

WINTER/SPRING
2022

CURRY *Currents*



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Success Stories

A HISTORY OF HELPING LANDOWNERS

The Curry Watersheds Partnership has a long history of success helping landowners care for the lands and waters of Curry County. We asked a couple of our longest-standing Board members to share one of their favorite success stories from over the years. The 'Reports from the Field' section highlights recent successes that are part of our ongoing, everyday work here at CWP.



Livestock crossing with a fish passage culvert over Gallagher creek.



Looking up a restored meandering channel of the Gallagher Creek wetland.



Conifers taking off in the newly restored Gallagher Creek wetland.

From George Fleming, Board Member Since 1995:

Kelly and I moved to Curry County in 1979. We are located eight miles east of Langlois, Oregon and border the north fork of Floras Creek. Gallagher Creek, a Salmon-bearing tributary to the North Fork, runs through the length of our property. Adjoining the tributary is a wetland that receives the floodwaters of Gallagher Creek. While away on vacation in 1992 our daughter's horse fell into a hole in the wetland, broke a leg and had to be put down. Out of sadness, frustration, and ignorance, we dug a shallow trench to drain the wetland and provide drier ground for our animals. The very first rainy season scoured the trench down to six feet and in an unfortunate twist of fate, a few of our sheep fell into the trench that year and drowned.

I volunteered to be the Floras Creek representative to the South Coast Watershed Council in 1995. Kelly and I began learning about stream health and structure, and the watershed council helped us find the funding and expertise to build a shallow meandering stream in place of the dugout trench. When it rained excessively, the stream poured over its banks and accessed its floodplain once again. We've since planted over a thousand trees and shrubs and placed large logs in the stream channels to provide habitat for fish. We've also enrolled the wetland and Gallagher Creek into NRCS's 'Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program', which provided funding to fence out our animals from the stream and the wetland. Curry Watersheds Partnership also helped us install a livestock crossing over Gallagher Creek to connect our pastures, keep our animals out of the creek, and allow for upstream and downstream fish passage.

Over the years, we have watched the stream and wetland evolve a healthy connection. The water from Gallagher Creek and the wetland have become cold and clear year round and native vegetation has flourished. The restored wetland has reintroduced itself to Gallagher Creek. The sedges and grasses that we planted during restoration are naturally spreading to reaches of the stream where they have been absent for decades. The overall effect on water, wetland and vegetation has consistently, year after year, improved stream health, beauty and structure. After heavy rains (100 inches last year) the water clears the next day. As we were writing this, a pair of coho salmon traveled up the north fork of Floras Creek past our house and into Gallagher Creek. We are very grateful for the Curry Watersheds Partnership's encouragement, expertise and funding to help restore the wetland and stream to its original beauty and function.

From Jerry Becker, Board Member since 1993:

When the Watershed Councils were formed in the early 90s, developing trust among all the stakeholders was the biggest and most important task. People came to meetings because they assumed watershed council activities would impinge on their rights and their ability to make a living. We had timber industry folks, environmental activists, and ranchers all at the table together. Concerns were brought up that I had never thought of, like 'when they make a couple more rules, we won't be able to walk our dogs along the river'. We sat there giving each other hard looks across the table. At the time, I thought this wasn't going to work.

One of the Watershed Council's early programs was working with school kids to plant trees along the Elk River. The timber folks brought the trees, we brought the kids, and everybody brought tools. The program was a big success and went a long way toward opening communication and breaking down barriers. As time went by, the Council did a great job of building trust with landowners. They learned that the council was not out to bust anyone for clean water act violations, but rather to help landowners with their issues while also helping watershed health.

