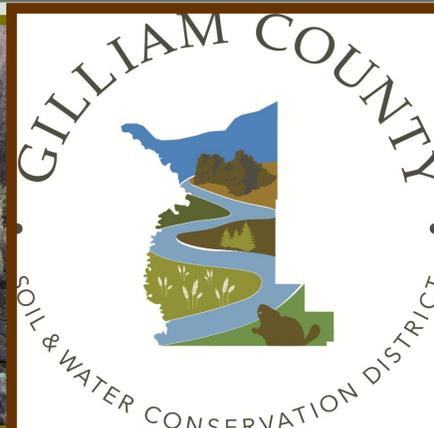


# GILLIAM COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE RURAL COMMUNITY AND TO EDUCATE AND ASSIST THE COMMUNITY IN CONSERVATION WHILE MAINTAINING SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE.**

## A few words from the Manager

The past year has been shaped by recovery, and by the resilience of the people and landscapes that define this county. The Lonerock Fire burned 137,222 acres and destroyed more than 300 miles of livestock fencing across Gilliam County in the summer of 2024. In the nearly two years since, the District has remained deeply committed to the long work of helping producers and land rebuild.

That commitment led to the launch of our Virtual Fencing Program, a multi-phase initiative that gives ranchers a practical, technology-driven alternative to replacing miles of conventional fence. What began as a fire recovery response has grown into one of the most promising tools we've brought to producers in our district's history. We are grateful to Gilliam County, the Ford Family Foundation, and the producers who stepped up early to make it possible. We look forward to expanding the program and putting this technology to work on more operations in the years ahead.

On the watershed side, the District continued advancing restoration work across our priority drainages, with more than 35 miles of stream now treated using process-based techniques that restore natural function rather than simply stabilize the bank. Healthier streams mean better water retention, more reliable late-season flows, and more productive riparian corridors, outcomes that matter as much to working ranches as they do to fish and wildlife. The John Day Basin Partnership, of which this district has been a founding member for over a decade, received the 2024 State Land Board Partnership Award, a recognition of what sustained, on-the-ground commitment to this basin looks like over time.

As I begin my seventh year as District Manager, I'm proud of what we've accomplished and clear-eyed about the work still ahead. Recovery from a fire of that magnitude is measured in years, not months, and this district is committed to staying the course. That kind of persistence is only possible because of the talented staff who bring this work to life every day, and a board of directors whose practical judgment and steady guidance keep us focused on what matters most. The Gilliam SWCD will continue serving the people and landscapes of this county with the same dedication that has carried us to this point.

-- Herb Winters, District Manager

**GILLIAM COUNTY SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Condon, Oregon**

**MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

**June 30, 2025**

A condensed version of the statement of activities as follows:

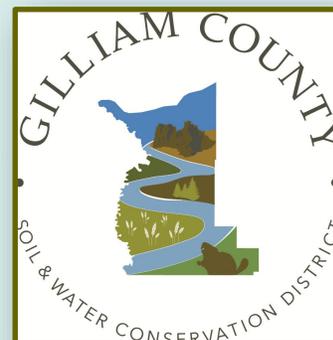
	Governmental Activities	
	June 30, 2025	June 30, 2024
Program revenues		
Operating grants and contributions	\$ 1,435,889	\$ 1,161,736
General Revenues		
Interest income	4,986	4,714
Rent Income	93,727	98,613
Miscellaneous	1,185	1,195
Total revenues	<u>1,535,787</u>	<u>1,266,258</u>
Program expenditures		
Soil and water conservation	1,292,937	1,169,681
Interest expense	36,916	30,473
Total program expenditures	<u>1,329,853</u>	<u>1,200,154</u>
Change in net position	205,934	66,104
Net position beginning of year	<u>1,099,961</u>	<u>1,033,857</u>
Net position end of year	<u>\$ 1,305,895</u>	<u>\$ 1,099,961</u>

**Financial Analysis of the Government's Funds**

The focus of the District's governmental funds is to provide information on short term inflows, outflows, and balances of spendable resources. Such information is useful in assessing the District's financing requirements. In particular, unassigned fund balance serves as a useful measure of a government's net resources available for spending at the end of the fiscal year.

