

4.0. ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE WATERSHED ASSESSMENT PROCESS.

Information for this section provided by the SAC and TAC, and summarized by Beth Franklin.

This section summarizes the comments and issues about the Jackson Creek watershed formulated by the SAC and TAC in group meetings. It is reported to better inform the people, city and county governments, state and federal agencies, the Bear Creek Watershed Council and fellow citizens of the social, economic, water quality, and natural resources issues and concerns within the Jackson Creek watershed. The issues will be addressed in the Jackson Creek Watershed Action Plan, which is the next phase of the watershed assessment process.

4.1. Method for Issue Identification.

Several methods were used to identify issues and concerns facing the Jackson Creek watershed. These included the following:

- 1) An open house was held for area stakeholders on April 25, 2000 to describe the purpose of the assessment and action planning process and the roles and responsibilities of different agencies.
- 2) Open communication between RVCOG staff, Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was encouraged through a sharing of phone and e-mail lists, and accessibility of RVCOG staff to answer SAC committee questions via phone or in-person at meetings.
- 3) Public Works Managers of municipal governments were interviewed to identify municipal concerns.

4.2. Primary Issues, by Topic.

The following is a summary of issues and concerns identified by the Stakeholders Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee at meetings conducted for this purpose from April through August 2000. Written reports of technical information were also requested from both Technical and Stakeholders Advisory Committee members. Technical Advisory Committee members reviewed the technical assessments and suggested changes as needed. Five members of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee volunteered to review and comment on the technical assessment. These members were also given the Watershed Assessment Condition Evaluation - Appendix A from the Oregon Watershed Assessment Manual to provide a framework and guidelines for the types of critical questions to consider during their evaluation.

The issues and concerns were organized using a method of content analysis, in which similar comments are grouped to provide a distilled presentation of the issues and concerns expressed. The response to concerns and issues falls into the following categories: (1) regulatory, (2) data gap, further study needed, monitoring etc., (3) natural resources specialist response needed, or (4) referral to appropriate pages within this document. Part of the purpose of the assessment is to identify where further information is needed. A detailed listing of issues and responses is

provided in Appendix B.

4.2.1. Program Organization and Coordination.

There was considerable concern expressed about the need for identifying a community vision, and classifying urban and rural problems associated with Jackson Creek watershed. Concerns included:

- ◆ How should improvements to Jackson Creek be made?
- ◆ How does the Jackson Creek Assessment and Action plan fit in with regulatory mandates? Is the watershed assessment a regulatory process?
- ◆ What are the social and economic impacts of current stream use?
- ◆ What are the potential opportunities for stream and watershed condition improvements in Jackson Creek?

4.2.2. Impact of Past Watershed Conditions.

Concern about the historic conditions focused primarily on change in landscape condition and how changes have affected the function of Jackson Creek and the watershed.

- ◆ Has Jackson Creek been rerouted in the past and how has this affected the Jackson Creek watershed?
- ◆ What historic information can be found regarding 1) wetlands in the Jackson Creek watershed, 2) Jacksonville reservoir's storage capacity, and 3) a comparison of historic and current aerial photos to see changes in land use patterns?
- ◆ Who had responsibility for maintaining Jackson Creek in the past and who is responsible currently?
- ◆ A community member noted that at one time Daisy Creek was used as a conveyance for effluent.

4.2.3. Channel Habitat Type Classification.

Concerns about channel habitat type included:

- ◆ Impacts of stream bank incisement and how to address this problem, particularly in the lower watershed.
- ◆ Questions regarding the accuracy of stream gradients and channel habitat type descriptions in the assessment.
- ◆ What can be done to improve the stream channel conditions?

4.2.4. Hydrology and Water Use.

Hydrology and water use issues included:

- ◆ Flood control
- ◆ Storm water management
- ◆ Maximum and minimum stream flows throughout the year
- ◆ Water quality concerns
- ◆ The role of irrigation and water transport by irrigation districts
- ◆ The accuracy of hydrologic modeling, and how Jackson Creek is currently functioning.

4.2.5. Plant Communities and Upland Vegetation.

Concerns about Native vegetation involved:

- ◆ Identification of the plant community types in the Jackson Creek watershed.
- ◆ How have plant communities changed over time?
- ◆ The Committee requested that potential plant communities be put into a GIS database.
- ◆ Can plant communities be managed for further diversity?
- ◆ Primary exotic species issues focused on blackberries and blackberry removal, Committee members were concerned about methods of blackberry removal (e.g., use of herbicide).
- ◆ Committee members want to know whether removal of blackberries would increase sediment loading into Jackson Creek.
- ◆ Committee members want further information regarding area regulations for blackberry removal, and methods for restoring native vegetation.
- ◆ Consideration of long-term plant community health and diversity of the watershed is a concern. Maintaining diversity will require blackberry removal, however blackberry eradication may not be possible.
- ◆ Committee members also requested a listing of other non-native plants or shrub species of concern and information regarding the management of these species.

4.2.6. Wetlands and Riparian Assessments.

Primary concerns regarding wetlands and riparian areas included:

- ◆ What was the historic extent of wetlands in the Jackson Creek watershed?
- ◆ Were any flood plain wetlands found along Jackson Creek?
- ◆ How do wetlands benefit water quality and streams?
- ◆ Committee members requested a glossary which defines terminology used in this portion of the assessment.
- ◆ Understanding local regulations regarding riparian setbacks and how landowners can comply with setbacks and riparian regulations.
- ◆ Committee members also wanted to know what landowners can do to improve riparian conditions in the Jackson Creek watershed.
- ◆ Concerns were also expressed regarding improving the ability of Jackson Creek to convey water and storm water while protecting riparian areas.

