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BLM plans for Hinsdale property blossom

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After a decade and a half of idling, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has a plan for Spruce Reach Island. BLM Interpreter Sharon Cawley announced to the Reedsport City Council on July 13 an agency goal to turn the plot of land, adjacent the Dean Creek elk viewing area on state Highway 38, into a day-use recreational area.

When complete, new walkways and a gazebo could highlight the site's plants that bloom in spring— an ideal backdrop for picnics or family events, Cawley said. "This is such a pretty area to come out and enjoy the river," she said.

Organizers hope to finish a draft recreational use plan by October. The agency will restore a woodlands garden and open the site to the nearby highway.

Work crews from Northwest Youth Corps were tearing up blackberry vines and weeds last week at the site, clearing the soil amidst a seemingly disjointed smattering of mature shrubs and fully grown trees called a woodlands garden.

"There's a deliberate plan," Cawley said. BLM botanists and archaeologists found a box containing cards marked with garden details from 1934 to 1991. As many as 200 species of rhododendron and 100 species of azaleas and other flora are planted around the Hinsdale house. Full-grown trees were planted on elevated berms surrounding the flowering shrubs, a style more commonly found in England, Cawley said.

Youth have spread mulch, cut branches and cleared brush at the site for two years, part of an annual maintenance project in the Dean Creek management plan.

"It's a really interesting project," said 15-year-old Northwest Youth Corps worker Charley Mainwald. "I can't wait to come back and show it to my mom when it's open to the public. She's really into rhodies."