



# INSTREAM/NEAR-STREAM HABITAT + FLOODPLAIN CONNECTIVITY

Bear Creek, the most urbanized watershed in southern Oregon, is lined by dense colonies of invasive plants with sparse areas of native vegetation; it experiences chronic water quality issues such as low summer flows, high summer water temperatures, and high nutrient and bacteria loads. These conditions negatively impact native fish and wildlife, and create safety issues for users of the 25-mile long Bear Creek Greenway, and increase the risk of fire. In the face of these conditions, Rogue Valley organizations, municipalities, and advocacy groups remain committed to increasing the ecological and recreational value of Bear Creek and its riparian corridor.

Healthy instream and near-stream (riparian) habitats provide food and shelter for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, as well as increase creek water quality. The long-term sustainability of these habitats relies on functioning stream and floodplain processes.

BCRI hopes to improve instream and riparian habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. To do this, BCRI intends to use data and stakeholder-driven analyses to identify locations along the Bear Creek corridor where floodplain connectivity can be increased without adding risk to adjacent communities or infrastructure. These efforts will increase the complexity of instream habitats and increase water quality along the length of Bear Creek and also provide more opportunities for the public to view wildlife and natural stream functions. These restoration efforts also improve access for management, public safety, and recreation along the Greenway.

Further, the BCRI will strategically design and implement riparian, instream, and floodplain projects that promote food sources and habitat for beavers, whose activities improve water and nutrient retention on the floodplain and increase habitat for a host of other wildlife.

**Keep current on Bear Creek Restoration Initiative's work and collaborative efforts in the Rogue Valley. Visit us to learn more!**

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## BEAR CREEK RESTORATION INITIATIVE (BCRI)

In 2018, in response to a large number of fires along Bear Creek, several organizations started a partnership to improve conditions in and along the creek. These groups developed the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative (BCRI) to assess current conditions and envision a desired future outcome by considering ecological, recreational, social, and public safety (including fire) goals. In 2020, the BCRI released their ten priority sites for restoration and started to develop and implement several of those efforts.

The devastating Almeda and Table Rock fires of September 2020 created additional pressure to address community, social, and natural landscape concerns along Bear Creek. The BCRI is intent on working with the public sector, social service organizations, and restoration practitioners to increase public and community safety, combat invasive species, increase water quality, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and encourage the establishment of native plants along Bear Creek.