SUMMER/FALL
2024

CURRY Currents

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IN THIS ISSUE

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Introduction

The Curry Watersheds Partnership has a long history of conducting monitoring projects, and even has a whole program dedicated to just that, so what does that actually mean? When we talk about monitoring, we are more specifically referring to environmental, or ecological, monitoring. At its core this is observing, or monitoring, certain aspects of the environment over a period of time in order to answer questions about it. Our ability to answer these questions helps us to achieve our mission in a number of ways.

The results from monitoring are only ever as useful as the question we're trying to answer. These questions can be focused on identifying issues in our watersheds (ex. are summer water temperatures in a particular stream or reach too hot for juvenile salmon?), or helping us better understand the effectiveness of our work (ex. did the vegetation we planted in the riparian area along a stream cool it enough for juvenile salmon to comfortably find refuge?). How we answer these questions is the fun part, at least if you're a bit of a science nerd.

Monitoring is a highly valuable part of what we do, and can sometimes be a particularly difficult part to carry out. Making sure you're asking the right questions, and collecting and analyzing the right data to get the right answer, requires both a deep understanding of the place you're working in and the methods and science needed to do the work. Natural systems often also change slowly, which means it can take many years to get the results you need. This all requires a place-based community with a deep connection to their watersheds, and a dedication to this work often over many years. We're very lucky to have both highly skilled technical staff, and a stewardship-minded community that has supported our Monitoring Program for over 20 years. If you're not yet involved and are curious about how you could support our work, learn more at our website **www.currywatersheds.org**

Our staff ran survey equipment to measure multiple aspects of the Sixes River mainstem before we implemented a large bank stabilization project last summer in order to better understand how conditions change after the project is completed.

Some monitoring equipment collects continuous data and requires regular checks in the field to download the data and make sure it's functioning properly, like this water level logger we maintain in the lower Sixes River.

> ***"We're very lucky to have both highly skilled technical staff, and a stewardship-minded community that has supported our Monitoring Program for over 20 years."***

Kelly and Miranda work to deploy a fish trap. We run these traps in the spring and check them daily to learn what species of salmon are overwintering in certain tributaries.

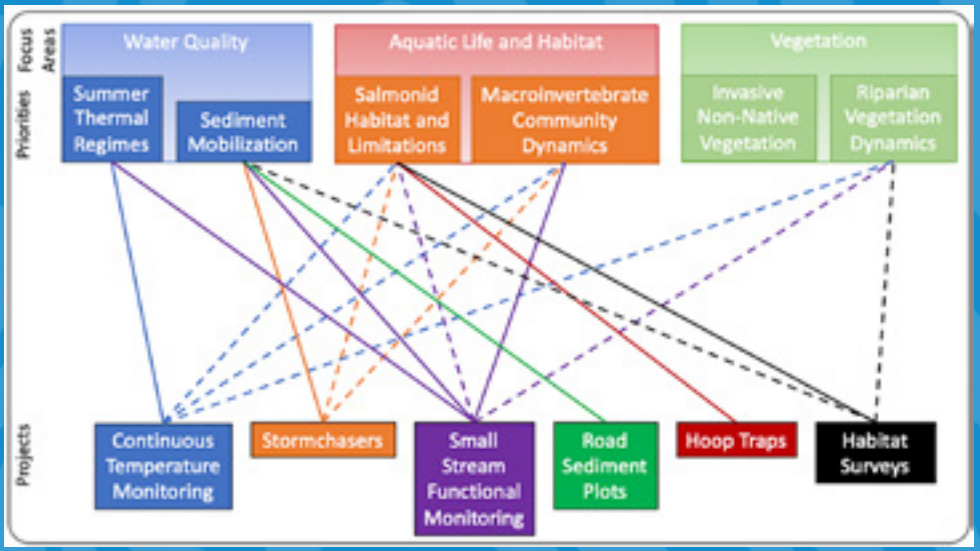
Sometimes monitoring is a family affair. Here Robbie is deploying a summer temperature logger and bringing his son along for the ride.

What Do We Monitor?