### Our Team

- ◆ Herb Winters, who joined the team in November of 2017, holds the position of Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District, District Manager.
- ◆ Norie Wright joined the team in the summer of 2018 as a Conservation Technician I. Previously, Norie held the position of GEJDWC Coordinator. In December of 2018, Norie took the position of Office Manager.
- ◆ Jessica Gillen joined the team in early 2018 to fill the Conservation Technician I position.
- ◆ Roger Lathrop holds the Project Manager position and has been with the district for 18 years.



## Lower Thirtymile Creek Restoration Project

The Lower Thirtymile Creek Restoration Project is a multi-phase effort to restore approximately ten miles of Thirtymile Creek, a key tributary of the John Day River in Gilliam County, Oregon. Led by the Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District with the Bureau of Land Management and regional partners, the project is designed to reconnect the creek to its floodplain, restore riparian habitat, and improve conditions for native fish and wildlife, especially wild steelhead.

The project began with a design phase awarded in 2023, which funded engineering analysis and restoration planning for the lower reach of the creek. Phase 1 was awarded in 2024 and focused on completing designs and beginning early restoration actions, including installation of beaver dam analogues and post-assisted log structures, along with weed treatment and range seeding.

Phase 2 was also awarded in 2024, with major implementation planned for 2026. Planned conservation

work includes potential berm removal to restore floodplain connectivity, adaptive management of earlier restoration features, invasive weed control, seeding disturbed areas, and additional riparian planting.

Together, these efforts will improve stream complexity, retain water longer during dry periods, create cooler aquatic habitat, strengthen climate resilience, and support healthier fish, wildlife, and plant communities throughout the Thirtymile Creek watershed.

### LOWER THIRTYMILE CREEK PROCESS BASED RESTORATION DESIGN

Prepared by Anabranch Solutions



In Collaboration With  
Gilliam County SWCD  
Condon, OR.  
Bureau of Land Management  
Prineville, OR



December 2025



# DRY FORK OF THIRTYMILE CREEK RESTORATION

## *RIVERSCAPE RESTORATION*

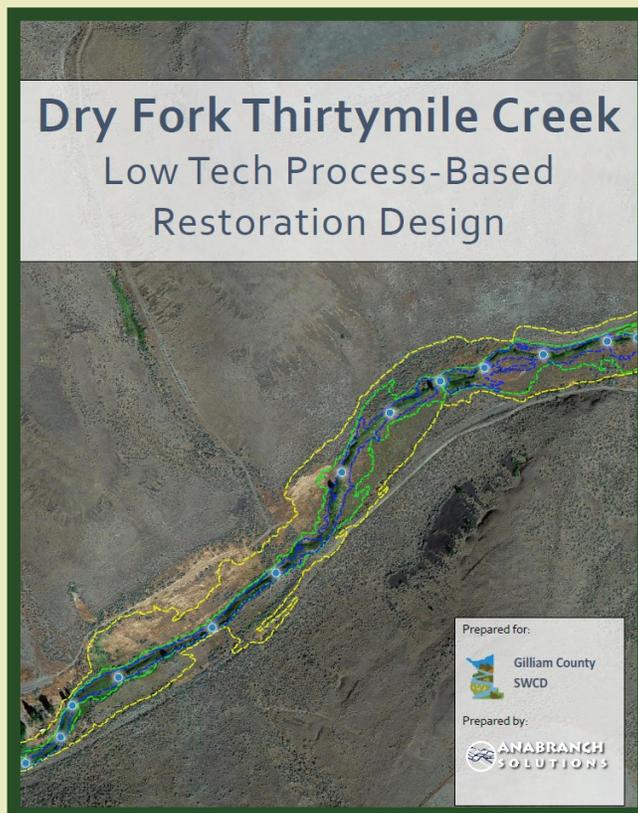
### Implementation of Low-Tech Process Based Restoration

LTPBR Designs were created in 2024 for Dry Fork of Thirtymile Creek Restoration. Implementation for Phase I was completed in the Summer 2025

The Dry Fork Thirtymile Creek Restoration Project brought restoration plans to life in 2025, improving a degraded stream reach in the Thirtymile Creek watershed in Gilliam County, Oregon. The project design was completed in 2024 and outlined a low-tech, process-based approach to restore .25 miles of stream using 23 beaver dam analogs (BDAs) placed in structural complexes throughout the project area.

Implementation took place in summer 2025, when crews installed hand-built BDAs using untreated wood posts, local vegetation, and sediment. These structures were designed to slow water, spread flows onto the floodplain, increase ponding, and raise local water tables while still allowing fish passage.

