



The Kingfisher



Newsletter of the Yamhill Basin Council
Working to improve our watersheds
Volume 6, Issue 4

May 2009

Local Art

Purchase a limited edition Kingfisher print (above), painted by local artist Terry Peasley.

Un-matted 11x14 cost \$35; 16x20 cost \$60. Framed prints are also available.

Call Hidden Treasures Gallery in McMinnville at 503-883-0353 to order yours today!

Yamhill Basin Council

Officers

Stan Christensen *Chair*

Staff

Jean Reiher *Watershed Coordinator*
Denise Schmit *Monitoring Technician*
Corissa Kunze *Monitoring Assistant*

Stakeholder Groups

Agriculture
Bureau of Land Management
Business/Community Development Assoc.
City Government
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Environmental Groups
Industrial Forestry
Natural Areas Parks & Recreation
Students
Small & Large Utilities
Small Woodlands Assoc.
Watershed Residents
Yamhill & Polk Counties
Yamhill SWCD



A bare ditch between the road and a farm field.

Roadside Vegetation Management

By: Jean Reiher (YBC) and
Steve Kindel (Yamhill County Road Department)

We all know that healthy streams and rivers are important to public health, but also consider that roadside ditches are an extension of those streams and rivers. They collect water from the road surface and from nearby land which then flows directly to streams. To improve the health of our streams and rivers, we should improve the health of our roadside ditches. The YBC, Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District, and some concerned citizens are working with the Yamhill County Road Department to address such environmental concerns.

The Department maintains 670 miles of paved and gravel roads. They maintain roadside ditches and control roadside vegetation to maintain sight distances and visible signs to make our roads safer.

The overall goal of the Roadside Management Program is to have roadsides with a 2 foot gravel shoulder (See Zone A on photo). Outside of that, maintain a 10 foot wide area with a shallow ditch with short grass or groundcover vegetation, but not tall vegetation that obstructs the view of the road and safety signs (Zone B). The road right-of-way extends as far as 30 feet from the center of the road (Zone C). The Road Department wants landowners to avoid planting trees inside this area which may grow to obstruct vision lines.

To control roadside vegetation, County employees mow roadside grass or brush cut larger vegetation. Brush cutting is expensive and dangerous, and can also spread weeds, so mowing is preferred. The County also uses herbicides along roadsides to control invasive weeds in some situations. Where necessary, the shoulders are sprayed 1 to 2 1/2 feet from the edge of the road to expose the gravel shoulder. They avoid herbicide use within 25 feet of flowing streams and stay 100 feet away from salmon-bearing streams.

Some landowners have requested the right to maintain their own roadsides. Some of them do perform proper maintenance, but others allow the vegetation to become overgrown, so the County must step in and do it. On the other hand, some landowners spray and scrape away the vegetation until the roadside ditch is bare dirt. This is not a good situation since it can cause the shoulder of the road to wash out, leading to unsafe conditions. Eroded materials can fill and block roadside culverts. This can cause flooding over the road and road slumping. The eroded sediment will flow to nearby streams and rivers. Besides landowners losing their soil, this is not healthy for the stream.

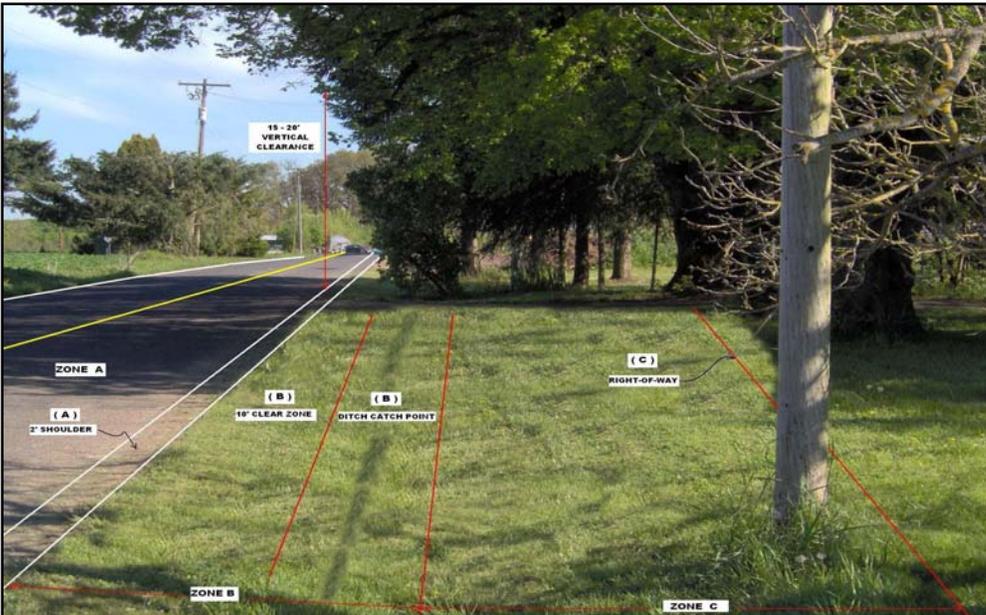
Since mowing of roadside vegetation is less expensive and less dangerous than brush cutting, the County is encouraging low-growing vegetation on roadsides and in ditches. A thick growing grass such as Creeping Red Fescue is suggested for ditches since it is low growing, long lived, and creates a mat of grasses that suppresses any weeds and prevents others from becoming established. Grassed ditches also reduce erosion which prevents degradation of the road shoulder.

