

Behind the Scenes

February 2018



Dear Friend,

As we march towards.. well.. March, the days are growing longer and our watershed activities are beginning to ramp up! Those of you who are involved in our knotweed control projects will be hearing from us soon, and if you live on or near one of our planting sites, you may see our crews busy at work putting thousands of native trees into the ground. Speaking of our planting crews, I'd like to take a moment to thank our contractors for the hard work they do to ensure our restoration projects are a success. Whether it is 20° or 100°, rainy, snowy or sunny, they are out there making our watershed a healthier and more beautiful place to live. So the next time you see one of our crews out along the waterways, feel free to give them a smile and a wave, and a big THANK YOU for their excellent work!

In this issue, we are highlighting our upcoming Love Your Watershed events taking place in March and April, and our newly funded restoration project on Maxfield Creek, a tributary to the Luckiamute River. As always, please feel free to call or email LWC Outreach Coordinator, Suzanne Teller, at 503-837-0237 or outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org with your questions and comments.

Happy reading!

LOVE YOUR WATERSHED

We are getting pretty excited about our next Love Your Watershed event coming up next month! On March 17 at The Grove Coffeehouse in downtown Independence, we will be hosting the first ever Watershed Recreation Fair from 12 to 4pm. During this four hour event, organizations, agencies and clubs that offer outdoor recreational opportunities in our local area will be on-hand to provide information and answer your questions about how to get out and enjoy our beautiful watershed. Whether your idea of adventure is flyfishing, birdwatching, river kayaking, or a leisurly bike tour through Willamette Valley vineyards - you will most certainly find a slew of exciting events to fill up your calendars this year!



Have you noticed more birdsong at dawn lately? Are your suet feeders needing to be refilled more often these days? Whether or not it feels like Spring to us right now, the birds are certainly preparing for the return of warmer weather, flower blooms and, of course, the insect bounty! If you have never been on one of our bird walks with Joel Geier, make sure you sign up today to get a behind-the-scenes look at our avian neighbors in the watershed. With his amazing repertoire of bird knowledge and the uncanny ability to call in warblers with a perfectly timed screech owl impersonation, you won't want to miss the chance to join one (or both) of our upcoming Spring Bird Walks! An added bonus is that as a Friend of the LWC, you are eligible for a reduced rate of \$7.00 per registration, instead of the regular \$10.00 fee! Stay tuned for an early-bird registration link coming soon.

Your Land. Your Rivers. Your Community. Your Watershed.

Watershed Notes

Oh February. The month that often keeps us indoors fretting over endless gray skies and longingly poring over seed catalogs and home improvement websites. But this month is also a busy one. Although February is really only two or three days shorter than the other months, it sure does feel a lot shorter than that in our line of work. The late winter hustle of planting season is timed just right to ensure that newly planted trees and shrubs have time to grow and expand their root structure before the growing season is in full swing, and that our crews can safely navigate the streambanks before the spring snowmelt. Then in March and April, the focus will be on controlling tall grasses and early season weeds that compete with the young saplings for light, nutrients and water. In total, our crews are poised to plant 22,400 trees and shrubs along the Luckiamute and its tributaries this year, which contributes to a total of 430,000 plants going in within the entire Willamette basin!



A little rain doesn't stop a D. Franco crew member from planting trees on our restoration site at Luckiamute State Natural Area.

This February, we are particularly excited to announce the beginning of a new restoration project in our watershed - **Building Resiliency and Connecting Corridors in Maxfield Creek: Phase 1**, or more simply put, our Maxfield Creek Revegetation Project. With funds and support coming from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Program, Meyer Memorial Trust, Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Oregon Wildlife Foundation, Greenbelt Land Trust, Benton Soil & Water Conservation District and the landowners themselves, this project exemplifies the team effort that watershed council work usually relies upon for longterm project success.

Maxfield Creek Project Funded!

The "behind the scenes" view of restoration project development doesn't only include the glamorous and exciting work of planting saplings and dropping huge logs into the stream channel. There is also the painstaking work of crafting a budget that spans a project lifetime of 5 - 10 years, reaching out and coordinating with the many landowners in the project area, pulling together match funds and in-kind work to help support the project, and the nailbiting waiting game that precedes project approval by the main granting agency. This entire process can take about a year, and this is if the grant gets funded on the first try - which is no guarantee. As you can imagine, when we finally get the good news about a grantor approving a project we worked so hard to make happen, it almost feels as if balloons and confetti come streaming down from the ceiling amidst our cheers and high-fives!



Old alders line narrow buffers along Maxfield Creek, the site of one of our newest restoration projects.

This is precisely what happened when we got the news last October that our Maxfield Creek Revegetation Project was approved for funding by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). So you may be asking where exactly is Maxfield Creek, and why is it so important? In Benton County, Maxfield Creek Road hugs the curves of its namesake creek, which empties into the Luckiamute River just a few hundred feet west of the Kings Valley Highway crossing. Along Maxfield Creek, historical land use practices have resulted in the removal of many of the large conifers that provided both shade to the waters and the large wood so important to in-stream habitat health. In addition, much of the understory has been cleared of native species and overcome by non-native invasive species like Himalayan blackberry, vinca, common teasel and reed canary grass. The existing trees - mostly aging alders - often fall prey to heavy winds and other disturbances, which exposes the stream to even more solar heating and non-native weed infestation. The result has been an increasingly patchy and open streamside habitat that doesn't provide effective corridors for wildlife or enough shade to keep water temperatures cool enough for salmon and trout recovery. The non-native understory also prevents native species from regaining a foothold, meaning that intervention is necessary to stop this area from deteriorating further and put it back on the road to recovery.

The Maxfield Revegetation project aims to restore the health of a two mile stretch of this creek and 26.5 acres of neighboring riparian forest by removing invasive species, planting native trees and shrubs, and equipping the landowners themselves with the tools and knowledge they need to protect their creek's health beyond the lifespan of this project. Stay tuned for more news as we kick off this exciting new project in the next few months!