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Introduction

Lobster Creek has been identified by a number of studies as a refuge area for various native salmonid populations in the lower Rogue River (SW Or. Salmon Restoration Initiative, Or. Chapt of AFS, Lower Rogue Watershed Council Watershed Assessment, USFS biologists personal comm.).

Native populations of fall chinook, winter steelhead, sea run cutthroat trout, and coho salmon still utilize the watershed.

A concerted effort to protect and restore the watershed's key ecological and biological functions and support viable salmonid habitats is necessary if the refuge characteristics of the basin are to be retained.

The Partnership

Interest in a whole-basin restoration strategy for Lobster Creek has existed among a group of key constituencies for over two years. Discussions between HTRG, ODFW and Paul Hoobyar began in August, 1994.

A watershed restoration workshop organized by Paul Hoobyar was held in October of 1994 and further increased interest in the concept. Discussions have been conducted regarding the development of a whole basin strategy with Hancock Timber Resources Group (HTRG), Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), the Lower Rogue Watershed Council, (PRC), and the USFS Gold Beach Ranger District (USFS), collectively and individually.

Watershed Initiatives is providing project oversight and coordination.

To date, a number of projects and activities related to restoration have occurred in the basin. On HTRG land, culvert replacement, road "storm proofing," riparian stand conversions, and large wood placement have been done by HTRG, in partnership with ODFW and the Lower Rogue Watershed Council.

Charley Dewberry, stream ecologist at PRC, has done a habitat and fish distribution survey of the lower basin. USFS has installed a dedicated juvenile smolt trap (in partnership with ODFW & HTRG) and conducts spawning surveys annually. Finally, the USFS has conducted stream and spawning surveys in the upper part of the basin.

The Restoration Strategy

This project will provide coordination between these groups, with the goal of maximizing the potential of the existing efforts, as well as providing for an increased capacity to establish whole-basin priorities and opportunities which can't be developed with independent approaches.

The whole-basin approach will include coordinating restoration efforts planned by the USFS (with lands in the upper basin) with the restoration efforts of the partnership of key stakeholders in the lower basin using data collection, monitoring, and adaptive management techniques.

The major components of an initial restoration strategy will include:



- *Locate where the fish are still utilizing the streams*
Two "whole basin" dive counts in Spring and Fall of 1997 will be conducted to determine abundance and distribution of salmonids throughout the watershed and augment existing records of "hot spot" that continue to have high levels of function and productivity in streams.
- *Locate any threats, upslope or upstream, to these places*
Determine threats to these areas throughout the basin (e.g. road-related problems, culverts, timber sale lay-outs and timing, etc.)
- *Remove the threats*
Work with partners to remove or alleviate these threats.
- *Look for restoration opportunities*
Determine opportunities for restoration using refuge and hot spot areas as high priority guides (riparian planting, possible instream work, etc.)
- Continue dive counts, smolt trap monitoring and analysis of data to increase reliability for three-plus years.
- Reconstruct historic forest composition of basin to better determine goals of restoration.
- Based on data collected from dive counts and initial projects, determine subsequent restoration efforts.

Funding

The project has received initial funding from a variety of sources, including the Hancock Timber Resources Group and the World Wildlife Fund. ODFW and the USFS have committed in-kind contributions of staff time to help with monitoring and project development.

The Lower Rogue Watershed Council has conducted projects in Lobster Creek with GWEB, and future projects have been proposed to GWEB.

Project Status as of December, 1997

Two whole basin juvenile snorkel counts have been conducted in the spring and fall of 1997. These dive counts have established where juvenile salmonids (coho, fall chinook, winter steelhead and cutthroat trout) currently utilize the watershed for rearing purposes. Abundance and distribution maps showing these areas have been updated based on this data. A dedicated smolt trap was also established in the basin this year, and trapping data has been developed into a report. Together with the dive counts, the smolt trap has increased the partners' knowledge of how many smolts of various salmonid species are being produced in the basin, and where the high functioning habitat areas are located. Where the dive counts establish the distribution of high quality habitat used by juvenile salmonids, the smolt trap helps to document the population size of juveniles that successfully rear in the basin to the smolt stage, at which time they migrate out of the watershed and begin the next phase of their life history. In 1998, the partners will be planning the initial stages of a restoration strategy that is based on protecting these juvenile salmon source areas from further human-caused degradation. The primary emphasis will be to assess potential upslope, or road-related, causes, as well as potential upstream causes. The Lobster Creek Whole-Basin Resoration Project has been included in the Oregon Plan as part of the Coastal Salmon Restoration Initiative (ODF # 39).

For more information, contact [Paul Hoobyar](#) at Watershed Initiatives