

## **Cardwell Hill Landowner Meeting Minutes**

March 1, 2007 7-9pm

Wren Community Hall

*35 people attended.*

### **Ponds & Western Pond Turtles**

Dave Vesely of Pacific Wildlife Research described the Western pond turtle tracking project that will begin this spring. Several turtles from Percy/Schoener's pond will be tagged with radio transmitters to help identify the vicinity of where the turtles are nesting. Then Dave's trained dogs will assist in locating the nests so that they can be protected from predators. Young Western pond turtles appear to have difficulty surviving and the population seems to be dominated by older turtles.

Two ponds will be enhanced and one new pond constructed through a grant from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, combined with assistance from USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife. Work will commence this summer. The ponds will benefit both turtles and butterflies, providing mud edges for butterflies to find needed minerals.

### **USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program**

Steve Smith, Private Lands Biologist of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Wren is one of three hot spots in the world where Fenders blue butterflies exist. Basket Butte and West Eugene are the other two. The Partners program has a programmatic incidental take permit for habitat enhancement and management activities for Fenders blue butterfly, a federally listed species. This means that participating landowners do not have to individually receive approval from USFWS for management activities. It includes provisions for the proper equipment and timing for mowing among other specific management activities.

The Partners program requires a 10-year agreement to not intentionally compromise the integrity of the restoration work and site. If one wishes to withdraw from the program after work has commenced, there is an amortized payback agreement. They are in the process of working out "Safe Harbor" protection for those landowners interested in this – under this protection, a landowner is not held responsible for increased populations of listed species beyond starting levels. There needs to be an estimate of current populations established before the "Safe Harbor" is in place. Participation in the Partners program does not preclude future options for doing mitigation on the site. The Partners program normally does work through contractors with no cash disbursed to the landowner. The landowners' work is match for the project.

It is anticipated that there will be funds available to support purchase of conservation easements where landowners are interested. This provides compensation for loss of value where landowners agree to place permanent restrictions on the use of the land through an easement to protected specific resources.

Fenders blue butterfly habitat requires ongoing management. If you don't want the butterfly, just do nothing and they'll be gone. A location of more than 1 km from Kincaid's lupine is unlikely to have Fenders. Kincaid's lupine is not federally protected on private lands—only the Fenders blue butterfly is. However, if Fenders blue butterflies are present, disturbance of Kincaid's lupine impacts the butterfly and is therefore controlled. The goal is to eventually delist the species. However, butterflies dependant

on lands under Safe Harbor protections cannot be counted toward required populations levels for delisting because they are not protected over the long term.

Fenders blue will likely emerge around the third week of May. Cheryl Schulz, a researcher from Washington State University, has been funded to do research in the Cardwell Hill area on how Fenders blue butterflies move about in a hilly landscape to nectar plants and other populations, which is important for genetic interchange. Currently, it is only known how they behave in a flat landscape, like W. Eugene where they fly about one mile. Cheryl will do a mark and recapture study. Karen Fleck Harding will be contacting landowners about their interest in participating in the study.

### **Oak Restoration Grant**

The Marys River Watershed Council has been awarded a \$100,000 grant to work with 9 landowners in the Cardwell Hill area to do restoration in oak woodlands and oak savanna areas. Funding will pay for removal of competing firs and invasive weeds and for replanting of native plants, as needed. If the contract is issued in time, work will commence this summer. In order to participate in the project, landowners who have Kincaid's lupine or Fenders blue butterflies may need to sign up with the Partners program. This will provide the needed protections from incidental take of butterflies in the course of implementing the improvements. Steve Smith will do site visits to confirm species presence prior to the contract being issued. Most of the work will be done by contractors. Landowners are expected to provide matching funds in the form of either cash or their own contribution of time/work.

### **Management Plans**

The Watershed Council has completed habitat project plans for six landowners in the Cardwell Hill area. Karen shared examples of the plans. The Council has been recommended for funding for development of an additional 11 plans over the next year.