A favorite restoration project that I've been involved in occurred on Bear Creek in the Elk River watershed. The Watershed Council had funding from the Bureau of Land Management to place a number of logs in the creek to improve structure and salmon habitat and plant trees along the creek. We rented a piece of equipment to log the trees directly from the property and place them in the creek. We got done just as the rainstorms started and in that first winter after the project, the wood started doing its thing - interacting with the water, sorting gravel, and causing deep pools to be scoured out. In the second winter, there was a good high water event at the right time in December during the peak of the salmon run. We went out following the storm and saw 50 or so salmon all around the wood placement. Bear Creek had long been devoid of salmon due to habitat impacts from logging, and they were back. At the water's edge, there were a couple of salmon carcasses that a bear had dragged out and partially eaten. The bears at Bear Creek once again had a salmon dinner and it felt really good to be a part of that.



Jerry Becker anticipates the return of salmon up a tributary to the Elk River after large wood was added to the stream.



Get Involved

Local Board Meetings - Currently being held via video tele-conference. Please contact us for information on how to join.



Curry Soil and Water Conservation District - Last Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Contact Liesl Coleman for more information: liesl.coleman@currywatersheds.org



Lower Rogue Watershed Council - 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm. Contact Kelly Timchak for more information: kelly@currywatersheds.org



South Coast Watershed Council - 4th Thursday of the month at 3:00 pm. Contact Miranda Gray for more information: miranda.gray@currywatersheds.org

Upcoming Events & Community Resources



March 1-2, 2022: Forest Health in Oregon 2022: State of the State

Virtual - Register for free at:

<https://www.forestry.oregonstate.edu/cpe/forest-health-2022>

Sponsored by the OSU College of Forestry, The Forest Health in Oregon: State of the State conference occurs every-other-year and is meant to summarize forest health issues in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The focus is on major forest insect and pathogen activity and emerging issues, as well as weather phenomena such as drought and heat waves, and of course fire. We seek to inform foresters, forest industry, agency forest managers, small woodland owners, forestry and natural resources extension volunteers and agents, and anyone interested in forest health in Oregon, about these important issues that influence forest health. In 2022 we are also focused on tree decline issues regarding western redcedar, big leaf maple, and Douglas-fir.



May/June 2022 (Exact Date and Location TBD): Curry Watersheds Partnership Fundraiser

We rely solely on grants and donations to accomplish the work we do, and all proceeds from this event will go towards sustaining watershed restoration and education in Curry County. We will be debuting two short films about our organization and there will be opportunity to mingle with our staff and boards. Keep an eye out on our website: <https://www.currywatersheds.org/calendar/> for details coming soon.

Interested in Watershed Restoration on Your Property?

The Small Grant Program is an easy-to-engage-in, competitive grant program that awards up to \$15,000 for on-the-ground restoration projects principally carried out on private lands. This program responds to a need for local decision-making about watershed restoration opportunities on a shorter timeframe than is available under other grant programs.

The Small Grant Program enables landowners to contribute to the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and the Oregon Conservation Strategy by committing “small acts of kindness” on their properties for the benefit of water quality, water quantity, and fish and wildlife. From planting native plants along stream sides to reducing sedimentation and erosion from upland farms and ranches, citizens everywhere can make a difference. For more information, please call Miranda Gray at 541-373-3127 or email:

miranda.gray@currywatersheds.org

Weed Alert!



Using a weed wrench to manually pull invasive Scotch broom.

Sometimes we all need a reminder. Here on Oregon's south coast it rains a lot in the winter, as it has this year. Current precipitation monitors [Link: <https://www.weather.gov/mfr/precipitation-tracker>] show the coast has received 27" since the start of the water year on October 1st - around 100% of normal rainfall to date. So, let those beautiful, warm spring-like days that come in between rain events be a reminder to get out and get ahead of weeds. These months can be a good time to control invasive weeds for several reasons. If your site is well drained after a few sunny

days, the soil can be dry enough and yet still soft enough to allow for hand pulling. Additionally, many native forbs are dormant at this time of year and will not be easily damaged, and it can be easier to see weeds when other vegetation is dormant.