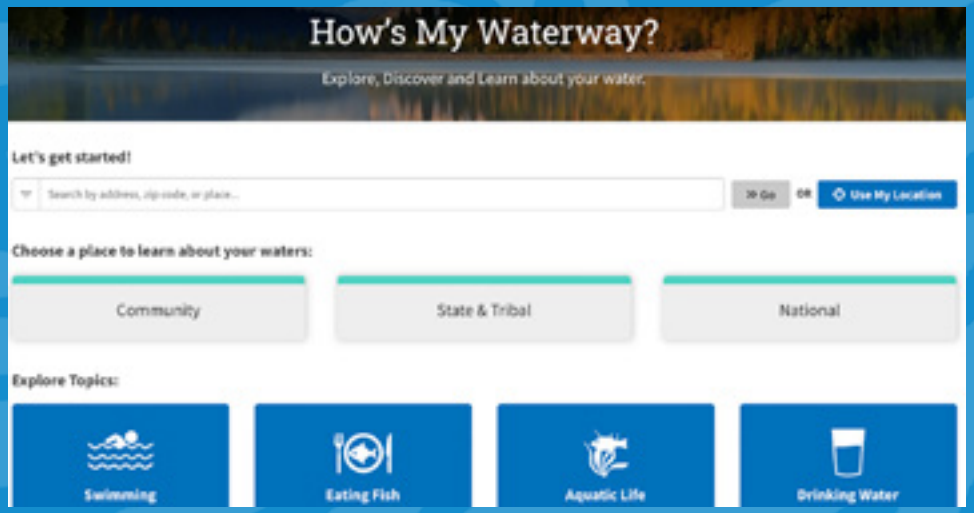
The watersheds of the South Coast are very complex, dynamic systems, and the types of restoration projects we do in them are also complex and varied. As a result, we can and do monitor a wide range of topics. Unfortunately, we don't have access to a cloning machine, so our Monitoring Program is limited in how many of those topics we can realistically take on at any time.

In 2020, we completed a long-term monitoring plan that looked back on the past 20 years of the program and charted a path forward. That plan identified a number of focus areas and priorities for the program, and projects to pursue to best inform those. This was all done to ensure we are collecting highly relevant and pertinent data that's applicable to both our work and others.

To learn more about those focus areas, priorities, and projects, or read the plan itself, visit the monitoring page of our website at **www.currywatersheds.org/programs/monitoring/**



"Relationship map from our Long-Term Monitoring Plan of Focus Areas, Priorities, and Projects. Solid lines represent primary priorities that projects are focused on. Dashed lines represent secondary relationships in which a priority may not be the primary focus of a project, but which project results may still inform priorities development."



The EPA's How's My Waterway webpage utilizes our publicly available data, along with other sources, to inform the public on a number of water quality topics.

What Do We Do with Our Data?

The primary goal of all of the data we collect is to inform our work, either by identifying potential issues to investigate or evaluating the effectiveness of work we've done. We strive to work collaboratively as staff to make sure this goal is being met. The data that comes out of the Monitoring Program is a critical part of us being able to tell our story, sell our story, and direct our efforts.

A secondary, but still highly important goal is to make our data available and usable for the public, and other institutions, to make use of it. We recognize that we don't always know the full extent of our data's capabilities to help others, both now and in the future. For example, a majority of our water quality data is submitted to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, who hosts it on their publicly available database AWQMS, and shares it with the EPA as well.

These other institutions have the experts, and the capacity, to develop resources that we couldn't in house. A good example of that is the EPA's How's My Waterway website. If you go to mywaterway.epa.gov and enter in a location or address it will pull up all of the available water quality data for that area, including ours, and let you explore how the local water quality affects a number of topics including swimming, drinking water, and aquatic life.

Project Spotlight:

Storm Chasers

The Sixes River just downstream of highway 101 after a large storm. The brown coloration is primarily due to sediment washing into the river during the storm.

One of the primary projects the Monitoring Program coordinates each year is our Storm Chasers program, which aims to help us understand how much sediment is entering our streams and rivers from the large storms we get each year, and where excess sediment may be an issue that we can work to address.

