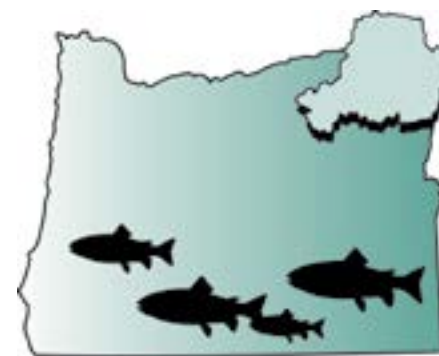


RIPPLES IN THE GRANDE RONDE



SUMMER EDITION 2016

RIVERS UNITING NEIGHBORS • QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE GRANDE RONDE MODEL WATERSHED

The Beaver State:

How Salmonids and Beavers Relate

by Jessica Phelps and Lacey Moore, GRMW Staff

In 1961, the Chinook salmon, one of the most highly prized fish in the Pacific Northwest, was named the official fish of Oregon. Eight years later, officials declared the American Beaver to be Oregon's state animal. Beyond sharing status as Oregon royalty, salmon and beavers have other interesting commonalities. New research about how fish use different components of streams and rivers is indicating a strong correlation between healthy beaver populations and more preferred habitats for salmonids. While the benefits that salmonids realize from beavers are numerous, beaver benefits aren't exclusively piscine.

Beavers may be able to provide high-quality habitat restoration at a fraction of the price it costs for humans to perform large-scale restoration projects. Through dam creation and maintenance, beavers can help raise the water table, improve water quality, and provide flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, and other ecosystem services to benefit humans. Although the concept of leveraging the ordinary habits of beavers to do valuable conservation work seems novel, it actually has been around for quite some time (see inset "Airborne Beavers" page

2). In 1950, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game used beavers for flood control and soil conservation.

Beavers: "Nature's Engineers"

Just like humans, beavers are habitat engineers and have a disproportionate impact on their surrounding landscape. Cutting down trees and building dams like we do, beavers are a stereotypically busy but often underappreciated animal. More than 200 years ago, salmon, steelhead, and beavers populated the Pacific Northwest in very high densities. Subsequent fur trade in the area nearly eliminated the beaver population, leaving the landscape greatly altered even before European settlement. Following the decline in popularity of their pelts, beaver populations have been rebounding. They now occupy most of their native range, although not nearly to the level of historic population rates.

Since beavers began repopulating the landscape, the relationship between beavers and fish has been a subject of some disagreement among researchers and natural resource managers, with many believing that

beaver dams impede the movement of fish. This belief has led to the common practice of removing beaver dams and beavers from public and private lands. While not all beaver impacts on the environment are completely understood, research during the past two decades increasingly has shown that the relationship between beavers and fish, including endangered salmon and steelhead populations, is beneficial. A study published in 2013 by researchers with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Utah State University asked the question of whether beaver dams impede the movement of trout. The surprising answer, in the case of the Logan River in Utah, was that movement appears to be somewhat impeded for the invasive Brown Trout, while the native species, Bonneville Cutthroat



Beaver dam analogue on Bridge Creek near John Day
(photo: Nick Bouwes)

Continued on page 2, **Beaver**



Article from *Mechanix Illustrated*, August 1950

Trout, negotiated even large beaver dams to reach critical upstream habitat. A long-term study by Utah State University and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) researchers in the John Day River basin also has documented a positive relationship between the presence of beaver dams and steelhead production and movement.

When beavers build dams in the river, they create deep pools and a more complex network of channels in the river. These channel networks accommodate high flows, while the beaver pools both alleviate stress from high-water events and sustain late-season flows. Beaver complexes also are associated with increased riparian habitat diversity, improved

channel stability, and higher water quality. However, when beavers build dams in an irrigation ditch or a culvert, the results are less desirable.