When manually controlling invasive weeds, persistence pays. Cutting them back will weaken the roots over the following few weeks as the plant taps into its stored energy reserves in the roots. This can help with pulling stubborn deep roots. Repeatedly cutting a plant every 3-4 weeks can help exhaust rhizomes and dense root systems. Manual control of English ivy [Link: [https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Meetings/Documents/English Ivy Forum 2016/EnglishIvyManagementResourcePacket.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Weeds/Meetings/Documents/English%20Ivy%20Forum%202016/EnglishIvyManagementResourcePacket.pdf)] is a great winter activity. Soft soils can also help when using a weed wrench on species like Scotch broom (contact us at info@currywatesheds.org to borrow a weed wrench).

DISPOSAL TIPS

- Some species such as ivy and knotweed can resprout vegetatively from pieces, so pile and burn or pile in a place that you can turn the cuttings to dry out. If these are not options, then double bag and send to the landfill with standard garbage.
- Clip seed heads from last season into a bag and double bag, then dispose of in the regular garbage (not green waste).
- Always try to minimize the movement of noxious weeds and soils that are contaminated with noxious weed seeds.



Pull gorse and other weed sprouts as soon as they emerge to prevent establishment.

STOP! Weed seeds have been waiting for the rain to germinate. Preventing invasive plants from establishing in the first place is always the most efficient control method, but is a fleeting opportunity.



Liesl Coleman finds a sunny day to cut and pull English Ivy.

GO! Go outside - find some sun - pull sprouts - turn to face the sun - don't feel that you have to do it all in one day - cut back excess growth from last season - turn to face the sun - enjoy knowing that a little effort now pays off later - dispose of waste - turn to face the sun. Repeat!

Reports

FROM THE FIELD

- Building Habitat in the Rogue Estuary
- Preserving Port Orford Cedar
- Gaining Ground Against Gorse
- New Frontiers in Managing Japanese knotweed
- Understanding How Water and Sediment Move Through a Watershed
- Connecting Students with Outside Classrooms



New beaver activity at the Rogue estuary restoration site.

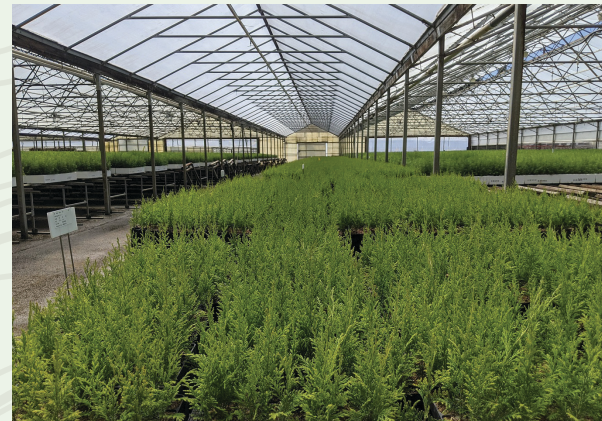


Beavers were busy building this dam (seen in foreground) after large wood structures were placed in the Rogue estuary (seen in background).

Building Habitat in the Rogue Estuary

In the Lower Rogue watershed, we recently completed seven acres of instream estuary habitat restoration. The project enhanced habitat for coho salmon production, along with many other key fish and wildlife species. We had one major concern going into this project - there was a strong beaver population present in the slough and we were worried that the disturbance may scare the beaver away. We continued to see beaver activity during equipment mobilization and site layout, but on the first day of construction we ceased to see any activity. There were no signs of beaver throughout the entire two weeks of implementation.

Fortunately, only one week following implementation, the beaver were busily at work once again rebuilding an old dam that had blown out the previous winter. There were several new beaver dams in the area, and new construction on the dams daily. We respect the integral role beavers play in this functioning estuary ecosystem and were overjoyed to see them back. Additionally, we brought this project in under budget and were able to pivot to the second phase more quickly than originally planned. This project has been a smooth success, from start to finish!



Port Orford Seedlings are being grown on contract by a commercial nursery.

