

Vernal Pool Information Network
December 20, 2016
Site Visit to the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy's
Rogue River Preserve
Summary

Attendees: Jim Thraikill, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Craig Tuss, Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG); Paul Benton, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT); Keith Perchemlides, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Molly Morrison, TNC; Craig Harper, Medford Water Commission; Kristi Mergenthaler, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC); Paul Belson, SOLC; Karen Hussey, SOLC .

Objective of meeting and visit: The objective of the visit is to get an update from SOLC regarding the continuing effort to purchase this property and to see the vernal pools during the inundation period.

Background: The 350-acre property contains diverse and rich habitats, including oak savanna, vernal pools, meadows, oak-pine woodlands and chaparral, two miles of riverbank and the second largest riparian gallery forest on the Rogue River east of Galice, Oregon. The property is comprised of two tax lots, and contains one existing summer cabin built circa 1922, and associated small out-buildings. It has long been recognized by naturalists and conservationists in the region as one of the most important natural areas in the upper Rogue Valley. This is primarily due to the long stretch (~1½ miles) of unbroken and relatively intact natural open space along the Rogue River in an area that is moderately developed otherwise (Maps 1 and 2).

The property contains the second largest riparian hardwood gallery forest remaining on the Rogue River upstream of Galice. Other features on the property important to conservationists include the many sloughs and side channels that are vital for salmon and steelhead, including the ESA-listed Coho and Chinook salmon. The property also contains highly valuable upland areas – vernal pool wetlands (probable presence of ESA-listed fairy shrimp), oak woodlands, and chaparral.

The SOLC Board of Directors gave approval to staff to pursue acquisition of the Rogue River Preserve on January 10, 2015. The final decision to acquire the Rogue River Preserve property, for the agreed upon purchase price of \$2,400,000, plus the necessary stewardship funding; will be made by the SOLC Board after further analysis, development of partnerships, and commitments of funding. This conservation area is being purchased by SOLC for \$2.4 million. In early 2015, the property was appraised at \$3,000,000. In late summer/early fall of 2016, funding was awarded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the USFWS to contribute toward the outright purchase of the property. SOLC has until December 31, 2016 to attain the funding needed to purchase the parcel. At the time of this visit the SOLC was within \$200,000 of its purchase goal.

Vernal Pool Restoration/Monitoring Activities:

- In March 2016 Large-flowered woolly meadowfoam plants were brought in to three vernal pool flank locations. The plants were salvaged from the J. Herbert Stone Nursery where ODOT had been propagating them. See VPIN tour notes from the March 25, 2015 tour of the Nursery for more information.
- Some spot surveys have been conducted during the inundation period of the vernal pools. To date vernal pool fairy shrimp have not been documented in the area. A portion of the visit to the area was to conduct a spot survey for fairy shrimp. None were found.