To mitigate the negative impacts beavers can have on infrastructure and private property while promoting their contributions to the ecosystem, The Methow Beaver Project in Twisp, Washington, has been partnering with landowners. Their first priority is to help the landowners deter beavers from damage-causing activity. When this deterrence is not possible, The Methow Beaver Project relocates the beaver, first to their facility, where it is paired with a mate, and then to a higher elevation in the watershed on public lands. After eight years of implementation, The Methow Beaver Project reports that the beavers they have relocated have provided 780 acres of wetland habitat and 19 acres of pond surface as well as improved 19 miles of stream habitat. By removing problem-causing beavers from private lands, the project has reduced beavers' negative impacts on irrigation infrastructure, culverts, roads, and both ornamental and orchard trees. One of the greatest benefits of using beavers to restore habitat is that beavers

work constantly to repair and maintain their structures, providing ecosystem benefits and improved habitat for generations.

On Bridge Creek in the John Day River basin, a group of researchers has taken a slightly different approach to beaver-enhanced river restoration. Instead of relocating beavers, beaver dam analogues (BDAs) have been placed throughout the watershed to help the current population build and maintain long-lasting structures. Because the Bridge Creek system was deeply incised and disconnected from its floodplain, high flows often would wipe out beaver structures after just one season. BDAs consist of wooden posts driven

into the streambed and floodplain that are woven through with willow branches. These structures create a solid foundation for the beavers to build dams and lodges. The results of this nine-year study show an increase in natural beaver dams, significant stream aggradation, reconnection of the floodplain, increased channel complexity, and increased juvenile steelhead production. More studies in different locations as well as long-term monitoring are needed to determine the complete range of impacts of beaver restoration on the ecosystem. With that caveat, the success of The Methow Beaver Project and the John Day BDA efforts show tremendous benefits of beaver-enhanced restoration. ■

Beavers Combating Climate Change

The water stored in beaver ponds and meadows may prove to be a crucial component of climate resilience. As annual snowfall and associated snowpack decrease, low flows in the late summer and fall negatively affect wildlife, vegetation, and water users. Beaver habitat functions like a sponge, storing significant amounts of water high up in watersheds and slowly releasing it as the surrounding area gets drier, mirroring the function of snowpack and late season snowmelt. Beyond water storage, the work of Colorado State researcher Ellen Wohl has shown that significant amounts of carbon are stored in beaver ponds and meadows. As sediment and water builds up behind dams, organic material like wood is buried, causing it to decompose at a much slower rate. Studies by Wohl and colleagues have found the soil in meadows previously populated by beavers contains less carbon than the soil in beaver-inhabited meadows. This finding indicates that the removal of beavers and the drying up of beaver meadows released a significant amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Because active beaver ponds and meadows also produce carbon, it is not known how carbon production and sequestration are balanced in active beaver meadows. The overall impact of beavers on the water and carbon cycle is an exciting new area of research. ■

Farewell! *to Mike Hayward*

By Jeff Oveson, *GRMW Executive Director*

After 16 years of service on the Board of Directors for the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW), Mike Hayward is stepping down as Board Chair. I had the chance to sit down with Mike and reminisce about his time with the GRMW and the journey that has brought him to his current position as General Manager of Wallowa County Grain Growers. Public employment, small business ownership, ranching, and politics as well as membership on numerous boards and committees are all part of Mike's broad and impressive resume. Most of us here at the GRMW came to know Mike through his service on the GRMW Board of Directors. Mike first served as an alternate to Pat Wortman, a Wallowa County Commissioner who played a key role in the formation of the GRMW. Mike's alternate position lasted from 1997 to 1999, and when Wortman left the Board, Mike took over the position, playing an integral role on the Board from 1999 until April 2016 and serving as Board Chair from 2003 to 2016.

Although he's been here for what seems like his whole life, Mike was not raised in Wallowa County. He was born and raised in Pullman, Washington, playing football and baseball at Pullman High School and then earning a degree in Forestry from Washington State University. Mike's first long-term exposure to Wallowa County came when he participated in an internship with the Oregon State Parks at Wallowa Lake State Park. After graduation, he returned as a seasonal employee and subsequently was promoted to a Park Manager position, working in both Culver and Bend before leaving the Parks Department. He and Bev Combes were married in 1978 and returned to Wallowa County in 1979, where Mike worked for the McClaran Ranch and local tire stores. In 1988, Bev's family persuaded Mike and Bev to buy Eagle Cap Chalets, the family business at Wallowa Lake. Mike says that the hospitality business was a great way for the Hayward children, Jessie and Clay, to develop a work ethic by managing the family-owned go-kart track and snack bar. Mike and Bev managed the 37 rental units and were essentially on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the tourist season. Although

Jessie and Clay left the county following high school to further their educations, both are again local residents, with Jessie working as the Office Manager at Winding Waters Clinic and Clay running the concrete plant for South Fork Ready Mix.