The work addressed key challenges including intermittent summer flows, limited riparian vegetation, and poor habitat complexity. By restoring more natural hydrology, the project will improve wetland and riparian habitat, increase water retention, and support healthier conditions for Mid-Columbia steelhead and other native species.



## DISTRICT CONSERVATION PROGRAMS— PARTNERSHIPS WITH ODFW

### Thirtymile Steelhead-Bass Interaction

#### Monitoring

The Thirtymile Steelhead-Bass Interaction project continues monitoring how non-native smallmouth bass affect juvenile steelhead. Researchers study bass movement, abundance, diet, predation, and competition, while also examining how temperature influences these interactions. This ongoing monitoring provides essential information for restoration planning and helps managers balance habitat improvements with predation risks.

### Thirtymile Phase III

#### Monitoring

The 2024–2026 Thirtymile Phase III project continues monitoring in Thirtymile Creek to evaluate restoration benefits for ESA-listed steelhead. Crews track wetted extent, water temperature, and juvenile fish abundance, growth, and survival. This continued monitoring helps measure restoration effectiveness and provides data to guide adaptive management and future restoration planning.

### Thirtymile Phase IV

#### Monitoring

Thirtymile Monitoring Phase 4 continues long-term monitoring of restoration effectiveness in Thirtymile Creek. The project measures surface water extent, adult steelhead spawning distribution, and juvenile fish abundance, growth, and survival. By extending earlier work, it strengthens the dataset needed to evaluate restoration outcomes and guide future habitat improvement decisions.



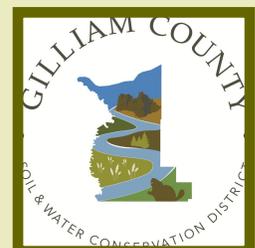
## Thirtymile Landowner Appreciation Dinner

On June 30, 2025, Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District hosted a Landowner Appreciation Dinner to recognize and thank the landowners of the Thirtymile Watershed for their collaboration, stewardship, and commitment to voluntary conservation and restoration. The event celebrated the

strong partnerships that make watershed restoration possible and acknowledged the important role landowners play in supporting project planning, implementation, and monitoring.

The dinner emphasized that progress in the Thirtymile watershed is built on trust, cooperation, and a shared investment in the land. Through their willingness to participate in restoration efforts, landowners have helped advance work that improves stream health, strengthens riparian areas, and supports long-term watershed resilience. Their leadership and partnership continue to be essential to the success of conservation in the watershed.

Most importantly, the event was a sincere expression of appreciation from Gilliam SWCD. It honored the landowners whose voluntary involvement has helped drive meaningful restoration outcomes and reinforced a shared commitment to caring for Thirtymile Creek and its surrounding landscape for future generations.



# DISTRICT CONSERVATION PROGRAMS— WATERSHED FOCUS

## Active Projects in the Thirtymile

### Watershed

The Thirtymile Watershed Beaver Recovery and Resiliency Program is a conservation-driven effort to restore natural watershed function across 87 miles of stream habitat in the Thirtymile Creek watershed. By focusing on natural beaver recolonization, the project uses a nature-based approach to improve water retention, reconnect floodplains, and strengthen drought resilience in an increasingly stressed landscape.

Project work includes field assessments, habitat and vegetation surveys, data analysis, and development of a Beaver Occupancy Assessment, Beaver Action Plan, and interactive webmap to guide future restoration. These tools will identify high-priority areas for habitat improvement and support long-term watershed planning.

Through a conservation lens, this work is important because beaver-supported systems can store water longer, reduce stream temperatures, improve riparian habitat, and create climate refuges for fish and wildlife. These benefits are especially valuable for ESA-listed Middle Columbia steelhead and other native species. The project also benefits agricultural producers by improving groundwater recharge, extending seasonal water availability, increasing drought resilience, and providing science-based tools to support land management and proactive solutions to potential beaver conflicts.



25 14:17

# DISTRICT CONSERVATION OUTREACH

## Upper Rock Creek Virtual Tour



On October 20, 2025, Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District hosted the Upper Rock Creek Virtual Fencing Tour, bringing together legislators, partners, and local producers to explore innovative solutions for rangeland management and wildfire recovery. The event began at the Condon Parish Hall with introductions and an overview of virtual fencing technology presented by the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center. Participants then traveled to Lonerock to hear from community members about the impacts of the 2024 Lonerock Fire and the collaborative response underway to support recovery in the region.