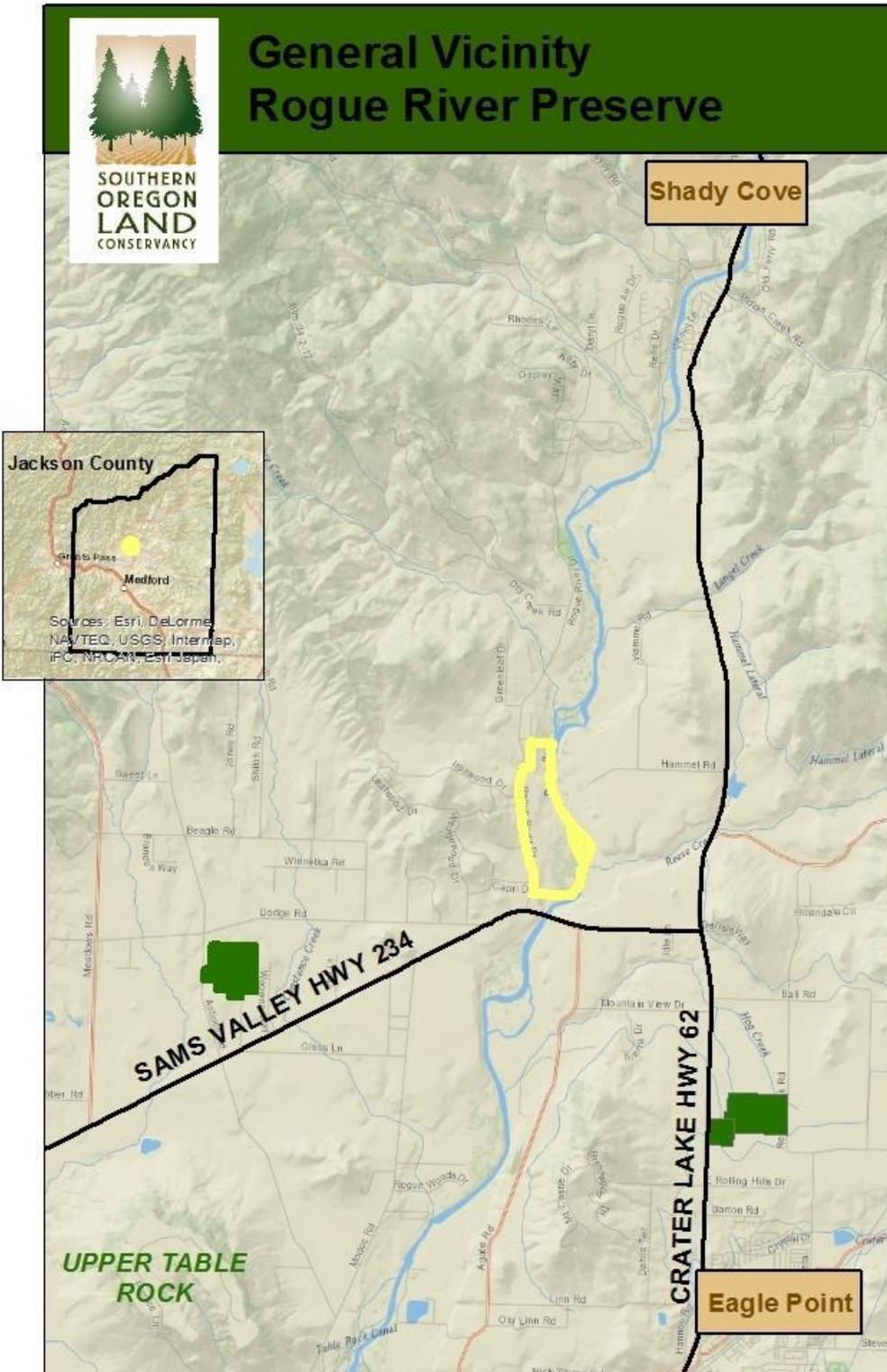
Future VPIN Site Visits

In August 2016, the Service provided funding (\$7,200) to RVCOG to convene several more VPIN site visits. RVCOG also has applied for education and outreach funding (\$2,500) from the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District to augment the Service funding for the site visits. This funding, along with in-kind staff time from RVCOG (\$500) and TNC (\$600) will allow the VPIN to continue site visits and landowner outreach into the fall of 2016. Due to the increased interest in native pollinators, RVCOG will add this topic to future VPIN discussions.

