

Behind the Scenes

May 2018



Dear Friend,

As we turn the calendar page to June, we move into the time of year where we spend a lot more time outside with family and friends. This brings to mind that our watershed does not only include the rivers and landscapes around us, it also includes our communities. Protecting and enhancing the watershed involves more than the restoration of native plant communities and bringing back salmon and trout to our rivers. It also involves forging strong partnerships across agencies, cities and industries, and strong relationships within neighborhoods. Throughout the summer, our Staff and Board of Directors will be embarking on a strategic planning process that will help shape the focus of the Luckiamute Watershed Council as we move forward into the future. We are excited to be on this journey together, and look forward to sharing more with you in the months to come.

Happy reading!

--Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator

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LOVE YOUR WATERSHED



On Tuesday, June 5, you have the opportunity to delve into the history and plant knowledge of our local Tribes during our **Native American Ethnobotany of Western Oregon** workshop. Stop by Beazell Forest Education Center anytime between 2:00 and 7:00pm with your whole family to discover a new way of looking at our native plants and how we interact with them. Presenter Greg Archuleta and other members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde will share their knowledge and demonstrate some hands-on techniques for cordage making, basic basketry, wood carving and dyeing using locally-sourced plant materials. Traditional foods gathered from local sites will be on display, as well as medicinal and culturally significant plants. During this workshop, you will also have the opportunity to join an hour-long guided plant hike along the trails at Beazell Forest Education Center. These hikes will start promptly at 3:00 and 5:00 and are limited to about 20 people each. Sign-up sheets will be available at the event, so come early and get your name on the list!

As our 2017- 2018 **Love Your Watershed** series winds down, we are beginning to plan for our next series of events and workshops that will start up again this fall. In order to make the next series as engaging and exciting as possible, we need your help! Next week, keep an eye on your inbox for a survey that will help us plan the line-up of events and workshops for our 2018 - 2019 **Love Your Watershed** series. Do you have an idea that just can't wait? You can also send Suzanne Teller an email at Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org with your thoughts, or call the LWC office at 503-837-0237.

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

Watershed Notes

The start of June means that we have officially begun stream temperature monitoring season! Thanks to the hard work of our new Monitoring Coordinator, Caleb Price, our awesome volunteers, and our participating landowners, every one of our 28 temperature sensors have been deployed on schedule. For the next four months, these sensors will record the water temperature at the top of every hour, allowing us to determine whether the monitored stream is maintaining water temperatures low enough for healthy salmon and trout populations. Stay tuned for more on our stream temperature monitoring program in a future issue of *Behind the Scenes*!



Restoring Upper Ritner Creek

Starting as a trickle on the slopes of Bald Mountain, Ritner Creek flows through forest, swirls around farmland and glides past homes to meet the Luckiamute River just past its namesake covered bridge. At first glance, much of the upper section of this small tributary looks relatively healthy and lush with vegetation. However, the appearance of upper Ritner Creek mirrors that of many other waterways in our area that have been scarred by the impacts of historical practices. Even though modern timber harvest guidelines aim to protect riparian (streamside) habitat, the effects of historical logging practices continue to negatively impact our waterways in many ways.



Upper Ritner Creek canopy lacks large conifers, which contribute woody debris essential to salmonid habitat

Our January issue of *Behind the Scenes* delved into the legacy of one of the most damaging of these practices – splash-damming – and how its effects have resulted in increased erosion, barriers to salmon and trout migration, and a loss of the large wood so important to healthy in-stream habitat. Today, exposed bedrock and the lack of gravel on the streambed are just a few of the issues facing Ritner Creek as a result of historical splash-damming and log drives, more than seventy years after these practices were abandoned in our area.



Much of the streambed along Ritner Creek lacks gravel and is dominated by bedrock.

Also introduced in our January issue was NetMap, a mapping and analysis tool that has helped us identify upper Ritner Creek and other stream sections within our watershed that have the most potential to be restored to high-value salmonid habitat. Thanks in part to our use of this innovative analysis tool, the LWC was recently awarded an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grant to help restore Upper Ritner Creek, and set it back on the road to recovery. Hancock Forest Management and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are partnering with the LWC as landowners and contributors on the project.

Starting in June, we'll be kicking off the Upper Ritner Creek Splash Dam Recovery project. We'll start with invasive weed control in order to allow native vegetation to recolonize a half-mile section of the project area that is dominated by reed canary grass. Later this summer, we'll be installing 162 logs in 27 large wood structures along 1.6 miles of the creek. These log jams will help slow down the water velocity, reducing erosion and allowing gravel to settle to the streambed. Gravel is essential for both the macroinvertebrates that serve as a food source for native fish and as substrate for spawning adults. Log jams also allow the stream channel to meander through the floodplain forest, providing nutrients and refuge for juvenile fish during high winter flows. Looking towards the future, the LWC will ensure that large logs will continue to be naturally present within Ritner Creek by planting 1,100 native conifers throughout the project area.

We are hoping to give you a 'backstage' look at on-the-ground project work this Fall on a *Friends of the LWC* Project Tour, so stay tuned for more information about this exciting opportunity to really go behind the scenes!