A producer panel shared firsthand experiences with implementing virtual fencing and discussed how the technology can help manage livestock, improve grazing efficiency, and support post-fire recovery efforts. The tour of Lonerock provided attendees with an opportunity to see the affected landscape and better understand the challenges producers are facing.



Oct 20, 2025 at 10:16:30 AM

The tour concluded with a lunch and discussion on future program development, emphasizing continued collaboration between producers, conservation organizations, and policymakers to advance innovative tools that support both agricultural operations and long-term rangeland conservation.

# DISTRICT CONSERVATION PLANNING

## Lonerock Post Fire Restoration Workshop

Following the Lonerock Fire, the Lonerock Post-Fire Restoration Workshop hosted by Gilliam SWCD on February 13, 2026, provided an important opportunity for landowners, partners, and technical experts to come together around a shared strategy for long-term recovery in the Upper Rock Creek and Lonerock watershed. The workshop emphasized that post-fire restoration is not only about repairing damaged land, but also about reducing future wildfire risk, improving watershed health, and strengthening the resilience of local working lands. Discussions focused on FEMA Hazard Mitigation funding, restoration actions such as reseeding, invasive annual grass treatment, juniper removal, and standing dead tree management, as well as tools like virtual fencing, prescribed fire, and water development to support better land management after the fire. Participants also explored available NRCS conservation programs, opportunities for landscape-scale planning, and the value of coordinated mapping and inventory work to guide future implementation. By bringing the community together after the fire, Gilliam SWCD helped build momentum for a collaborative, multi-year restoration effort that will benefit rangeland health, riparian areas, wildlife habitat, and the long-term sustainability of local agricultural operations.



## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOLLOWING FIRE

### The Lonerock Wildfire Mitigation Project : Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program – Post Fire (HMGP-PF)



In the wake of the 2024 Lonerock Fire, Gilliam County and Gilliam SWCD are turning recovery into action across the Upper Rock Creek Watershed. Backed by FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program–Post Fire and supported with state match funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, this project is a bold investment in the future of the land and the people who depend on it. Crews will remove expanding western juniper, treat invasive grasses that fuel fast-moving fire, clear dangerous woody debris, and use virtual fencing to guide strategic grazing across thousands of acres. These efforts will help break up fuel continuity, restore healthier plant communities, and protect soils and water after wildfire. Just as importantly, the project supports working ranchlands and strengthens the watershed's ability to recover from fire, erosion, and future climate stress. It is a strong example of conservation, partnership, and resilience in action. Implementation plan: 2026-2030



## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOLLOWING FIRE

### Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Wildfire resource planning in the Upper Rock Creek Watershed



Following lessons learned from the 2024 Lone Rock Fire, Gilliam SWCD and Gilliam County launched a watershed-scale planning effort to improve wildfire preparedness in the Upper Rock Creek Watershed. Funded through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program 5% Initiative, with match support from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the project will map roads, gates, terrain, and water resources across 50,737 acres of remote working lands. It will also develop conceptual designs for strategically placed above-ground water storage to support future fire suppression. By improving responder access to accurate field information and creating a roadmap for future mitigation investments, this project will help protect agricultural operations, natural resources, and rural communities from future wildfire impacts.

