

Jackson Creek Watershed Assessment

Prepared on Behalf of
Jackson Creek Stakeholders Advisory Committee

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ABSTRACT

This document is the Jackson Creek Watershed Assessment, a subbasin in the Bear Creek watershed, in the Rogue River Basin of Oregon. It is prepared on behalf of and under the direction of the Jackson Creek Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC), which is a voluntary, non-regulatory citizen-directed group that unites diverse interests to improve watershed health in the Jackson Creek watershed. The assessment describes the *existing conditions* within the watershed, to provide information to local stakeholders and public agencies regarding watershed restoration needs and potential actions. It takes a *river to ridge top* approach that strives to integrate existing plans and efforts, and coordinate with other local and regional resource management entities. The SAC is supported by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) composed of local natural resource management professionals, and staffed by the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG). The watershed assessment is part of the larger Bear Creek Watershed Assessment and Action Planning process in the Rogue River basin.

The Jackson Creek watershed is a diverse ecological region long recognized by ecologists as uniquely different from adjoining areas. It has some of the most contrasting climatic regimes in the Northwest, and a microclimate that is prone to rather severe flood, drought, and fire cycles. The landscape has been continuously modified since its settlement by Indian tribes some 6,000 years ago. The Watershed Assessment collects available information about the current condition and effects of change of the larger ecosystem in which it is located, historical geological and climatic disturbances, human actions, hydrology and water use, channel habitat, riparian and wetland assessments, fish and wildlife habitat condition and assessments, forest condition and plant communities in the Jackson Creek watershed, water quality, erosion, and sediment conditions, and state and federal regulatory requirements that affect the Jackson Creek community.

The watershed has been heavily impacted by multiple uses, which include forest harvest, mining, and alteration of the landscape. Agriculturalists have used the water from Jackson Creek for irrigation of some of the finest farm land in the Rogue Valley, and portions of the creek have been bypassed, blocked or rerouted for irrigation diversions and flood drainage. Many sections of the watershed streams are ephemeral, and supported by irrigation overflows. In recent years the area has experienced rapid urban development, which confine channels, limit riparian vegetation, and create drainage and water quality problems.

The Stakeholders Committee has formulated a Statement of Mission, and Goals to address the watershed restoration and protection needs identified from the technical information. Data on past and existing conditions is used to identify watershed restoration needs in the Jackson Creek watershed, in particular the regulatory and water quality requirements, fish habitat, riparian, and wetland restoration needs, and minimum water quality and stream flow needs. The watershed restoration needs were then prioritized by the SAC and TAC for restoration actions. The assessment will be followed by an Action Plan based on the Committee's goals and vision, and federal and state regulatory mandates. Both plans are working documents with an initial 5 year focus, that will be updated and reevaluated as information becomes available.

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