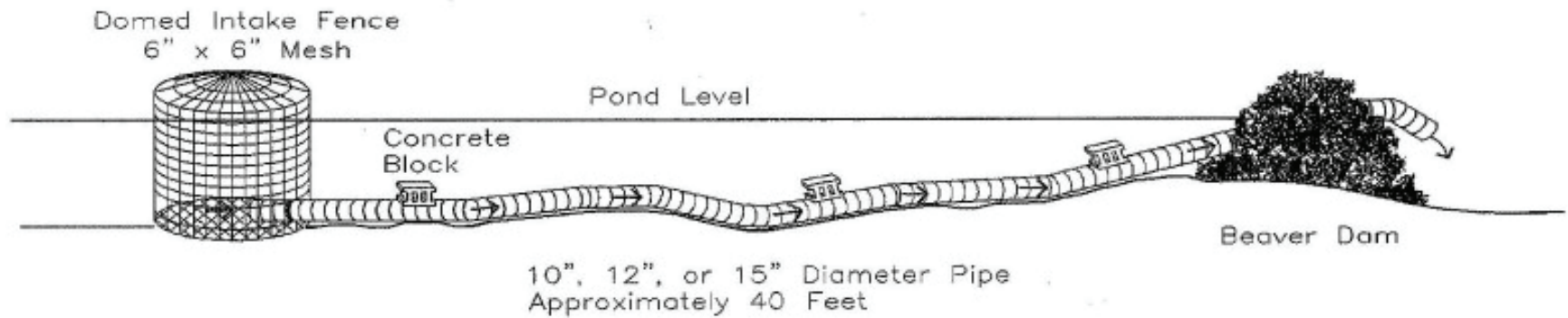
- You live along the river, and one day you come home from work to find out a tree has been chewed down. You are concerned about the remaining trees and would like them to remain standing. Good news! There are options to protect your trees:
  - Wrapping trees using the appropriate gauge and mesh size of fencing;
  - Using a latex paint and sand mixture applied to the base of the tree; or
  - Establishing an electric fence close to



**Example of a keystone culvert.** (Photo courtesy of The Beaver Institute)

the ground to protect a larger area or grove of trees.

- You work for a highway crew, and beavers have chosen to block a culvert you're working on. At first blush, it sounds pretty simple to solve the problem by removing the material. However, beavers are persistent, and they will return to dam up the culvert and create more habitat. Rather than return time and again to clear the same culvert, a keystone fence or similar structure can be installed to reduce your maintenance needs. This kind of structure essentially tricks the beavers into damming the fence and not the culvert, allowing water to flow freely through the culvert and your maintenance costs to plummet.
- Perhaps you have a favorite pond that also happens to be the beavers' favorite pond, and they dam the pond outlet, causing water levels to exceed the desirable height. You can mitigate this co-habitation challenge using a pond leveler, a device that again tricks the beavers by installing an appropriately sized pipe with an inlet that is submerged in the pond and away



**A flexible pond leveler.** (Photo courtesy of The Beaver Institute)

from the beavers. The outlet can then be adjusted to come out of the pond at the desirable water surface elevation.

**T**his online training taught me how to install and maintain these devices for private landowners, road crews, municipalities, and others, which save money by reducing the labor involved with clearing culverts, performing repeat trapping, and learning how to navigate the regulatory framework associated with these flow device structures. So, if you need help with beavers or know someone who does, then please contact me to schedule a site visit to assess your situation and recommend a solution that values watershed health while protecting your interests. ■

For more information on living with beaver, feel free to reach out to Ian!

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Wallowa County Project  
Coordinator

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# FUTURE RESOURCE STEWARDS

by Jacob Losby, *Wallowa Resources*

Summer 2024 was a real ripper with this year's crop of Wallowa Resources HAWK Interns. Local professionals like Ian Wilson from the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW), David Bates and Marcy Osborne from Oregon Water Masters, and fish biologist Mike Lance from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) once again took the time to partner with the program to provide their insights into watershed management and restoration and offer the students hands-on field experience.

For the uninitiated, the HAWK Summer Internship is a paid eight-week internship through Wallowa Resources' Wallowa Mountain Institute that introduces students to the wonderful world of natural resource management and stewardship. This summer, six local students representing each of the public high schools in Wallowa County got their hands dirty doing projects in the fields of watershed restoration,



**The 2024 HAWK Interns at the Wilson Haun restoration site. Pictured from left to right: Carter Schnetsky, sophomore at Enterprise High School; Justice Osgood, senior at Joseph Charter School; Violet Riverman, junior at Wallowa High School; Grayson Hawkins, junior at Joseph Charter School; Isaac Beachy, junior at Joseph Charter School; Olivia Butzien, sophomore at Wallowa High School.** (Courtesy of Jacob Losby)



**HAWK Intern Violet Riverman handles a Chinook jack at the ODFW Upper Imnaha River fish weir.** (Courtesy of Lily Rhoades)

trail maintenance, range management, forest monitoring, and much more. The interns met and work with 16 natural resource professionals to get a glimpse of what they do for a living and help them complete various projects all around Wallowa County. The partners also shared their experiences with the many natural resource career opportunities and showed the interns that there is not one right way to do things. On top of all that, the HAWK Internship is a great way for students to be exposed to aspects of nature and locations in their community that they may not have ever seen before, which gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility for the lands on which they live.

