

## JOINT NEWS RELEASE



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### **EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN YREKA BREAKS GROUND ON INNOVATIVE WATER CONSERVATION AND WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PROJECT** *Project to Benefit Native Klamath Basin Salmon, Steelhead and other Wildlife*

YREKA, Calif., – When Evergreen Elementary school students return to the classroom this week, they will be greeted by the usual throng of back-to-school excitement – new teachers, busy administrators, familiar friends, and new “*bioswales*.”

What exactly is a bioswale? Think SPONGE!

When completed, the Evergreen’s main bioswale on the front lawn will look like a small meandering stream, lined with rocks, boulders and native trees, plants and shrubs. Smaller bioswales will also be installed on the property as well. The bioswales will improve drainage of school lawns and parking while at the same time reducing the volume of unfiltered stormwaters being flushed into Yreka Creek.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Yreka Union School District (YUSD), and the Siskiyou Garden Parks and Greenway Association, (SGPGA).

“Whether the storms are big or small, rain carries a lot of pollutants into local streams,” said Jerry Mosier, Chairman of the Yreka Creek Committee of the SGPGA. “This project will help filter some of these contaminants, which will help improve water quality in Yreka Creek, home to native Klamath Basin salmon, steelhead trout, and many other wildlife species.”

In addition to the functional and visual benefits, the bioswale project can help improve water use efficiency on the school’s campus. For example, the amount of water needed to irrigate the landscaped areas in front of the school will be reduced by about 30 percent, saving roughly 180,000 gallons of water per year.

The school was originally built without an underground storm drain system, and storm runoff can flood Evergreen Lane, as well as the parking lot and sidewalks on campus, and can lead to icy conditions in colder months. This project will eliminate these problems.

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“This is an exciting project for the school and the community and the Yreka Union School District appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with these conservation partners,” said Dave Parsons, Superintendent of YUSD. “We hope that, as this project progresses, we can incorporate it into our learning environment here on campus.”

Project design and construction oversight is being provided by Tom Hesseldenz and Associates and the project is being constructed by Mike Peters of Peters Enterprises. Both have offered many in-kind services on project planning, design and construction. Work on this project will occur on weekends to avoid disrupting classrooms activities and construction activities will not interfere with parking availability.

“When this project is completed, Yreka Creek’s water quality will be improved, water will be saved, and the health of the watershed will be enhanced,” said Erin Williams, Field Supervisor for the FWS’ Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office. “The project at Evergreen School can serve as a model for students and the community to see up close how conservation at the local level can have a big impact on the larger world around us.”

The first phase of the bioswale project is expected to be completed later this fall.

### **Side Bar – Bioswales 101**

#### **General benefits regarding the bioswales are:**

- Reduce peak flows during floods by slowing down and infiltrating runoff.
- Improve water quality by filtering runoff through vegetation and reducing downstream bank erosion.
- Improve fish habitat by recharging aquifers leading to higher base flows in streams.
- Improve wildlife habitat by replanting with native species and creating wildlife corridors through town.
- Improve water conservation by reducing landscape irrigation.
- Reduce stormwater infrastructure installation and maintenance costs by relying less on traditional underground storm drain systems.

#### **Additional benefits of the bioswale specific to Evergreen Elementary School are:**

- Solve flooding and ice problems on west side of building.
- Solve ice problems in parking lot.
- Upgrade remaining lawn irrigation system.
- Coordinate with parking repaving and improvements next year.
- Intercept adjacent County Special Services parking runoff and include in bioswales.
- Greatly reduce runoff onto Evergreen Lane
- Provide educational opportunities for Evergreen students
- Potential installation of future paved trail connection between Evergreen and Jackson Street Schools.