While living, working, and raising a family in Wallowa County, Mike made time to give back to his community not only through the GRMW but also as a long-standing member of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners. There's little

doubt that his more than 16 years representing the people of Wallowa County, including innumerable trips to Salem, Portland, and Washington, DC, shaped Mike's view of Oregon, the U.S., and the world. "Philosophically, the notion that sometimes, you could actually help people or the community in general" was the tenet by which he served, acknowledging that some topics held his interest more than others. Frustration, one of the burdens of leaders everywhere, came with the job. Realizing that he sometimes "couldn't move the needle"

challenged what Mike believes is his very patient personality. He sums the frustration up by saying, "I think we had some positive impacts, but it was never enough. I had a hard time accepting a low bar, but maybe sometimes my expectations were too high." Mike's work ethic and high standards carried over to his work with the GRMW and elevated the entire organization. Mike recalls that the best part of serving with the GRMW was "working to actually address multiple values with landowners and improving fisheries and their habitat concurrently." Mike says his concern for assuring the future viability of farming, ranching, and logging while simultaneously improving

fish habitat drove him to stay involved with the GRMW for those 16+ years. He believes that although people altered habitat to the detriment of fisheries and fish habitat in order to secure farmland, prevent flooding, and harvest timber, they almost never did so with malice, saying that "you can't judge past actions based on today's knowledge."

Mike committed a lot of time and effort to his position on the GRMW Board and leaves with an expansive perspective. According to Mike, "We owe a great deal of gratitude to the folks who came together in the beginning, far too many to mention by name, to facilitate an organization that recognized the importance of the water resource to not only fish and our other natural resources but also the agricultural and economic viability of our two counties. Over the years, the people who have committed countless hours of their time have continued to work with that shared vision in mind.



Mike receives one of his farewell gifts
(photo: GRMW)



Ripples in the Grande Ronde is funded by the
Bonneville Power Administration and the
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board



Continued on page 8, **Farewell**

Until the Cows Come Home

6 Ranch Uses their Cattle as Restoration Partners

by Liza Jane McAlister,
Adele Nash, James Nash,
and Coby Menton

Project Background

Much of the Wallowa River downstream of Enterprise has been altered, often straightened and moved adjacent to a steep slope so that it could be kept in place instead of naturally meandering back and forth across the valley. The river was moved to limit the impact of high-water events on human-built infrastructure such as farms, homes, highways, and railroads. This type of channelization was, at one time, common practice throughout the region and the world. Although the intended benefits to humans were realized, there also were unintended adverse effects of channelization on all native aquatic species, most notably Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout, all three of which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. After the river was straightened (i.e., channelized), it became a very simple channel without the pools, glides, and side channels that are critical habitat components for native fish. In a channelized system, there is no place for fish to avoid the faster current, no side channels where juveniles can rear, and very little connectivity to the natural floodplain. Floodplain connectivity works to de-energize high flows, support riparian

vegetation, and store water in the adjacent soils to maintain flows later in the season.

The 6 Ranch channel restoration project area encompasses designated critical habitat for three endangered species of varying life stages. Juvenile spring Chinook and steelhead inhabit this reach of river year-round for juvenile rearing, while bull trout use it to forage, migrate, and overwinter. Prior to restoration, this reach of the Wallowa River was found by the Wallowa County Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan and the Grande Ronde Subbasin Plan to be deficient in several habitat, water quality, and stream function parameters, including high temperatures, excess sediment, and a simplified stream channel. This reach was designated as high-priority for restoration because it is located in an area that historically provided some of the most productive fish habitat in the Grande Ronde Basin. The restoration solution that was designed to improve aquatic conditions involved installing large wood structures and stream simulation material such as boulders and smaller rock, stabilizing streambanks, re-meandering the main channel, constructing side channels, and planting riparian vegetation. Currently, the project area is being rested from domestic livestock grazing for two growing seasons. After this period, focused grazing techniques will be utilized to promote the achievement of restoration objectives. A stock watering system was installed to help facilitate this grazing strategy.

