

## Students highlight projects at summit

By Jim Anderson  
Correspondent

More than 200 high-powered students from Bend, Prineville and Sisters met last Thursday at the FivePine Lodge Conference Center in Sisters to tell their stories about why water reclamation and stream restoration projects are special to them — and vital to us.

The meeting, "Students Speak: A Watershed Summit," was put together with the help of Healthy Waters Institute and the environmental education organization Wolfree, partnering with the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council and The Freshwater Trust.

Five classes from Central Oregon elementary, middle and high schools attended the summit in Sisters, and with the help of teachers, parents and Healthy Waters Institute and Wolfree Educational coordinators they highlighted their work.

Sisters High School Interdisciplinary Environmental Expedition (IEE) students culminated their year-long experience of studies and experiences on Whychus Creek at the Watershed Summit. One of the elements of their restoration work was landscaping a riparian site Wolfree picked, where the USFS used large boulders to close a "drive through" area.

"Drive through," said Wolfree coordinator Ashley Burry-Trice, "is a polite way of saying it was degraded over time by four-wheelers that were 'recreating' — or as it is called in some circles, 'mud bogging' — in Whychus Creek, which, when looked at in another way, is vandalism."

Each of the Sisters groups

doing the Whychus Restoration projects — ecologists, social scientists and artists — described their part of the work. The ecologists presented their data on life in and on the creek, including riparian vegetation, water quality, temperature and chemical components and how those elements applied to salmon habitat. The social scientists addressed their interviews with irrigators and long-time residents who have been using Whychus Creek and living along the creek over the years.

Diane Trammel, mother of Mackenzie Trammel, a member of the Sisters team, told *The Nugget*, "Mackenzie was so excited when she got into the IEE class. It has been a wonderful learning experience for her this year. She has had the opportunity to learn about the great outdoors, things she would never have learned before. Even though planting the trees along the river was hard work, she came home smiling and excited that she got to help combat erosion and help in her community's back yard. It has been a creative, hands-on style of

learning which really does bring it home for the students."

The Sisters High School artists brought their huge mandala to the summit, where all the participants had the opportunity to add their thoughts and impressions of water restoration projects in the form of a beautiful sand painting.

Each presentation was unique in its methods of addressing the principal components for stream restorations. Crook County High School students spoke of the conflicts involved in McKay Creek and Crooked River between irrigators and attempts to create salmon habitat.

One student from Powell Butte, who comes from a long line of hay ranching families, spoke about the perspective of the water-dependent agricultural community and how difficult it will be to bring about a change of attitude regarding water management.

"I doubt if any of the old-time water-users of Crooked River will ever change," she said, "but the younger generation will probably see things



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Crook County High School students pouring the thoughts and emotions into the mandala designed by Sisters IEE students.

differently."

John Vargas, Crooked River High School student, spent many hours helping Wolfree assess the Wild and Scenic section of Crooked River below Bowman Dam. One of his responsibilities was to put up educational signs, warning fishermen to keep out of the salmon redds along that stretch of the river. When asked what got him going in watershed restoration, John replied, "Working with Mr. Wachs, my science teacher, and other students cleaning up the creeks and

river."

Eighth-grade students from REALMS, the Rimrock Expeditionary Alternative Learning Middle School in Bend, created an impressive report entitled "A Mosaic of Tumalo Creek," an attractive document containing data, comments and artistic features from the various disciplines of creek restoration. The layout of the publication is professional in its content, and the appeals for ecological balance of water needs in the future, based on historical use of Tumalo Creek.