



First Grade students from Council Elementary learned about Black-eyed Susans in their pollinator project.

ADAMS SWCD WORKS ON EDUCATION OUTREACH, WATER QUALITY AND FOREST STEWARDSHIP

By Steve Stuebner

The Adams Soil and Water Conservation District worked with more than 100 Council elementary and middle school children in May 2021 to create a community pollinator garden. The project turned out well as an educational outreach project with Adams Supervisor Kris Stone, a retired biology teacher, leading the effort, officials said.

“Kris did a great job,” said Julie Burkhardt, Chairwoman of the Adams District. “As a retired biology teacher, it was a natural thing for her to do.”

The pollinator project was one of several new initiatives that the Adams District worked on in the last year, including a \$35,000 grant project to replace an aging culvert with a

fish-friendly modern structure, and a fuels-reduction Shared Stewardship project along the U.S. Highway 95 corridor with private landowners, the Payette National Forest and Idaho Department of Lands.

In the pollinator project, the Adams District involved Council Elementary School kids from each grade, K-6, and a seventh-grade class from Council Middle School also participated.

Each grade focused on learning about and planting different types of flowering plants that attract pollinators, Stone said. They planted the flowers from seed during the winter in a greenhouse, and then they planted the starts in an outdoor community garden.

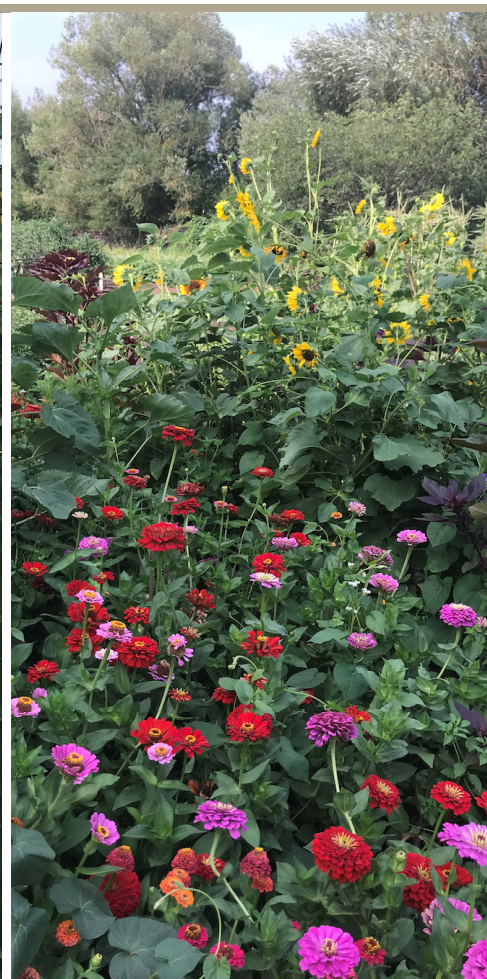
“The whole garden is pretty

spectacular,” Stone said. “It’s flourishing.”

Betsy Wagner, nongame biologist with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, also led a bumble bee workshop for the students and the Council community, so folks could learn more about the role that bumble bees play in nature.

“We had an after-school gardening club that took care of the seedlings in the greenhouse,” Stone said. “The kids loved watching the plants grow up, and then they could watch the plants attract the insects we talked about in the classroom. Pretty neat learning experience for them.”

Overall, there’s been a nationwide push for urban dwellers and farmers to plant more pollinators to benefit a



The Council Elementary kids also hosted a pollinator plant sale for their community in partnership with the Adams District. Seventh-graders not only learned about specific pollinator

Top and right: Council pollinator garden (Courtesy Adams SWCD)

wide variety of bees, butterflies and birds. All of the pollinating species are in decline, especially Monarch butterflies, whose numbers have plunged to dangerously low levels nationwide.

Let's take a quick tour of the species the kids learned about and what they attract:

- Kindergarteners - Sunflowers, bumble bees and honey bees.
- First graders - Black-eyed Susans, bumble bees, butterflies and birds, mostly finches.
- Second graders - Zinneas, bumble bees, wasps, ladybugs and

hummingbirds.

- Third graders - Echinaceas, bumble bees, butterflies and birds, mostly finches.
- Fourth graders - Cosmos, bees, butterflies and hoverflies.
- Fifth graders - Salvias, bumble bees, honey bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
- Sixth graders - Blanket Flowers, green metallic sweat bees, bumble bees, moths and butterflies.
- Seventh graders - Hyssops, honey bees, bumble bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, skippers and moths.