The interns got to splash around a few times throughout the summer. They spent a day with local water masters, David Bates and Marcy Osborne, to gain an understanding of how water rights are managed and see how water is distributed throughout the community for irrigation and agricultural use. They



**Interns Olivia Butzien, Carter Schnetsky, Isaac Beachy, and Grayson Hawkins repair a willow enclosure in the riparian zone of Elk Creek.** (Courtesy of Lindsay Miller)

# Building a Beaver Dam Analog: Hands-on River Restoration

by Justice Osgood, *Senior at Joseph Charter School*

**A**bout me: My name is Justice Osgood, and I am a senior at Joseph Charter School. Every student at Joseph Charter has to complete a senior project to graduate. My project has turned out to be something I really enjoyed. I wanted my project focus to be natural resources and watershed restoration because I am very passionate about it. I have always loved

nature, and it has always been a big part of my life, so this was an easy choice for me. I chose Ian Wilson of the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) to be my mentor.

**My senior project:** Ian and I brainstormed ideas for my project. One option was to build a beaver dam analog (BDA), which I thought was a great idea. The purpose of a BDA is to replicate a natural beaver dam that improves river health. I was fortunate to go through the entire process of completing a BDA project, from permitting to communicating and coordinating with partners and other agencies. We started off by consulting with the Wallowa Nez Perce Homeland and regulatory agencies. We determined the best location for the build was the Wallowa River side channel in Wallowa, Oregon. We then moved quickly to secure a permit and gather a list



**Using a hydraulic post-pounder to drive the posts down as far as possible.** (Photo courtesy of Dana Nave)

of volunteers because it takes a lot of labor to construct a BDA. We coordinated closely with the Facilities & Grounds Director for the Wallowa Nez Perce Homeland. We got permission to harvest some woody debris and building materials near the site. Americorps

*Continued on page 8, BDA*



**Group photo of all the great volunteers. From the left, back row: Justice Osgood (Joseph Charter School - Senior), Joseph Marin (Wallowa Resources), Mike Eng (community member), Nash Wadhams (Greater Hells Canyon Council), Colter Loman (GRMW intern - La Grande High School), Montana Pagano (NPT), Charla Lower (Wallowology) Front row: Gardena Miramontes (Greater Hells Canyon Council), Dana Nave (USFS), Ian Wilson (GRMW).**

(Photo courtesy of Dana Nave)



**Construction of the beaver dam analog using buckets of dirt and hand tools.** (Photo courtesy of Dana Nave)

... continued from page 6, **HAWK**

completed a transect of the Wallowa River at a monitoring site in Enterprise, Oregon, and were able to go out on the Wallowa Lake dam to learn about the importance of water storage and the responsible distribution of water throughout the season.

Perhaps the most eventful watershed day was spending a day at the Wilson Haun River restoration site in Lostine, Oregon. GRMW Project Coordinator Ian Wilson introduced the interns to beaver dam analogs (BDAs) and the significance of beavers to the American landscape and its watersheds. The students made their best impressions of beavers by layering logs, branches, rocks, mud, and sod to dam up a side channel at the restoration site. It was a wet, wild time and provided an immediate sense of accomplishment as they watched the water begin to back up and slow down behind their creation.

The Wallowa Resources HAWK Summer Internship is an eight-week paid internship for local high school students aged 15-18 who want to learn more about their home. If you or someone you know is interested in joining next summer's crew, then visit [wallowainstitute.org](http://wallowainstitute.org)

org/hawk to learn more. This program is made possible by the generous support of partners and sponsors like the Oregon Youth Corps, the Gray Family Foundation, and many more. ■

... continued from page 7, **BDA**

volunteers helped collect materials. A separate group of volunteers came together to help with construction.

**What I learned:** I learned a lot from this project. It could not have happened without Ian Wilson and all of the volunteers. The agencies involved included the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland, Americorps, Wallowa Resources, Greater Hells Canyon Council, GRMW intern Mike Eng, Wallowology, and the whole GRMW team. I am really grateful for the support of these agencies and the opportunity to have met all of these people. It felt great to complete this project and learn about project coordination, group communication, and watershed restoration. ■

## Grande Ronde Model Watershed

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## Grande Ronde Model Watershed

### UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

Tuesday, November 26, 2024  
5:00 p.m.

Elgin Community Center  
260 N 10th St.  
Elgin OR 97827

Tuesday, February 25, 2025  
5:00 p.m.

Wallowa Community Center  
204 E 2nd St.  
Wallowa OR 97885

*The public is welcome to attend.*

Meeting dates are subject to change.  
Please call (541) 663 - 0570 to confirm.

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