

## 2.4. Jackson Creek Watershed Socioeconomic Conditions.

### 2.4.1. Area Population.

The population of Jackson County and southwest Oregon has been growing rapidly in recent years, primarily from in-migration of new workers from neighboring states and cities. Much of the expansion has occurred around the Medford and Ashland urban areas, reaching out to neighboring communities. Small towns which once were independent social and economic communities have been "absorbed," creating a rather homogeneous Bear Creek valley culture. This growth is expected to continue to increase steadily in the future, in-filling the agricultural and forest lands surrounding the Central Point and Jacksonville communities.

**Table 2.4. Population of Jackson County, Oregon.**

Jurisdiction	Population 1997	Forecast 2000	Forecast 2006	Forecast 2015
Ashland	18,560	19,340	20,938	23,349
Central Point	10,750	12,685	15,912	20,607
Jacksonville	2,050	2,165	2,549	3,260
Medford	57,610	59,858	67,142	79,764
Phoenix	3,770	3,985	4,419	5,159
Talent	5,010	5,151	5,788	6,510
Rural		62,780	65,229	68,200
Jackson County	169,300	177,876	197,775	229,477

Source: "Our Region," Rogue Valley Council of Governments, 1998.

### 2.4.2. Population Sectors.

The current population within the Jackson Creek watershed is estimated by local city officials at about 12,000 persons, which includes incorporated Jacksonville, Central Point, and rural environs. Key economic and resident sectors include:

- ♦ **Vegetable/Orchard Farmers** - Long term landowners, who produce for local and export consumption, have long used and managed the water flows in the valley, and are facing encroachment from residential development.
- ♦ **Stockmen** - Ranchers living in or leasing grazing lands in the Jackson Creek uplands
- ♦ **Local small business owners** - Entrepreneurs tied directly to and dependent upon local consumers, many have been multi-generational businesses, now facing increasing competition from regional shopping centers.
- ♦ **Residential commuters** - Residents of subdivisions on valley floor and hillside acreage/woodlot owners. They usually have chosen the area because of local character, environmental quality, or cost of living.

The core values of these groups center around a pronounced environmental awareness and appreciation of the beauty and rural character of the surrounding valley, an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of Southwest Oregon and culture, and a desire for preservation of the local lifestyle and family wage jobs in order to attract and keep young people in the area. There is a sense of an increasing need to manage the natural resources to provide for quality of life for area residents, support the regional economy, provide recreation, and protect the natural beauty of the functioning ecosystems. There is also an awareness of the shrinking local dependence on natural resources such as timber and agriculture as the area evolves into a global economy. People are aware that a large share of the valley's income comes from outside transfer payments such as retirement dollars, and incoming migration of people from other regions.

### **2.4.3. Settlement Pattern and Culture.<sup>1</sup>**

**Prior to 1850** - Indian tribes settled in the Rogue Basin about 10,000 years ago, until their population was reduced through disease and the "Rogue Indian Wars" of the 1850s-1860s. Their economy was based upon hunting/gathering subsistence, which largely utilized the natural environment. They practiced controlled burning of meadows and hillslopes on an annual basis to encourage production of nuts, roots, berries, and deer forage. Most ethnologists claim that the burning practices were beneficial to the forest landscape, which was conducted during early spring and late fall months to limit burn areas.

**1850-1930s** - This period is significant for the start of mining, logging and sawmilling, farming and orchard development, irrigation and the beginning of business and service providers. Early settlers in the Jackson Creek watershed were farmers, miners, and loggers. Jacksonville and Central Point were distinct autonomous rural communities.

World War I brought a large change in the socio-economic function of the valley as did the installation of the railroad through Medford. Mining declined significantly by 1930, and logging and farming took up much of the slack in the later period.

For most of the 1900s the farming/orchard culture predominated in the area. They were major water users, and tributaries were sometimes rerouted to accommodate irrigation transfer and flow, and farmland drainage. Streams and tributaries were often used as dumping sites by area residents (there were numerous anecdotal reports of junk and dead animals in the streams), and for overflow sewage and drainage. Several sections of tributary channels went dry in summer months from both seasonal factors and water diversions.