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Council 6th graders pose for a pic in the greenhouse. They learned about Blanket Flowers in their pollinator project. (Courtesy Adams SWCD)

plants, but also had to create a brochure to go with each plant purchased – describing the plant, its habitat preferences and what pollinators they attract, she said.

It's been nice to have new supervisors on the district board like Kris Stone – people who bring new energy and ideas to the table, Burkhardt said. For a few years, the Adams District has been composed of an all-women board of supervisors until Charlie Munden recently joined the board.

"It's been nice to have other Supervisors stepping up to work on projects, that's been refreshing," she said.

Munden, who recently retired from the U.S. Forest Service, is leading up a Shared Stewardship project for the Adams District, along with partners from the Idaho Department of Lands, private landowners and the Forest Service.

The Shared Stewardship project seeks to thin about 92,355 acres of private lands while IDL and Forest Service officials work to reduce fuels on their lands. They're calling it a forestry project with "No Boundaries."

"We're going to start with a 15-acre project on private land to show people the benefits," Munden said.



The projects will follow Firewise principles to create defensible space from homes, move flammable vegetation away from dwellings, and thin the forest adjacent to homes, while also addressing noxious weeds, he said.

The Adams District is applying to IDL to receive partnership funding for the project. At the same time, Munden is working to sign up private landowners who want to participate in the project. They will take before and after photos to show how sites will look after thinning and Firewise treatments, he said.

Thinning the forest to reduce the threat of wildfires on private property as well as IDL and Forest Service lands is "hugely important," Burkhardt said. "The Shared Stewardship program will benefit all land ownerships."

In other District news, the Idaho

Water Resource Board approved a request for a \$17,606 state Flood Management Grant to replace an aging culvert on Grays Creek. The total cost of the project is \$35,728. State flood grants require a 50 percent match. The funds will be available for improvement work this field season.

Kraig Spelman, Road and Bridge Supervisor for Adams County, said it's good news to hear that they will receive the grant funds. The old aging culvert on Grays Creek gets overtopped by flood flows every 3-5 years, he said, damaging the road, other resources and sending sediment into the creek.