This work requires collecting a large number of water quality samples throughout a watershed simultaneously so we can capture a snapshot of conditions. This would be impossible for our small crew to carry out, so we rely on the help of dedicated volunteers to collect those samples. Over the past three years, over 20 volunteers have been going out after large storms, sometimes still in the cold, wind, and rain, and have collected over 300 water quality samples for us.

Storm Chasers sample bottles showing the variation in how much sediment can be captured in a sample.

These efforts, so far, have been focused primarily in the northern half of Curry County. Thankfully, we recently received a grant to expand our efforts to the rest of the county, and are currently looking for volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about this program, or want to become a Storm Chaser volunteer, visit our website at **www.currywatersheds.org/programs/monitoring/** or contact Robbie Lascheck at robbie.lascheck@currywatersheds.org (541) 373-7068.

Storm Chasers volunteers use special equipment, like this bridge bucket, to safely collect samples from bridges and river banks.

Monitoring the Rogue River

"Have you ever wondered if your favorite swimming hole is safe for swimming?"

You can easily check to see if some of your favorite swimming and boating spots meet the recreational water quality standard at our Swim Guide page.

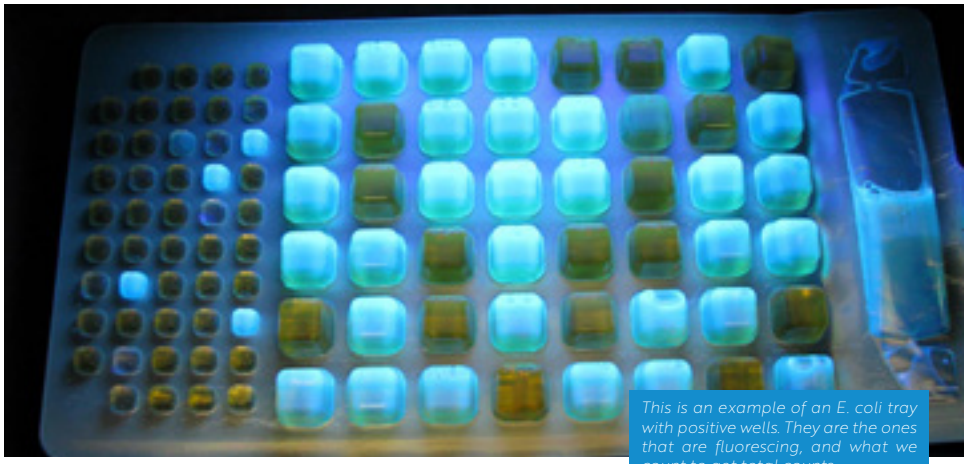
Each summer, the Lower Rogue Watershed Council partners with Rogue Riverkeeper to work with volunteers to collect water samples at popular recreation sites across the lower Rogue to test for bacterial contamination. We test the water every other week, from July 1 – September 30th. The level of bacteria at our sampling sites is then compared with the Oregon recreational water quality standard to see if local waterways are violating the standard for water contact.

What do we test for?

We collect water samples at each site and test for the presence of E. coli, a type of bacteria that is found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals. Levels of E. coli are used as the standard because E. coli indicates the presence of pathogens that can cause gastrointestinal illnesses and make people sick.

What do the results mean?

After collecting and processing the water samples, we compare the measured level of E. coli with the Oregon recreational water quality standard. This is a limit on the amount of bacteria that can be in a river or stream that is established by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) based on the advice of scientists to protect public health. If the sample surpasses the standard, it is not considered safe for water contact like swimming and boating.