## AWARDED UPCOMING PROJECTS

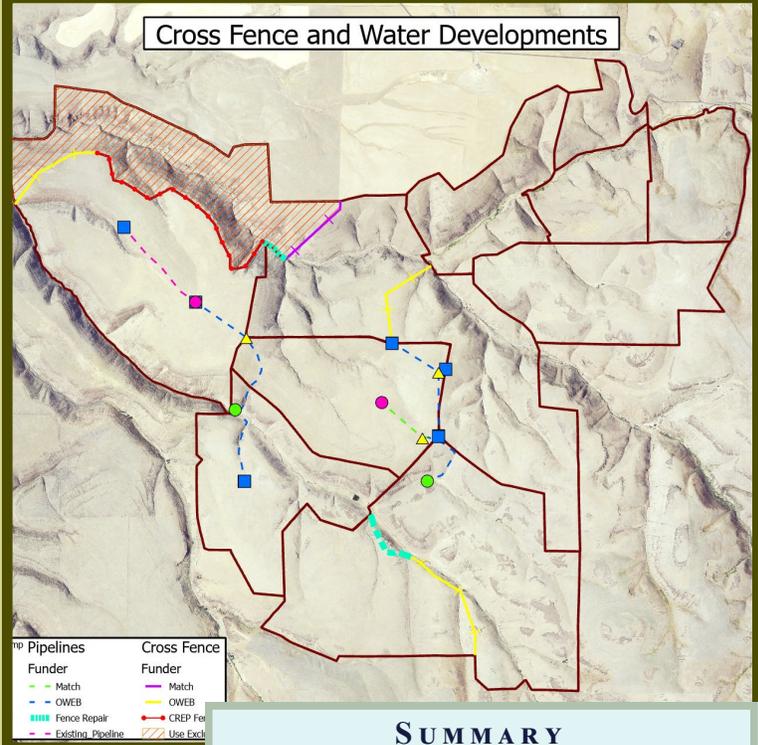
# Big Mossy Riparian Fencing, Planting, and Livestock Distribution Project

The **Big Mossy Riparian Restoration Project** is a watershed restoration effort led by the Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District on the 17,342-acre Big Mossy property in the Thirtymile Creek watershed in Gilliam County, Oregon. The project focuses on restoring ecological function and improving steelhead habitat along the East Fork of Thirtymile Creek and Lost Valley Creek, which contain 4.27 miles of designated steelhead habitat.

Decades of unrestricted livestock access have degraded riparian vegetation, reduced stream shading, destabilized banks, and disconnected the floodplain, leading to warmer water temperatures and reduced habitat complexity for fish.

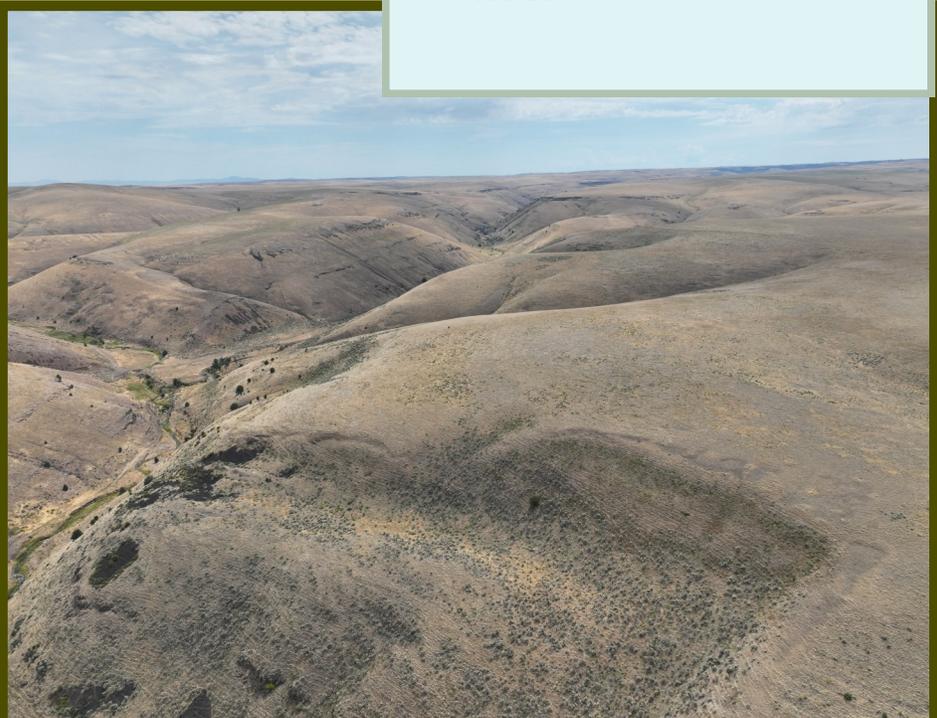
To address these issues, the project will implement several restoration practices. These include installing 7,333 feet of riparian fencing to protect approximately 2 miles of stream, planting 2,050 native riparian trees and shrubs, and installing beaver dam analogs (BDAs) to reconnect the stream with its floodplain and improve natural water storage. The project also includes cross-fencing and off-stream livestock watering systems to distribute grazing more effectively across upland areas and reduce pressure on sensitive riparian zones.