**1930-1950** - The Great Depression and World War II were dominant socio-economic factors affecting the Bear Creek valley. Logging and sawmilling increased to support the war effort, but really got in high gear after the war as did farming, cattle raising and building. Government jobs paid better than many other occupations in the valley during

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Kangas and W.L. Moore contributed information for this section.

the war, hastening the decline in mining. Jacksonville lost its status as the county seat and also a large share of its population to Medford and vicinity.

**1950-1980s** - This period was noted for expansion of building and corresponding increase in the demand and supply of timber in the valley. Farming, orchards and stock raising also expanded. The latter part of this period saw population movement out of urban areas into the Rogue valleys, and an influx of people from other states, particularly from California. Commuter residents from Medford moved to Central Point and Jacksonville, seeking lower cost housing and a rural setting. The small towns became more suburban in culture, but still retained distinctive community identities. There was minimal regulation from cities, zoning/building requirements, and regulatory oversight. Residential development further eroded riparian/wetland protection.

**1980-2000s** - The robust economy of southwest Oregon fostered commercial development and in-filling along the I-5 corridor. Planned subdivisions became more frequent, as residents sought lower cost housing within commuting distance. Cities formalized and extended zoning and regulatory oversight, and towns expanded in infrastructure. Stormwater drainage and road systems were constructed, along with flood barriers. State and federal government regulation increased as a result of the Clean Water Act, and EPA/DEQ regulations. Development continued in the floodplains of Bear Creek tributaries, with buildings sometimes constructed on streambanks. Tributary streambanks were confined and/or channelized in many places, and wetland and riparian areas were modified by private landowners with little regulatory oversight. Some developers set aside wetland areas for parks and public-use areas. Residential development was regulated by LCDC Urban Growth Boundary requirements. Business parks and high-density subdivisions of up to 1,400 housing units with commercial areas replaced open farmlands.

Significant changes occurred in the management of federal forests during this period, centering around concepts of ecosystem management. Harvest levels on federal forests were reduced to 1/10<sup>th</sup> during the latter part of the period, but harvesting on private forests expanded. Tourism, recreation, government transfer payments, and local manufacturing and secondary processing of food and forest commodities became the foundation for the local economy.

#### **2.4.4. Future Trends.**

The Urban Growth Boundary has limited development potential in the Central Point-Jacksonville area, and is not likely to be changed in the future. Subdivision and residential/commercial growth will continue at a modest pace after current developments are finished. If current zoning regulations remain, much of the remaining farmland will then remain as agricultural land. Real estate appraisers expect that residential development is more likely to occur along the Griffin Creek corridor, while the Jackson Creek watershed will experience slow continued growth. The number of residences bordering stream channels will continue to increase. Residential in-filling of the southern-westside upslope forested area will also continue at a slow rate in future years.

The stormwater management plans of municipalities often contain inherent conflicts which are to some extent, mutually exclusive; to maintain clear channels for rapid transport of stormwater flows during flood events, while also providing riparian vegetation to maintain fish and wildlife habitat quality and aesthetic values. Planned unit residential subdivision development can facilitate watershed management, by designing stormwater conveyance and detention ponds into natural flow areas. Several developers have designed stream channel and riparian restoration projects, which can assist in maintaining water quality and flow. Stormwater channels may be designed as greenways, or public use areas (parks). Planned subdivisions also enable the formation of homeowner groups which could focus upon water management, wetland and riparian restoration, and environmental quality in their neighborhoods. The trend toward building in riparian zones may decrease as riparian protection ordinances increase, and future construction of residences and buildings will occur further away from riparian areas.

A key concern about watershed organizations is their impact on or capacity to respond to state and federal regulatory actions. Riparian ordinances put the burden of community watershed management upon both private landowners and public land managers, and restoration actions require coordination and technical assistance.

Recognition of the value of protecting and enhancing recreation and natural resources in Jackson Creek has increased. Lands are being purchased and developed for multiple uses around Jacksonville, and this trend will continue, along with the expansion of public interests, such as recreation and education.

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