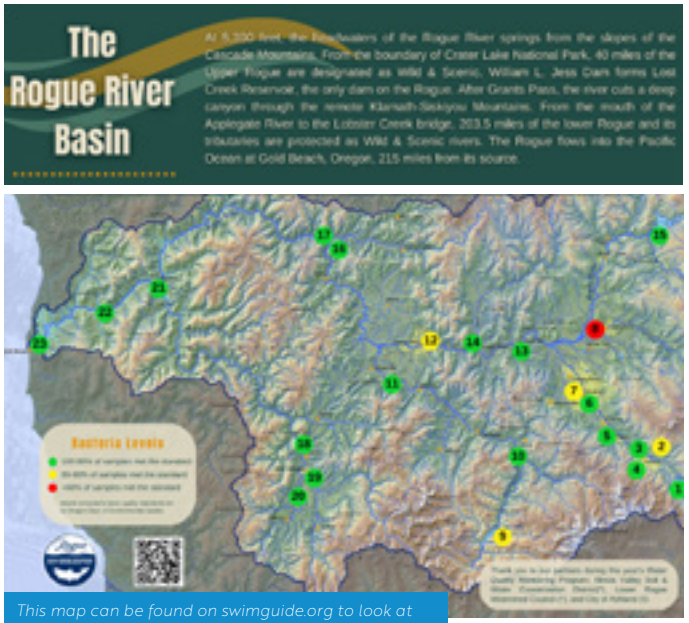


This is an example of an E. coli tray with positive wells. They are the ones that are fluorescing, and what we count to get total counts.

Good news for you!

The lower Rogue River has NEVER been out of compliance with E. coli standards, according to DEQ's protocol. So, get out to your favorite swimming hole today and rest assured that you can enjoy the Rogue a little more!

Find up to date information on the Rogue River here:
https://www.theswimguide.org/affiliates/rogue-riverkeeper/
(all lower Rogue sites on page 3)