Together, these actions will improve water quality, increase stream shading, restore floodplain processes, and enhance habitat for Mid-Columbia steelhead, while maintaining the property as a productive working ranch. The project represents an important first phase in restoring watershed health across this large and strategically located property within the Thirtymile watershed.



### SUMMARY

- 7,333 FEET OF RIPARIAN EXCLUSION FENCE TO PROTECT 2 MILES OF STREAM
- 2,050 RIPARIAN PLANTS
- BEAVER DAM ANALOGS
- 3 SOURCES OF OFF-SITE WATER



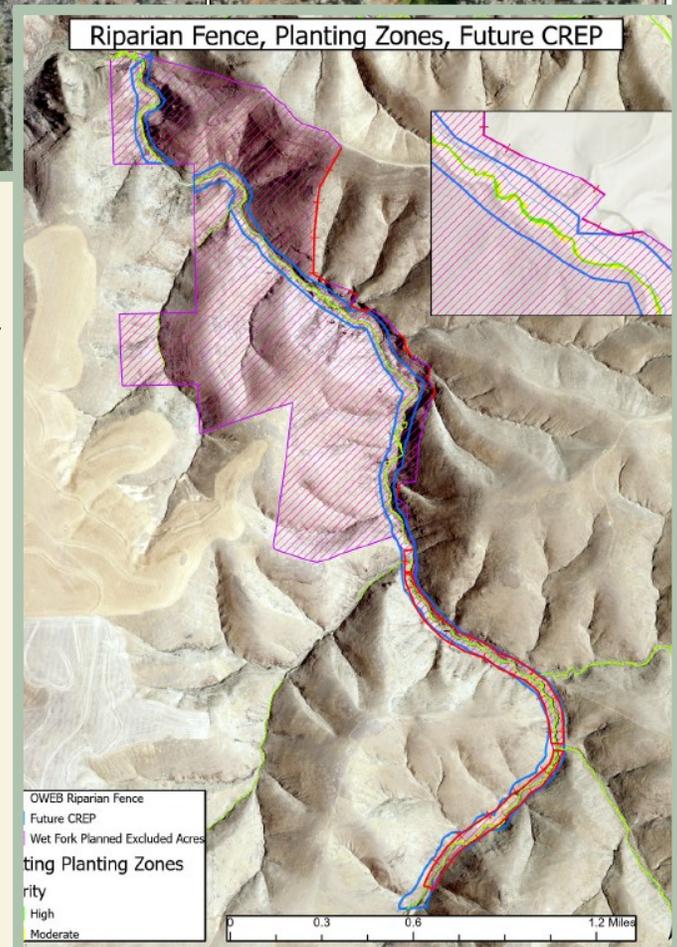
# Gilliam SWCD Large Scale Restoration HAY CREEK RIPARIAN FENCING AND PLANTING

The Hay Creek Riparian Fencing and Planting Project will protect and enhance restoration work completed along Hay Creek, a tributary to the John Day River in Gilliam County that supports one of the Columbia River Basin's largest wild summer steelhead populations. The project focuses on safeguarding previously installed restoration structures and rebuilding riparian vegetation to improve watershed health.

Earlier phases of restoration installed 377 beaver dam analog structures across 10.6 miles of stream, reconnecting floodplains, improving water storage, and creating habitat complexity for fish and wildlife. However, livestock access currently threatens these investments and limits natural vegetation recovery.

To address this, the project will install approximately 3.9 miles of riparian exclusion fencing and plant 28,294 native trees and shrubs across the riparian corridor. These actions will protect 6.6 miles of restored stream habitat, stabilize streambanks, reduce sediment and nutrient runoff, and provide shade that helps cool water temperatures for threatened Mid-Columbia steelhead.

The effort is a collaboration between Gilliam SWCD, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and OWEB, with the Tribes supporting the native plant installation. By protecting restoration infrastructure and establishing resilient riparian vegetation, the project will improve water quality, increase drought resilience, and support both fish habitat recovery and long-term watershed health in the Hay Creek basin.



