

Sisters High School students help restore Whychus Creek

By Jim Anderson
Correspondent

“Waste not, want not” is the slogan of the Healthy Waters Institute and Upper Deschutes Watershed Council these days, especially when it comes to riparian vegetation on Whychus Creek.

The Three Sisters Irrigation District is planning on putting water from Whychus Creek into a pipeline and sending it down McKenzie draw, east of Sisters. Consequently, riparian plants located in the place where the pipeline head works will be constructed are being removed and replanted upstream by a team of 15 sophomores from Sisters High School.

Prior to the completion of the piping project, students from Sisters High School are working with the Healthy Waters Institute, the environmental education organization Wolfree, and the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council to salvage mature riparian plants from the canal and transplant them in degraded riparian areas along Whychus Creek, according to Kolleen Yake, of Healthy Waters Institute.

Ashley Burry-Trice, Program Manager for Wolfree, teamed up with Kolleen Yake to provide restoration

projects for Sisters High School students that would open new vistas to education and careers.

The Student Stewardship Project, a program of The Freshwater Trust that is coordinated locally through a partnership with the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, and Healthy Waters Institute are dedicated to educating the next generation of watershed stewards.

This year, 15 students have the opportunity to be in three groups of five each; one to study the arts, another for social studies, and the third for conservation studies.

Last Tuesday, just downstream of the footbridge at the Mainline Road across Whychus Creek, all 15 of them were knee-deep (some literally) in the riparian vegetation replanting.

Hannah Boles, a junior said, “I enjoy doing this work as it reminds me how lucky we are to live in Sisters, with Whychus Creek so close.”

Everything the students do is run through the high school’s instruction objectives to ensure the best education and based on solid scientific criteria.

Brittany Birkeland is excited about working in the Student Stewardship Program, as it provides her with

the opportunity to employ her photographic skills to show her appreciation for the beauty and health of Whychus Creek.

“I like to express myself without words, using photos instead,” she said. “And I think this work gives me a sense of place, and ways to help save the creek for future kids.”

Social science students conduct interviews with Sisters residents who are interested in the impact of Whychus Creek on their lives and the community and historical uses of the creek.

Through their watershed studies, these students were attempting to answer questions about how human perspectives about Whychus Creek have changed over the past 100 years.

Junior Drew Johnston says he didn’t know very much about Whychus Creek



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Sisters High School students replanted willows along the banks of Whychus Creek.

prior to his getting involved in the Student Stewardship Project.

“I think it’s a privilege to

help with the planting, and have the enjoyment of working with others in the group,” he said.