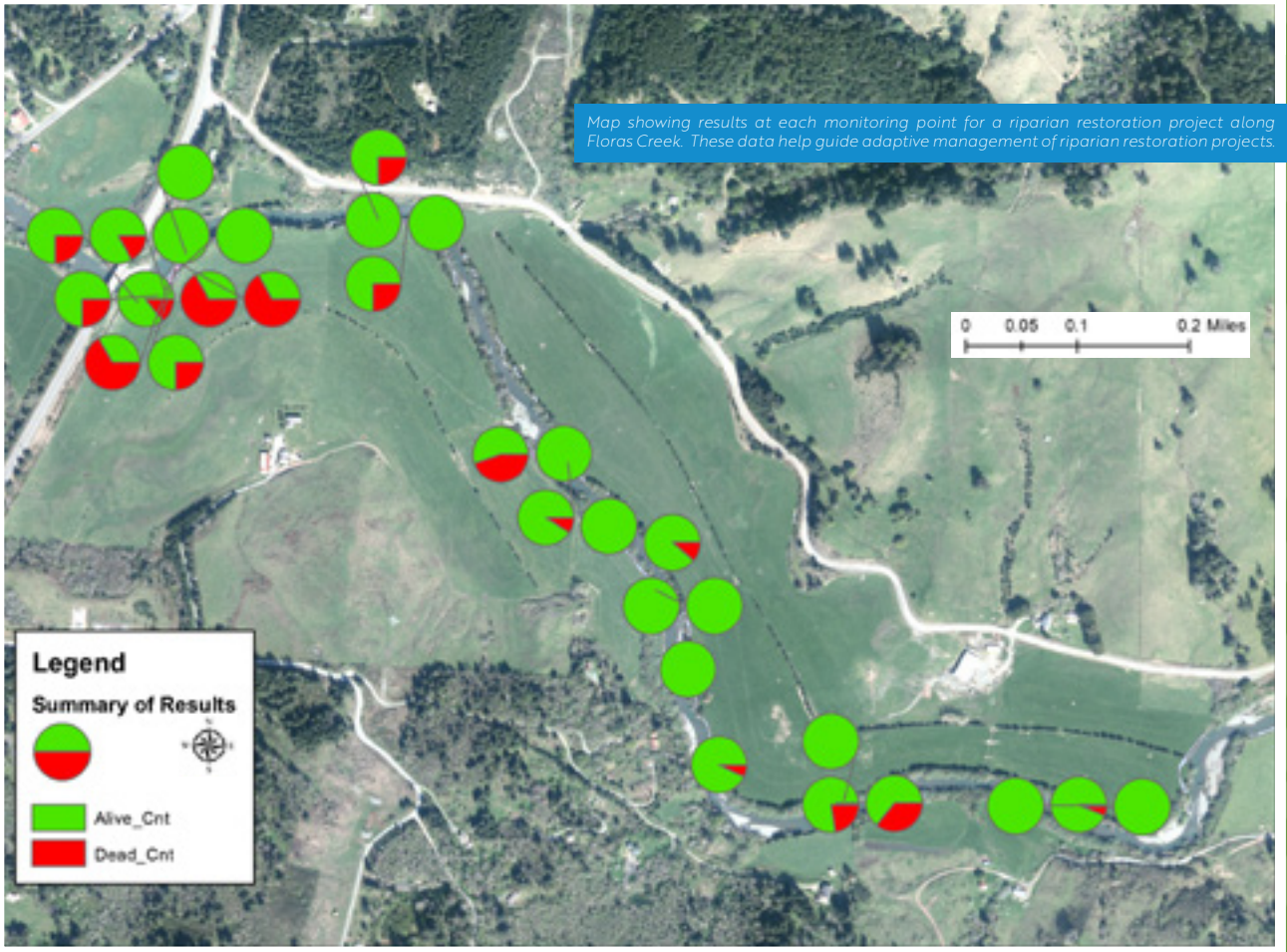


This map can be found on swimguide.org to look at sampling locations throughout the Rogue River.

Monitoring Riparian Plantings

Riparian plantings are monitored using a modified version of the Intensive Monitoring procedures described in the Coastal Oregon Riparian Silviculture Guide (Massingill 2003). In this monitoring procedure, random points located within planted areas are generated using GIS. Curry SWCD staff then navigate to each point in the field, place a stake the point, and attach a 10-foot long piece of rope to the stake. All planted plants within a 10-foot radius of the stake are counted as either 'alive' or 'dead'. The target area to be surveyed by this technique is 10% of the total area planted. The Data is used to calculate percent survival for each plot, as well as a combined percent survival that is extrapolated to the entire area planted.

Monitoring is typically conducted twice in the first year after planting (Spring and Fall) and once (Summer) for three additional years. If, at any point, survival falls below 75%, we attempt to assess the cause of mortality and take corrective actions. Depending on the cause and extent of mortality, we may deploy additional protective measures (mesh tubes, caging), increase or modify plant establishment activities, and/or interplant the affected areas with different species, stock size, etc. to increase the number of stems per acre.



Map showing results at each monitoring point for a riparian restoration project along Floras Creek. These data help guide adaptive management of riparian restoration projects.

Keeping a Close

WATCH ON WEEDS!

Before

Monitoring can be a valuable tool as long as the data collected is utilized and not just stored up for a rainy day! Data can be used in a variety of ways depending on the information gathered and the intent of the user. With weeds it's imperative that we re-visit sites to monitor the effectiveness of our herbicide applications and to follow up with additional treatments if necessary. Specifically, weeds like gorse need continually monitored in order to stay on top of germinating seeds year after year. Some weed species can easily treated with a "one and done" approach, but like gorse if it's gone to seed, you're in it for the long haul.

Japanese knotweed is another tenacious weed like gorse that requires many years of diligence to manage it effectively. Although Japanese knotweed does not spread from seed, it has the ability to spread from fragments of plant tissue and rhizomes from its dense root system. Monitoring has shown that initial herbicide treatments on knotweed will suppress it, but larger patches tend to show some regrowth the following year. Our data shows that some sites have been eradicated, so there is hope on the horizon! These are generally smaller isolated patches of knotweed where one or two herbicide treatments have successfully eradicated them.

After

What kind of data is collected? Aside from the location, date and weed species, we collect a host of other parameters that mainly help us keep track of our treatments and make project reporting much easier. Weed sites that have been monitored for several years tell a great story, and before and after photos are very supportive in monitoring weed sites. Our recent trends in data show a decline in active weed sites for several species that have been managed throughout Curry County. Due to our favorite weeds data field to fill out, the "gone" button or none found at the time of monitoring is ultimately the greatest achievement and end goal of these weeds' projects. Persistence is key with weeds management and monitoring is a big part of it.