## SUMMARY

- 3.9 MILES OF RIPARIAN EXCLUSION FENCE TO PROTECT 6.6 MILES OF STREAM
- 28,294 RIPARIAN PLANTS
- 337 BEAVER DAM ANALOGS

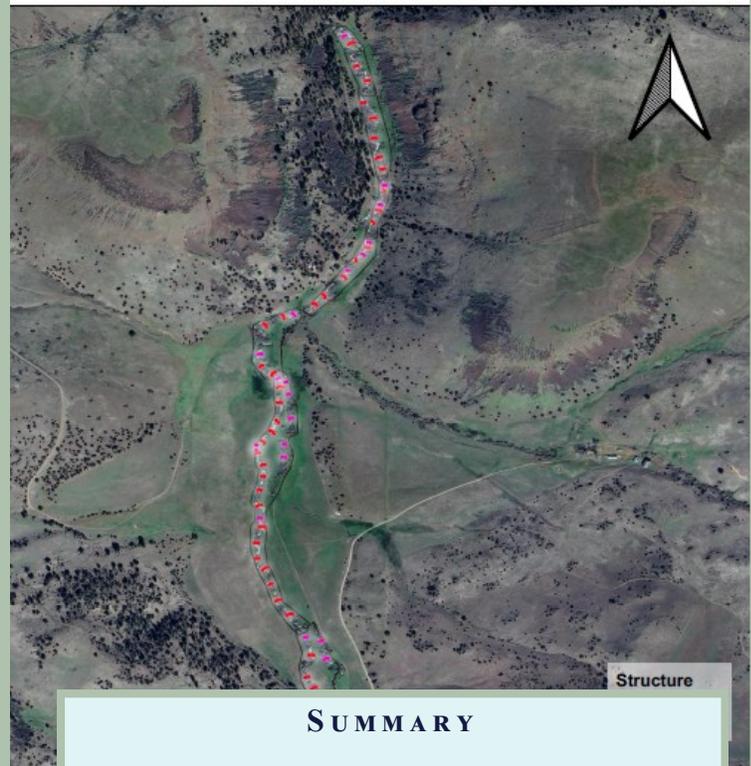
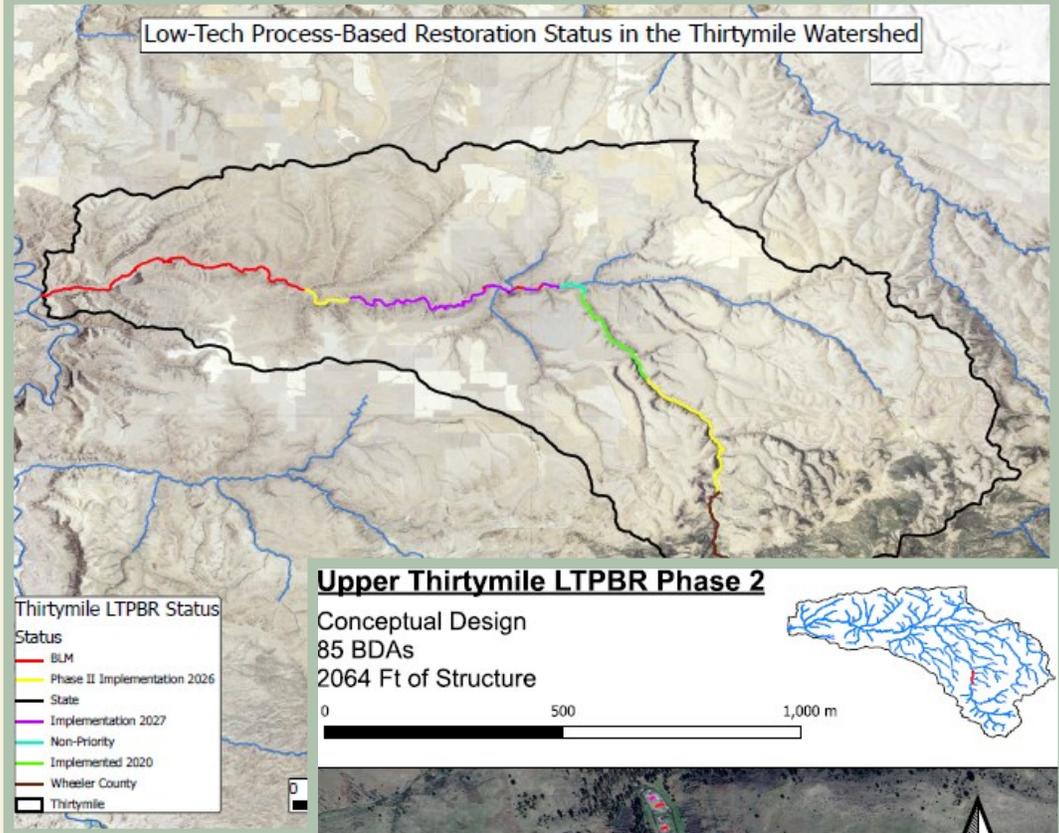
# Gilliam SWCD Large Scale Restoration

