

The Middle Wind River Riparian Enhancement Project

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Abstract

Underwood Conservation District is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is “to enhance the level of natural resource stewardship for all landowners, managers and resource users” in Skamania County and the western third of Klickitat County, WA. As an integral part of a large and collaborative team, Underwood Conservation District has overseen the implementation of the Middle Wind River Riparian Enhancement Project. The primary project goal is to enhance riparian and fish habitat structure and function through the construction of a series of *formidable multi-faceted* (FMF) log structures and the installation of extensive riparian plantings along a one mile privately- and publicly-owned reach of mainstem and side channel habitat in the middle Wind River in Skamania County, WA. Specific objectives of the project are to reduce the low-flow and bankfull width-to-depth ratios to <12:1 and <35:1 respectively; increase the abundance of floodplain large woody debris (LWD) to >16 pieces per acre; increase in-channel LWD to >120 pieces per mile; reduce the percent of unstable banks to <20% and to increase stream shading. Overall 17 FMF structures were constructed and modified between 2007 and 2008. Conifers seedlings, live stake cuttings, and other native trees and shrubs have been planted, mechanically using a Stinger and manually by hand, along stream banks, cobble bars, terraces and other open areas within the riparian and floodplain areas. As of January 2009, all FMF log structures are intact and functioning. Preliminary estimates of planted seedling survival indicate varied success with increased rates of survival attributed to specific and favorable soil conditions, management of competitive plants and efforts to provide supplemental water. Invasive species control efforts have included the management of scotch broom and Canada thistle populations utilizing mechanical methods. Efforts to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of restorations actions, with respect to project goals and objectives, will continue in 2009 and 2010. For more information on this and other Underwood Conservation District projects, contact us directly at (509) 493-1936.