Get Involved

Local Board Meetings

Please contact us for information on how to join.

Curry Soil and Water Conservation District
Last Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm
at the Curry Watersheds Partnership Office.

Contact Liesl Coleman for more information:
liesl.coleman@currywatersheds.org

Lower Rogue Watershed Council
3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm
at the Curry Watersheds Partnership Office.

Contact Kelly Timchak for more information:
kelly@currywatersheds.org

South Coast Watershed Council
Third Monday of every odd-numbered month, rotating location between Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings.

Contact Robbie Lascheck for more information:
robbie.lascheck@currywatersheds.org

Upcoming Events

Experience the Elk River Clean-Up Event

Saturday, September 14th

Bike a portion of the wild and scenic Elk River and pick up trash along the way. Visit our website at **www.currywatersheds.org/calendar** for more info and to sign up for the event

Curry Watersheds Partnership: Friendraiser at the Chetco Brewery

Come celebrate our watersheds!

Monday, October 14th 5:30PM - 7:30PM

Featuring music from the Pistol River Players!

Nibbles provided. No cover charge. No host bar.

REPORTS *from the* FIELD

Education & Outreach

Youth Education Program
YEP has been hard at work focusing on increasing our engagement with students and the community. Through our dedication to fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among students, the YEP has seen a significant increase in participation and overall engagement.

Since 2023 we have hit the following Milestones

# of Students Interacted with:	*1,925*
# of Hours Direct Teaching:	*110*
# of Classes Taught:	*108*

Furthermore, in January 2024, YEP solidified a partnership with a Curry County U.S. Department of Education TRIO program, marking a significant milestone in our mission to promote student achievement and educational excellence. As the partnership has grown, YEP and TRIO continue to work together to provide a range of services to low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities. It is a perfect meshing of TRIO's commitment to guiding students through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs and YEP's goal of fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and community connections among young people.

In April of this year, our organization embarked on a mission to connect with local schools and communities through a series of 14 exciting field experiences and six engaging community events.

TRIO tree Planting at Salmon Run Golf Course 2024

The field experiences took place at a Valley Flora and Wahl Family Farms, where students had the opportunity to explore the breathtaking wilderness, learn about the importance of watersheds protection, and where their food comes from. They eagerly participated in these events, asked terrific questions and gained a newfound appreciation and connection with their watershed.

Meanwhile, our community events drew in crowds of all ages, with our interactive stream trailer and educational field activity at REEL fish days. It was heartwarming to see people of all backgrounds come together to celebrate our shared interests.

YEP team meeting with ODFW prior to REEL fish days learning and planning together.

As we reflected on the impact of bringing people together through meaningful experiences, we felt we created a sense of unity, empathy, and inspiration in our community. And as we look ahead to future endeavors, we are excited to continue spreading joy and knowledge through our programs and events.

Beach Cleanup with Driftwood 5th Grade at Battle Rock.

Curry Watersheds Partnership Staff & Contractors

Liesl Coleman *Curry Soil and Water Conservation District Manager*

Barbara Grant *NRCS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Technician*

Drew Harper *Riparian Management Coordinator*

Robbie Lascheck *South Coast Watershed Council Coordinator*

Erin Minster *Technical Coordinator*

Jen Nelson *Youth Education Program Specialist*

Kelly Timchak *Lower Rogue Watershed Council Coordinator*

Dustin Williams *Vegetation Management Program Project Implementation Manager*

Tammy Wills *Operations Coordinator*

Matt Swanson *Contracted Restoration Project Manager*

Acknowledgements

Funding for the work mentioned above has come from the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Gray Family Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wild Salmon Center, Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, US Forest Service, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and Oregon State Weed Board.

Cover Caption: *Water quality sampling equipment at a tributary of the Pistol River.*

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Curry Watersheds Partnership includes the Curry County Soil and Water Conservation District, the South Coast and Lower Rogue Watershed Councils, and the Curry Watersheds Nonprofit, working together to support our communities to care for our lands and waters, now and into the future. We rely solely on grants and donations and you can make a donation by visiting our website, scanning the QR code above, or contacting us using the information provided.