As a result of the 6 Ranch Habitat Restoration Project initiated by Liza Jane McAlister and her family, a formerly channelized section of the Wallowa River now meanders through the 6 Ranch, providing improved habitat for these critical species as well as numerous other native aquatic species. Liza Jane and her family implemented this large

restoration project on their property with the goal of creating a sustainable, family-run grass-fed beef operation that improves fish and wildlife habitat by managing cattle to promote the health and vigor of the riparian and upland plant communities. In support of this goal, they outlined the following objectives:

1. Manage domestic livestock in the riparian pasture to reduce the presence of Reeds' Canary grass (RCG), a non-native species that precludes the establishment of desirable plant species, including other native grasses and riparian hardwoods.
2. Manage domestic livestock in the riparian pasture to promote the development of a diverse riparian forest along the restored river channel that includes willow, cottonwood, dogwood, and alder hardwood trees.

Critical to the success of the restoration project is the effectiveness of the grazing management plan (GMP) that will be implemented in the project area starting in 2018. The GMP, written with the help of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and informed by Liza Jane, is a system of grazing that includes high-intensity, short-duration grazing episodes in small, temporary fenced areas of about two acres in size. Each area will be occupied for between one



(graphic produced by GRMW)

and three days, and animals will be moved based on vegetation and river channel response. Movement of animals will be based on several criteria, including forage stubble height, health of desired plant species like grasses and hardwoods, streambank stability, and in-stream habitat conditions.

The riparian pasture will be grazed for 26 days during the period between March 15 and May 15, 2018. The benchmark for pasture readiness will be the appearance of six to eight inches of new growth on the RCG prior to the riparian woody species breaking dormancy. This early-spring use has proven successful in significantly reducing the dominance of RCG and promoting recruitment of desirable grasses and shrub species, effectively allowing 6 Ranch to utilize their cattle as a tool to meet project objectives.



Looking down at the re-meandering of the Wallowa River and what will soon be riparian pasture on the 6 Ranch
(photo: GRMW)

The riparian pasture grazing strategy will be revisited every three to five years to adjust to changing species composition. A warm grazing season also may be added to the plan as riparian woody vegetation matures and exceeds browse height, although this option depends on the success of the initial grazing strategy. This grazing plan is adaptive and responsive to developments in the key plant species. Adjustments to the timing of use, duration of use, number of animals, or even size of the grazing cells all could be necessary as the riparian area transitions.

Many people and organizations are responsible for the success of the project, but it never would have been possible without the hard work, vision, and dedication to the land that Liza Jane McAlister shares with her family. Inviting organizations to do large-scale restoration work on your land is often daunting and requires a lot of trust in your partners, so we wanted to know, in her words, why Liza Jane and her family made the commitment to implement a restoration project on their land.

Interview With Liza Jane McAlister



Q: What is the 6 Ranch's motivation for allowing river restoration on the property?

A: It is our belief that everything is connected, so if we want to have healthy land, healthy animals, and healthy people, then we must have a healthy river system and thriving fish population. We believe that the river and fish habitat was not healthy, and the opportunity to partner with the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) to improve it was our solution.

Q: 6 Ranch is a bit unconventional for a Wallowa County ranch. Why?

A: We have often been described as an unconventional ranching operation. However, our goals – like those of the majority of the ranching community – are the same: responsible stewardship, preservation of Western ranching traditions, and production of healthy food. We have taken risks by partnering with agencies in order to accomplish our goals on large-scale projects. We've had a positive experience and hope that our success will encourage other landowners to consider similar choices.

Q: Why implement a management- and time-intensive GMP?

A: We have the opportunity to use grazing animals as the tool to improve the land, including riparian areas. There is potential with this project to shift the long-held paradigm that cattle grazing in riparian areas is detrimental, and effort on the GMP is time well-spent. Our cattle, Corriente, are a small breed of cattle that are less selective in their grazing choices and require less water than larger conventional breeds. Their instinct is to stay on the move, so they have less impact on shaded or riparian areas. In addition, we have created a business model that does not require the same expectation of weight gain.