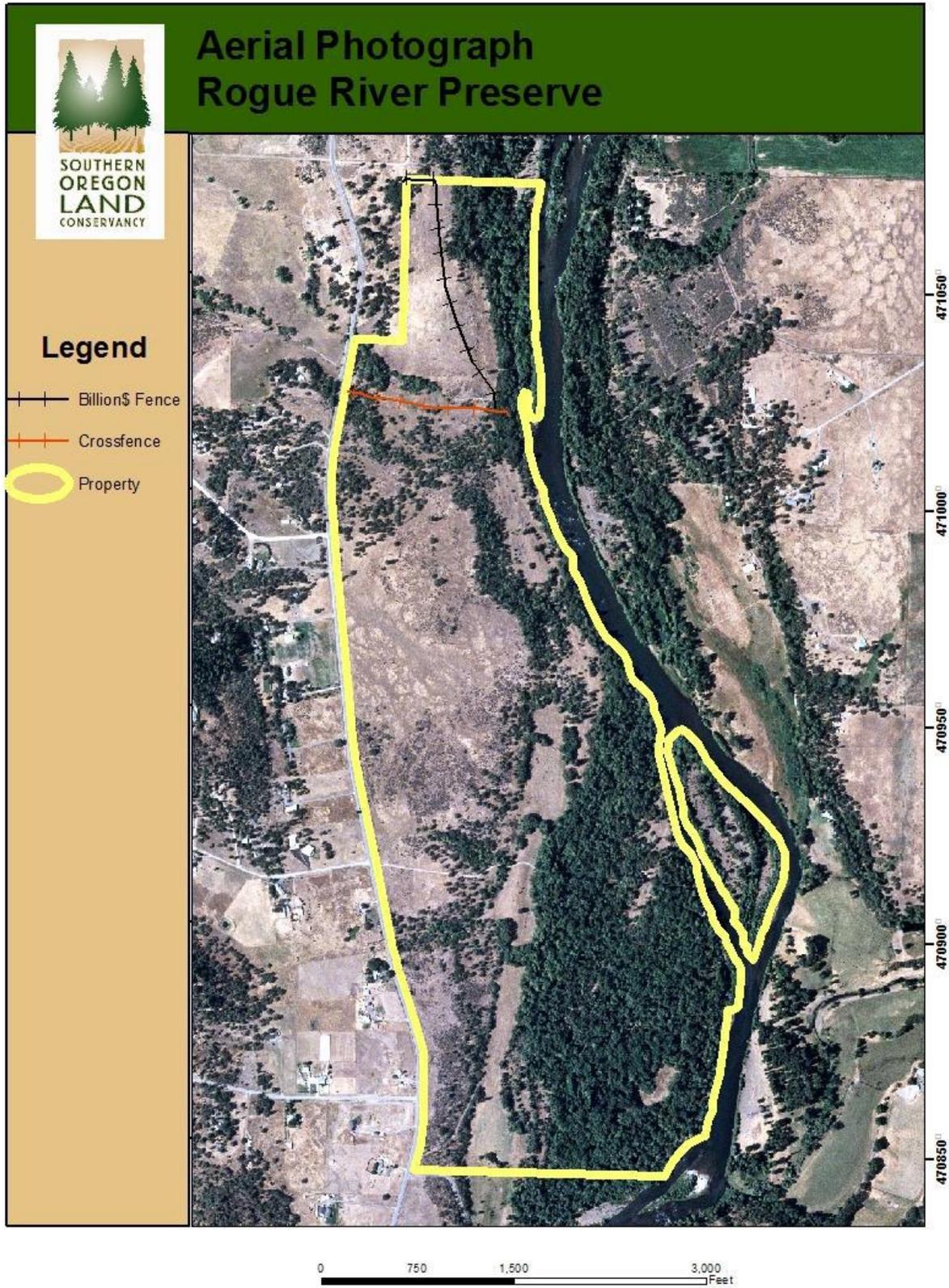
- ODOT Vernal Pool Mitigation/Conservation Bank (VPMCB) Expansion area: February, 2017
- Table Rocks (BLM): late spring 2016
- Native pollinator session Spring 2017
- The ODOT VPMCB in fall 2017. This visit would focus on the planned summer 2017 vernal pool restoration activities by ODOT.



Photo of tour participants looking for vernal pool fairy shrimp during the field visit on December 20, 2016.



Map 1



Map 2