4.2.7. Sediment Sources.

Some SAC members questioned the severity of water quality problems caused by sediments in Jackson Creek. Concerns included:

- ◆ Identification of sediment sources associated with urban and rural land uses.
- ◆ Identification of sources of streambank erosion.

4.2.8. Channel Modification Assessment.

The following issues regarding channel modification were identified:

- ◆ How have water flow fluctuations modified the channel of Jackson Creek?
- ◆ How extensive have channel modifications been?
- ◆ Committee members also noted that Jackson Creek's channel incisement is a safety concern for community members.

4.2.9. Water Quality.

The majority of the concerns discussed centered around water quality. Water quality is a public safety concern in the Jackson Creek watershed. Issues and concerns identified included:

- ◆ What are the water quality parameters of concern for Jackson Creek?
- ◆ Are septic tanks a source of water quality problems?
- ◆ What are the base stream temperatures recorded from the headwaters to the reservoir and on down to the mouth of Jackson Creek?
- ◆ How does water quantity in Jackson Creek affect water quality?
- ◆ How do irrigation return flows affect overall water quality in Jackson Creek? Is there a possibility of transfer of water pollution from the irrigation ditches into creeks?
- ◆ Can vegetation along Jackson Creek filter E. coli bacteria and reduce nutrient loadings? How will proposed channel modifications affect water quality?
- ◆ How does water quality in Jackson Creek affect the domestic aquifer water quality?

Committee members also requested a map showing water quality test sites, and information describing how citizens obtain water temperature loggers to record temperature data. Committee members were also unfamiliar with the agencies and organizations who have responsibility for maintaining water quality in creeks, and would like information about who they can contact should they identify a problem.

4.2.10. Fish and Fish Habitat Assessment.

Fisheries concerns identified included the location of fish populations, spawning areas, and sites for habitat improvements in the Jackson Creek watershed. Committee members also wanted to know how stream and irrigation flows affect fish habitat. A committee member suggested that Jackson Creek be viewed as a stream with differing needs according to winter and summer seasons. Other questions and concerns were as follows:

- ◆ How should reaches be identified in Jackson Creek watershed?
- ◆ How could the problem of access be addressed for future wildlife survey efforts?
- ◆ What about other wildlife in Jackson Creek watershed (are amphibians present)?
- ◆ What are the costs of road improvements that would help ameliorate fish passage problems (e.g., Hanley Rd. Culvert replacement)?

4.2.11. Issues Identified by Municipalities.

Public Works managers of the cities of Central Point and Jacksonville were interviewed (February, 2000) to identify issues, and current engineering and construction actions relating to the watershed. Both cities are undertaking flood plain and drainage management actions and construction, and incorporating fish passage and water quality improvements.

- ◆ **Flood Control:** A major problem for the area is flood control and surface drainage. River channels must be left open for flood drainage, but many areas are confined by large patches of brush and blackberry vines. Residential and commercial development limits opportunity for management. Actions to maintain open channels for flood flows often conflict with goals for fish-friendly riparian overstory. The cities are seeking to manage river access to maintain flood drainage, but river channels and floodplains in many areas have been altered. Central Point is developing floodwater holding basins and wetlands in open areas as a partial solution,

as exemplified by the day use parks in Griffin Creek between Beall and West Pine Streets. The cities have very limited jurisdiction and enforcement ability upon landowner alteration actions.

- ◆ **Water Quality and Stream Flow:** Water quality and flow conditions vary considerably by stream reach and seasonality, creating high variability in temperature, turbidity, contaminants, sediments, and streambank erosion. Some sections of streams dry up in summer months, and pool structure does not support native fisheries in many reaches. Irrigation overflows and drainage contribute a significant amount to summer stream flow in some reaches, and may even improve water quality in lowest flow periods. Some streamside residents have used the streams to dispose of garbage and trash, contaminating several stream reaches.
- ◆ **Irrigation and Storm Water Drainage:** Major portions of streams are used for irrigation transport and storm water drainage. Subsurface and storm water drainage adds poor quality water in some developed areas, which is highly variable in frequency and volume. Cities are implementing upgrades to sewage, septic tank, and storm water systems, but only about one-third of needed improvements have been addressed. Cities are constructing new culverts to enhance fish passage, sediment traps in storm water channels, catch basins, increase park and riparian areas, and limit effects of development upon water quality, wetland, and riparian areas. Several areas are designated for vegetative filter/wetland areas. The LCDC regulations affect city actions and improvements through restricting development to specific areas.
- ◆ **Riparian Ordinances:** The cities of Central Point and Jacksonville are considering adopting Goal 5 riparian setback ordinance, and using the City of Medford riparian ordinance as a model. Creek side variance is yet to be defined.
- ◆ **Exotic Vegetation:** There is extensive invasion by exotic plant species (blackberries, etc.) which limits access for improving riparian and wetland environments.
- ◆ **Groundwater Contamination:** An unknown number of private property wells are contaminated by surface water inflows. City governments encourage residents outside the urban growth boundary to connect to municipal wastewater systems.

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