Q: Why demonstrate that restoration and ranching can work side-by-side?

A: Restoration and ranching must work side-by-side for long-term success. In addition to overall ecosystem improvement, the river restoration project has created an economic benefit. We now have a guided fly-fishing business on our ranch, demonstrating that restoration, recreation, and agriculture can co-exist. We hope to set an example of proactive, mutually beneficial relationships with local and regional agencies that result in improved landscapes. At the same time, our neighbors benefit from a higher water table and improved wildlife and fish habitat. By allowing the river to function as a river, this project is indefinitely sustainable. ■

Meet the Staff

Connor Stone

By Lacey Moore and Jessica Phelps, GRMW Staff

For most people, the field of computer science is essentially a foreign language. Ironically, programmers and IT gurus have to know several types of languages to make computers compute, a feat that can look more like magic to the untrained onlooker. The concept of being both multi-lingual and a bit of a magician isn't one that's lost on Connor Stone, the new IT and Database Manager for the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW). Before entering the computer science program at Eastern Oregon University (EOU), Connor considered a degree in linguistics, as he had a keen interest in Spanish and Japanese. In an introductory course at EOU, Connor made the connection between this linguistic adeptness and his natural aptitude for electronics. Connor also is a bit of a wizard when it comes to card tricks; when you see him perform one of these illusions, you can't help but believe that he can make miracles happen when put to the test on a stubborn PC.

Connor was born in Spokane, Washington, and lived on the Fairchild Air Force Base for a number of years before moving to the southern Oregon coast. In 2000, his father's job with the Oregon State Police relocated his family to Cove, Oregon, where he graduated from high school in 2008. After graduating, Connor spent four years as an active-duty member of the Air Force, which took him to Texas, Delaware, and finally to California, where he spent most of his military career working in heavy aircraft operations. Early in his enlistment, Connor married his wife, Hannah Stone (formerly Ricker, who is from Union); the couple now has a one-

year-old daughter named Kiona. He recalls that his fondest memories of the Air Force are the relationships he built with his comrades and their families. He distinctly remembers an early morning, after having worked the entire night, when he watched a C-5 jet take off into the colorful California sunrise as a particularly inspirational moment during his service.

In June, Connor graduated from EOU and was named the 2016 Outstanding Student in Computer Science. When he isn't busy with his wife, daughter, and their two dogs and three cats



Connor with his wife, Hannah, and daughter Kiona
(photo: Connor Stone)

Alex Borgerding

By Jessica Phelps, GRMW Staff

Alex Borgerding, the new GIS Technician at the Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW), grew up riding horses and shooting cans in a beautiful, remote canyon that boasts a population of 175 people and a whole lot of rattlesnakes. To this day, Alex says that Imnaha was her favorite place to live and that she returns often, although mostly in the late fall and winter when she can hike and ride horses without worrying about snakes. Growing up in Imnaha and later in Joseph, Alex was deeply influenced by her time spent outdoors. From her childhood, she remembers nights when she went with her dad to check on the cows (she liked to hold the spotlight), hiking in the Eagle Caps with her mom, and spending countless summer days swimming in Wallowa Lake.

Despite her appreciation for the rural landscape in which she grew up, Alex, like many kids in Eastern Oregon, couldn't wait to get out. She traveled as an exchange student to Hungary for her sophomore year of high school and headed off to the west side of the Cascades after graduation, eventually landing in Portland. While in Portland, Alex attended Portland State University (PSU), worked for the GAP, received her cosmetology license, and volunteered at the Sauvie Island Center teaching kids about organic gardening. After years spent in Portland, Alex couldn't wait to come home, and we're so glad she did!

Alex earned her degree in Geography from PSU and says she was immediately intrigued by her Geographic Information Systems (GIS) courses. This interest motivated her to further her GIS education with a graduate certificate from the Oregon State University eCampus. Alex cites the family atlas as her favorite "book" as a child and says, "I really like the power maps have to display data in such a user-friendly way and that geographic reasoning applies to every subject." Alex's love of maps will serve her well in her new position with the GRMW that will involve providing map-making and data analysis services to the GRMW and our partners. Alex says she is excited to work for the GRMW because "I believe in the work that is being accomplished here, and what better place to do that than in a place I love so much!" Alex might be the prototypical Millennial, with her focus on a healthy lifestyle and a sustainable environment.



