

BREY RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT

The Brey Riparian Restoration project is well on its way to becoming a valuable forested riparian buffer in our county. It is located just south of Carlton along the North Yamhill River and includes 36 acres of riparian habitat along nearly one mile of river frontage.

The property is currently owned by James & Teresa Brey who purchased it five years ago from Teresa's mother who had owned it for a number of years. The forested acreage was selectively logged for Douglas fir in the early 1990's. The replant, which was required under the Oregon Forest Practices Act, was not very successful. Invasive species including Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) and reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) occupied most of the newly opened areas, out competing the planted seedlings. The area was abandoned except for some livestock grazing. However, access was nearly impossible even for cattle because of the dense weed growth.

The Breys contacted Yamhill SWCD in 2005 to request assistance in developing a conservation plan for their property. A plan was developed under the assumption that they would enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) which is a Farm Service Agency (FSA) program which restores stream bank vegetation. However, after developing a restoration budget of \$75,719, it was clear that program funds would fall well short of covering the enormous site preparation costs. In an effort to supplement CREP funding, SWCD staff applied for an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grant for \$43,760. We were awarded with the grant in September 2007 and began clearing the site in October 2007.

Specialized equipment was used to mow the dense blackberry and grass growth which towered in excess of 12 feet in some areas. Non-native English hawthorn trees were cut and piled as well as any trees which were competing with the Oregon white oak trees. The massive piles were partially burned until conditions became too wet to allow for successful burning. One month after clearing work was completed, a record flood hit the site. After the water had receded, flood debris was found 12 feet above ground level! The mulched blackberry debris had been washed away, but the slash piles as well as the topsoil remained intact.

Chemical treatment of the site was delayed by persistent spring rains in 2008. The first treatment in June was followed by three other spray efforts ending on October 1, 2008. Heavy treatment was necessary to eliminate the "old growth" stands of both blackberry and canarygrass. Both species were kept under 18" or less and were not allowed to set seed during the year.

A fence was constructed in July 2008 to exclude any livestock use in the area. A four strand barbed wire fence was built according to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards along with four gates to access the buffer for future planting and maintenance activities. The remaining slash piles were completely burned in November 2008.

A planting plan was developed by SWCD staff with input from the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Breys. It consisted of mainly hardwoods which were flood tolerant as

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well as some conifer trees for the upland areas and shrubs for the bank areas. Species were selected not only by soil and light preferences, but also for what was onsite already. The new plantings will eventually blend in with existing native species. It will then be a multi-species, multi-storied stand which will support a wide variety of native wildlife species. Many small mammals use the site along with deer and coyotes. A well established great blue heron rookery is located within the buffer and both bald eagles and harlequin ducks have been observed using the site.

After the site is planted in early 2009, maintenance activities will begin. Spring and fall herbicide treatments are planned to control emerging invasive weeds. Two watering efforts are planned for late spring and mid-summer. The site is very wet in the winter, but dries out quickly in the summer due to the high clay content in the soil. Watering during the first year will boost survival immensely. Spot spraying will continue for another couple years to eliminate any competition until the seedlings are considered “free to grow”. Wildlife structures including bird and bat nesting boxes will be added to the site to encourage use of the buffer.

The Brey Riparian Restoration site will serve as a model conservation acreage for the area. Hopefully, the surrounding community will see that full site restoration really is an achievable goal that can be met along with assistance from others such as FSA, NRCS, OWEB, ODF and SWCD.

BEFORE



AFTER

