

Ponds

Ponds come in many sizes and types – from the vernal pool that dries up in the summer to the beaver pond that backs up a stream to that “golden pond” of our memories. Ponds provide critical habitat for numerous species of plants and animals, as well as recreational, agricultural and aesthetic benefits to landowners.

But what a beaver builds instinctively is not so easy to replicate by man.



Ponds can provide habitat for countless species of plants and animals. If you are building a pond, have you thought about what might be attracted to it?

For starters, you must have a primary permit to construct a reservoir or pond of any size to store water. If you are intending to use the stored water for an “out of reservoir” use, such as irrigation, you must have a secondary permit to do so. Reservoirs with a dam 10 feet or more in height and that store 9.2 acre-feet or more of water require engineering plans and specifications approved by the Oregon WRD prior to construction.

There is an alternate review process for reservoirs with a dam less than 10 feet high or storing less than 9.2 acre-feet of water. The process is expedited and the fees are generally lower. To learn more about

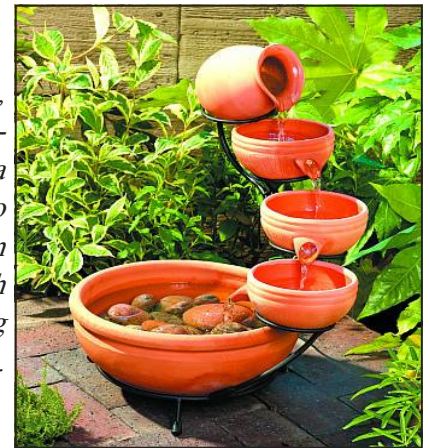
permits for ponds, contact the Watermaster’s office.

In addition to a water rights permit, any fill/ removal activity in stream channels (perennial or intermittent), or in wetland areas will likely require a permit from the DSL prior to any construction. Check out the chapter on “Riparian Areas, Wetlands and Water Quality Management” for more details.

While ponds provide important habitat for turtles, frogs and other animals, they can impair water quality and aquatic life downstream. Unless the pond is disconnected from a waterway (and few are in nature), the water in the pond will warm and grow algae before flowing downstream. This is of concern to natural resource managers since water temperatures in the Hood River basin exceed state standards in many stream reaches during the summer and fall.

A poorly-designed or constructed pond can be breached during a storm event. Ponds can also be attractive nuisances to children, pets and other animals. As such, ponds are a liability to the landowner. Check your insurance coverage to assess if the bene-

Water features, like the one pictured here, are a nice alternative to ponds which can require much more planning and maintenance.



fits outweigh the risks.

If you want to enjoy the aesthetics of a pond without the hassles of permits and liability, you might want to build a water feature. A water feature differs from a pond in size and source of water. It might be a fountain, a man-made babbling brook or a birdbath, but a water feature would be filled with domestic water, not irrigation water or water from a stream.

*Article written in cooperation with:
Bob Wood, Water Resources Department*



For further information on ponds, or anything relating to water rights, check out WRD’s “Water Rights in Oregon” alias the “Aquabook” at

www.wrd.state.or.us/OWRD/PUBS/aquabook.shtml