## UPPER THIRTYMILE CREEK PHASE 2

This project is a Phase 2 restoration effort on Upper Thirtymile Creek, about 5 miles south of Condon, focused on improving habitat for threatened Mid-Columbia River steelhead while making the creek more resilient to drought and warming conditions. The creek currently suffers from intermittent summer flows, high water temperatures, simplified channel shape, and poor floodplain connection, all of which reduce fish habitat and watershed function.

Phase 2 builds on earlier work completed in 2022, when about 325 beaver dam analogs and post-assisted log structures were installed across 5.7 miles of stream. This next phase will strengthen and expand those restoration features by installing 126 additional beaver dam analogs totaling 3,064 feet across 2.86 miles of channel. The work is designed to slow water, create deeper pools, reconnect the stream to its floodplain, increase groundwater recharge, and support natural beaver activity that has already started responding to Phase 1.

Overall, the project is meant to restore natural stream processes rather than rely on heavy engineering. Expected benefits include longer-lasting summer flows, cooler water, more complex habitat, better conditions for steelhead, stronger riparian function, and improved drought resilience for the watershed and surrounding working lands.



### SUMMARY

126 NEW BEAVER DAM ANALOGS (BDAS) WILL BE INSTALLED IN PHASE 2, TOTALING 3,064 LINEAR FEET ACROSS 2.86 MILES OF UPPER THIRTYMILE CREEK.

# 2025 ODA— SWCD COOPERATOR GILLIAM SWCD COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RESPONSE AWARD

At the May 2025 Oregon Department of Agriculture Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) meeting in Condon, Gilliam SWCD hosted commissioners for a training day focused on local conservation and wildfire



recovery. The SWCC provides statewide leadership and guidance for Oregon's soil and water conservation efforts.

During the visit, commissioners toured Gilliam SWCD's Virtual Fencing Program and then traveled to Lonerock to see impacts from the 2024 fire firsthand. That stop was especially important because it showed the need for continued recovery, landowner support, and watershed protection. Gilliam SWCD was also honored with an award recognizing its outstanding wildfire mitigation and recovery work.

## GILLIAM SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF DIRECTORY

DISTRICT MANAGER	HERB WINTERS	384-2672, EXT 110
OFFICE MANAGER	NORIE WRIGHT	384-2672, EXT 108
PROJECT MANAGER	ROGER LATHROP	384-2672, EXT 106
CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN I	JESSICA GILLEN	384-2672, EXT 108

### Board of Directors

- ❖ **Jordan Maley**-Chairman- Jordan is the OSU Extension Agent for Gilliam County. Jordan also manages family holdings north of Condon and on Ferry Canyon.
- ❖
- ❖ **John Anderson**-Vice-Chair-John and his wife Marilee own land in the Thirtymile Watershed.
- ❖ **Rich Harper**-Secretary/Treasurer- Rich and his wife Alice manage the Circle W Ranch on middle Rock Creek.
- ❖ **Chet Wilkins**-Chet is the Gilliam County Assessor and operates a family ranch on Rock Creek.
- ❖ **Doug Potter**-The Potter family operates a multi-generational farming operation in the Condon area. When not helping out on the place Doug maintains a “day job” with the Gilliam County Weed Department.

### GILLIAM SWCD THANKS

THE WORK OF THE GILLIAM SWCD IS SUPPORTED AND ENHANCED BY MANY, STARTING WITH OUR PRODUCERS AND LANDOWNERS. BUT, NONE OF OUR PROJECTS WOULD SUCCEED WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF OUR FUNDING PARTNERS. OUR THANKS TO OUR PRODUCERS, LANDOWNERS AND THE FOLLOWING FUNDING PARTNERS:

OREGON DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD  
CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE WARM SPRINGS  
BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION  
NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE  
GILLIAM COUNTY  
FARM SERVICE AGENCY  
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
THE FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION  
SUSTAINABLE NORTHWEST  
WESTERN BEAVERS COOPERATIVE