Alex with her dog, Bailey
(photo: Alex Borgerding)

Every summer, I am reminded of how hard it is to protect all my vegetables, flowers, and trees from the deer population in La Grande. They eat the tops off my vegetables and flowers, and they rub their antlers on the young trees until they are bent over, broken off, or damaged beyond repair. The Grande Ronde Model Watershed's (GRMW) habitat restoration partners and participating landowners share in that same struggle, only on a much larger scale, with deer browsing on trees and shrubs on all of the restoration projects in the basin. For years, the GRMW's partners in both Wallowa and Union Counties have been experimenting with methods to protect these young trees and shrubs until they are tall enough to withstand browsing. Countless hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent planting riparian trees and shrubs with the hope that they will eventually grow large enough to contribute shade to streams, stability from their root wads to stream banks, and future habitat to stream channels. How can we efficiently and cost-effectively protect our investments in riparian vegetation plantings? We here at the GRMW and our partners have tried to answer that question in a wide variety of ways:

1. Fencing – The average four-strand barbed wire fence works well to manage cattle, but it is ineffective in keeping deer and elk away from appetizing young trees and brush species. Fencing out deer and elk requires woven wire, field fence, or hog panels that are at least six feet tall. This amount of fencing becomes expensive on a scale of several miles of stream, as both sides of the stream for hundreds of acres of riparian area must be fenced. Additionally, there are the annual maintenance expenses associated with all types of fencing projects.

2. Pods – Pods are small circles or rectangles of woven wire, field fence, or hog panels that keep animals away from a cluster of plantings. These pods are typically between five and eight feet wide, which is small enough that deer and elk will not try to jump into the enclosure. They are expensive to build and only protect a small area of plants. Hundreds of pods must be built to provide enough protection for riparian vegetation to get established. Pods must be built at least six feet tall to discourage animals from reaching their heads over to feed on the new plantings.

3. Brush Piles – The idea here is to create a brush pile around plantings that is thick enough to prevent ungulates from venturing into them to eat the new plants. This method can

What is Plantskydd?

by Jesse Steele,
GRMW Staff

Our newest method to
protect riparian new growth

be effective with ungulates, but we have recently discovered that brush piles provide a nice home for small rodents that also like to feed on the fresh shoots and roots of the new plants.

The newest method with which GRMW partners are experimenting on a few large restoration projects implemented

by the La Grande Ranger District is a product called Plantskydd. This product is a browse deterrent with an active ingredient of porcine blood. The product is certified organic by Organic Materials Review Institute and can be applied to just about any plant, shrub, or tree. According to the website (www.plantskydd.com), "Plantskydd works by emitting an odor that animals associate with predator activity." The effective duration of the product is up to six months in the winter and three to four months in the summer.

The plan is to apply this product three times per year on several miles of streamside vegetation and then monitor its effectiveness in reducing browsing on newly planted trees and shrubs as well as existing vegetation. Once plants are at least six feet tall, they are typically above browse height and should no longer require protection. If the product is effective in deterring browsing, then it may prove to be the most efficient and cost-effective way of protecting riparian vegetation that we've found in all of our years of experimenting! ■



Grande Ronde Model Watershed UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

**Tuesday, November 8, 2016
5:00 p.m.**

*Elgin Community Center
260 North 10th St.
Elgin OR, 97827*

The public is welcome to attend.

Meeting dates are subject to change.
Please call (541) 663 - 0570 to confirm.
Thank you!

Farewell, continued from page 3

I believe that the success of the program is due in large part to the collective wisdom of all of the partners, board members, and staff who have touched the Grande Ronde Model Watershed.”