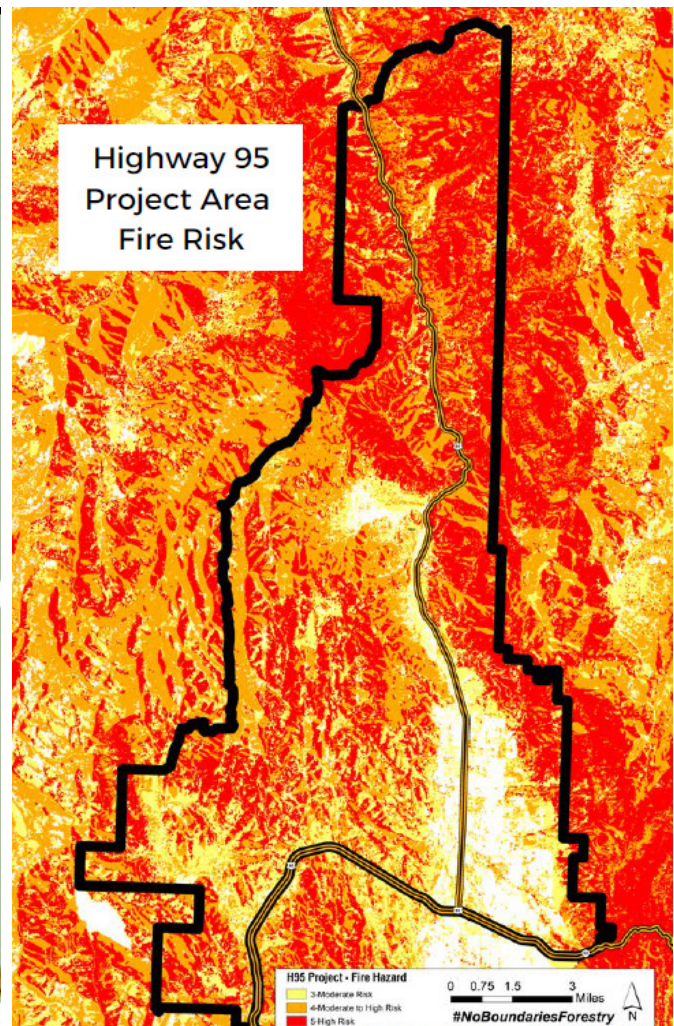
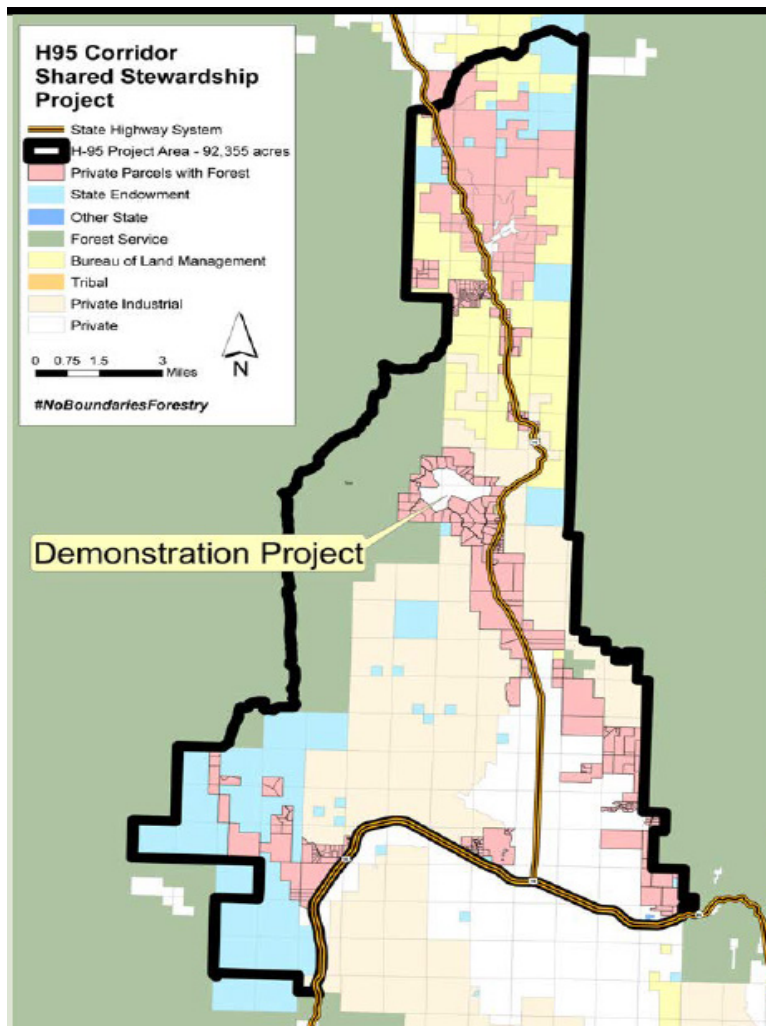
Grays Creek is a tributary of the Little Weiser River, flowing west from the West Mountain and Indian Valley area.

Spelman worked with Bill Lillibridge, an engineer with the Conservation Commission, to design a new fish-friendly culvert for Grays Creek. The new design is much larger to handle high-water runoff, he said. It's an arched culvert with no bottom, so it is more fish friendly.

"The current culvert has reached the end of its useful life," Lillibridge said. "Additionally, it is undersized and too short for the bend in the roadway. A larger capacity, longer culvert will allow for proper conveyance of storm events, eliminate frequent overtopping and road failure, and allow for adequate curve radius on a rather heavily utilized gravel county road. Properly placed, it will also allow for more fish passage opportunity."

To have the option of applying for a state flood management grant for the Grays Creek project really helps when county funds are stretched thin for road and bridge improvements county-wide, Spelman said.

"It's a win-win-win deal," he said. "The new culvert will prevent future road-washouts, the state funds help make the project possible, and the



Adams SWCD is looking for more landowners to participate in the Shared Stewardship tree-thinning project.

fish will benefit from the project as well.”

The Adams District has identified two other culvert projects that need to be addressed, Burkhardt said, so they will continue to work on finding additional funds to address those concerns.

The District also has provided a native dryland seed mix to private landowners who might want to plant seeds on burned-over lands from Mesa Fire in 2020. The fire is leading

to the spread of noxious weeds in places, Burkhardt said, so it’s important to plant seed of desired native plants before weeds can take root.

“We bought about \$20,000 worth of seed,” she said. “We had the lands mapped out, so we knew the areas where it would be best to plant them quickly after the fire. We had several landowners who were very excited about having the seed available. Most of it was broadcast planted from a pickup or an ATV.”

“As always, we’re here for our ag producers, and we encourage landowners to contact us about their conservation concerns and issues. We’ll try to find the resources to help however possible.”

For more information about the Adams District, go to www.adamsconservationdistrict.org and follow their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/adamsconservationdistrict.org>.

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