

Grant to fund Chewaucan assessment

By Kevin Winter Lake County Examiner
Jul 2, 2021

With a \$100,000 grant spread over two years from the Bureau of Reclamation, the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council (LCUWC) will develop a new assessment for the Upper Chewaucan River watershed.

Brandi Neider, stream and riparian coordinator for the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council, said the last time a watershed assessment was completed for the Upper Chewaucan River area was in 1998 and that with changes over the past 23 years it was time to develop a new assessment. Similar assessments have been developed for the Upper Deep Creek watershed, the Goose Lake watershed and the Warner Basin watershed. The Upper Chewaucan watershed is above Paisley and its surrounding tributaries.

In 2019 the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) identified the Upper Chewaucan watershed as a Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) due to reports of sediment and high temperatures in the river. Neider said the designation is not one to be afraid of, as it helps to bring resources, outreach, and projects to the area to make improvements.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funded a project for a monitoring study of the water quality of the Upper Chewaucan River, though that project is not necessarily part of the upcoming assessment.

"There have been a lot of forest fires in the area since the last assessment of the watershed, and a new assessment is needed to see where we are at and what needs to be done going forward," said Neider.

Watershed assessments give a detailed study of what the current conditions are in the watershed being studied. The consultants will also identify areas of concern and potential future project sites.

"Assessments are not just about identifying current conditions in depth, they are great resources when applying for grants because they are used to demonstrate the need," said Neider.

She said the goal is to develop a document over the next two years that shows what the updated conditions are like — especially after the recent fires — along with developing a document that can guide restoration work in the watershed for the foreseeable future.

Many of LCUWC's recent projects have been in the Warner Basin — building diversions for the Warner Sucker to move upstream — and in southern Lake County as part of their Lake County All-Lands Initiative — which has been focusing on healthy landscapes by thinning juniper and reintroducing fires to the landscape with prescribed fires. Neider is excited about the new assessment that will be developed so LCUWC can begin outreach to landowners and start work on projects in other areas of Lake County.

Work is not expected to begin until late this year, as the funds for the grant will not be delivered until September. At that point LCUWC will solicit from consultants scope of work for the project and will then hire a consultant to complete the project with LCUWC overseeing the process.

Once the document is complete it will remain with LCUWC as it works to develop and implement projects in the Chewaucan watershed. Neider is hopeful this could potentially lead to future grant funding to do assessments on the other watersheds in Lake County such as those in the Silver Lake and Christmas Valley area.

For more information email Neider at bdneider23@gmail.com.