Although he is stepping away from the GRMW Board, Mike is still deeply invested in the economic and environmental health of northeastern Oregon and is focusing his energy on his work at Wallowa County Grain Growers. His is a spacious second-story corner office suitable for a person in his position, with views on two sides in a location that provides for relative privacy while remaining accessible to staff and customers. He says there’s a “lot going on,” with several departments scattered across three counties, each functioning like an individual business. The “Grain Growers” is a changing, growing company with 80 employees and a young board of directors that only recently established its first human resources department. He relishes the fact that the phone doesn’t ring all weekend like it used to when he was a public servant, even though he holds a critical position of leadership in an enterprise essential to the economic well-being of local agriculture. Ever the optimist, Mike is encouraged by a number of things: first, that “there is no better place to live,” and second, that in his view, there remain a lot of opportunities in northeastern Oregon. He summarizes his perspective by saying that while “we might not be immune from the craziness of the world, I like our odds.”

I’ve known Mike Hayward for a long time, and I could not write this article without offering my personal comments. Many times over the years, I would get a phone call from him early in the morning, when he knew that both of us would be in our offices, ahead of staff, enjoying the quiet time before the phones started ringing and meetings commenced. Mike always had insightful observations to share about issues affecting the people and resources of our region and, even in the toughest situations, still found reasons to be positive. During his tenure as Board Chair, he ran meetings efficiently, with a culture of punctuality and succinctness, ever cognizant of other people’s time. Still, he always protected the right of anyone to express their views, even when I knew he disagreed with them. Of all the things in the world that are important to him, his family always has come

first, but the people with whom he shares this neck of the woods come in at a close second. It has been my immense pleasure and honor to have endeavored together to make this a better place. We’re all lucky to have him among us, no matter what he’s doing. ■

Meet Connor, continued from page 6

you might find him outside flying his drone, which is a hobby he picked up after being tasked with becoming the “drone expert” here at the GRMW. Within just two months on the job, Connor had mastered the GRMW’s two drones, capturing aerial imagery of project sites and water temperature data with a thermal camera. As if he weren’t already useful enough, this aerial imagery and data capture will be an invaluable contribution to our project partners as they implement and monitor large-scale restoration projects.

Connor’s ability to find inventive solutions to technology problems and his prowess as a magician make him a pretty popular guy around the office, but it’s his willingness to explain anything from quantum computers to the nuances of Google Docs that sets him apart from “your company’s computer guy.” Although he says “I’m no David Blane,” we think he’s pretty impressive and hope that Connor will keep the GRMW on the cutting edge of technology for many years to come. ■

Meet Alex, continued from page 6

Instead of sitting at her desk, she stands, with the lights off to avoid the glare from fluorescent bulbs and her hydro flask at the ready. She holds tightly to her roots while looking with open eyes and a curious mind to the world beyond her.

As a Wallowa County native, Alex will bring insight and a unique perspective to what will be some of her main projects during the coming years: the Wallowa County Atlas Project and the *Ripples* newsletter. When she’s not working, you will find Alex outside hunting, fishing, hiking, swimming, or playing with her four-month-old puppy named Bailey, who everyone at the GRMW hopes will become the new office dog. ■

**Grande Ronde
Model Watershed**

1114 J Avenue | La Grande OR 97850
Ph. 541-663-0570 | Fax 541-962-1585

WWW.GRMW.ORG

Board of Directors

Ted Taylor, Chairman
Public Interest Representative

Dave Yost, Vice Chairman
Agriculture and Education Representative

Allen Childs
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian
Reservation

Mark Davidson
Union County Board of Commissioners

Susan Roberts
Wallowa County Board of Commissioners

Norm Cimon
Conservationist Representative

Larry Cribbs
Economic Development & Industry Representative

Nick Myatt
Fish and Wildlife Representative

Jed Hassinger
Private Landowner Representative

Joe McCormack
Nez Perce Tribe

Kathryn Frenyea
Union Soil and Water Conservation District

Larry Nall
Private Forest and Landowners

Staff Members

Jeff Oveson
Executive Director

Mary Estes
Office and Fiscal Manager

Coby Menton
Wallowa County Project Coordinator

Jesse Steele
Union County Project Coordinator

Alex Borgerding
GIS Technician

Jessica Phelps
Restoration Outreach Coordinator

Connor Stone
IT & Database Manager

Margaret McGladrey | *Ripples* Editor
grmw.ripples.editor@gmail.com