Roadside Vegetation Management (cont.)

The vegetation in the ditch also acts as a filter to remove sediment and other pollutants from the water, thus keeping it out of the streams. Vegetation in a ditch may require mowing early in the season, but generally not after mid-June, so they are less expensive to maintain than bare ditches which often harbor tall weeds. Roadside vegetation also looks nice, which is important to local residents and visitors to the area.

The Yamhill SWCD Newsletter in June 2008 had an article presenting the results of a study done during December 2007 showing that water flowing from vegetated ditches was cleaner than from non-vegetated ditches. Read the article at: <http://www.yamhillswcd.org/resources/SpringNewsletter08.pdf>

We encourage the retention or replanting of low growing vegetation on road shoulders and ditches. The YBC, Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Yamhill County Road Department are working together with landowners and other agencies to have safe roads and to practice good environmental stewardship.



Top photo:
A nicely vegetated roadside with marked zones.

Left photo and
right photo:
More nice examples of
vegetated roadsides.

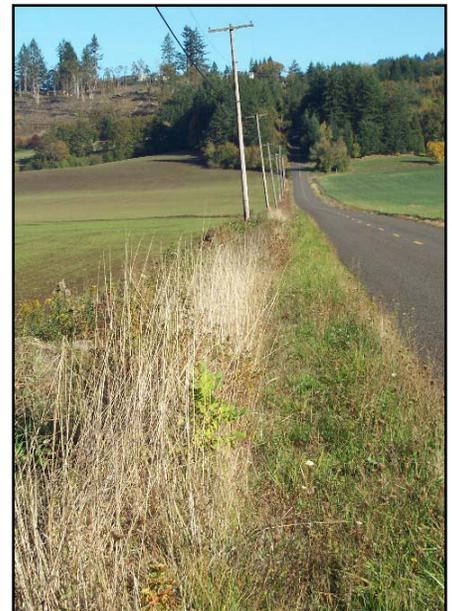


YBC Membership and Volunteers

Welcome new Council Members Kris Bledsoe, Richard McJunkin, Alan Mustain, Doug Reynolds, and Bruce Sigloh!

We still have openings for new Council Members representing Agriculture, Business Associations, and Watershed Residents. If you are interested in working to improve the Chehalem and Yamhill watersheds through a collaborative, consensus based group, please attend a Council meeting on the second Thursday of each month from 7-8:30pm at the McMinnville Water Reclamation Facility at 3500 NE Clearwater Drive, McMinnville. New Council Member Application forms are available at the YBC office or on our website.

We are also looking for volunteers to help with water quality monitoring, removing invasive plants, planting native species, mulching and watering plants, cleaning up streams, or doing event planning, fundraising, and office work. Please contact our office at 503.474.1047 and tell us your areas of interest. Thank you!



**Yamhill
Basin
Council**

P.O. Box 1517
800 NE 2nd St
McMinnville, OR 97128-1517
Phone: 503.474.1047
Fax: 503.472.2459
www.co.yamhill.or.us/ybc

Comments, questions, submissions? Wish to be added to or removed from the mailing list?

Contact Jean at (503) 474-1047 or ybc_coordinator@co.yamhill.or.us.