Preserving Port Orford Cedar

Port Orford cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) is a native conifer to southwestern Oregon and northwestern California, and as the name implies, the area around Port Orford is the heart of the species' endemic range. Port Orford cedar (POC) is prized for the quality of its wood, which is light, strong, fine grained, and aromatic. Native Americans used POC for a variety of purposes, including the construction of sweat lodges, and more recently, it has been used in dozens of applications, ranging from battery cells to arrow shafts to siding and musical instruments. The tree also plays a critical role in the ecology of the Siskiyou Mountains, particularly as a riparian tree, where it provides high quality shade and large, long-lasting wood structure along and within stream and river corridors.

In the 1920's, an exotic root disease called *Phytophthora lateralis* was detected in nursery stock in Seattle, and by the mid-1950's this water mold had spread to natural stands of cedar within POC's native range. The root disease essentially kills all native POC that it infects, and although new seedlings sprout from seed, those trees typically succumb to the disease within 20-30 years of age. To avert the loss of POC from the landscape, the US Forest Service, BLM, and OSU began a breeding program in the 1990's to develop resistant seedlings from remnant trees within infected areas. By the mid-2000's, a small number of private and public nurseries started growing resistant seedlings for resale, and over the last 15 years, we have planted ~2500 POC in restoration projects throughout Curry County. By 2020, the breeding program had increased the genetic resistance of their seed to ~90%. That advancement, coupled with an increasing understanding of the tree's importance on the landscape, led us to initiate a POC restoration project in 2021 with the goal of planting 5,000-10,000 seedlings annually for the foreseeable future. Our seedlings are being grown on contract by a commercial nursery, using seed purchased from the Forest Service. We will plant POC in areas that will not be harvested, such as riparian corridors, conservation easements, and publicly owned lands, but seedlings are also available at-cost to non-industrial forest owners who want to grow POC for harvest. In January 2022, we will start this initiative by planting 5,000 seedlings in parts of the Chetco River, Elk River, and New River watersheds, and in smaller watersheds surrounding the town of Port Orford.

Gaining Ground Against Gorse

In 2015-2016, experienced Curry County cattle rancher Mike Brown converted an under-producing, gorse-infested timber unit to hillside pasture. Mike applied years of experience managing pastures to plan this pasture conversion and anticipate complications. As stumps and slash piles decayed, Mike began strategic grazing to keep biomass in check on the rough ground while he worked with us to control gorse resurgence. In 2021,

Mike completed riparian buffer restoration along the maturing pasture's creek frontage, using the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Mike's project provides open habitat in an area dominated by industrial forest, boosts soil health with vigorous perennial grass cover, and helps reduce the pervasiveness of noxious gorse. The project's CREP riparian buffer component excludes livestock from steep banks, provides wildlife habitat, and protects water quality on tributaries to Crystal Creek where elevated temperatures and bacteria create water quality issues downstream.

The Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is available to help fence and restore riparian buffers on working and retired pastures throughout the Oregon South Coast. For more information about the program contact our CREP Technician, Barbara Grant: 541-396-2841.



Japanese knotweed in the Wild and Scenic section of the Rogue River.

New Frontiers in Managing Japanese knotweed

After many years of successful Japanese knotweed treatments on the lower reaches of the Rogue River, we recently embarked upon our maiden voyage through the Wild and Scenic section of the

Rogue. Since 2011, we have collaborated with the USFS on Japanese knotweed management on the Rogue. Access to many of the sites have required experienced pilots and jet powered watercraft to safely navigate some of the most unforgiving sections of this powerful river. Knotweed treatments have typically occurred from Lobster Creek bridge up to Blossom Bar, which is the furthest upriver extent that we've been able to treat by boat. In the Fall of 2021 everything finally fell into place and our hopes for including the Wild and Scenic section came to fruition. We owe our gratitude to the US Forest Service staff for helping to pull this trip together. Our trip began when the raft hit the water at Rogue River Ranch and we started our journey down river. Several large patches were discovered as we penetrated thick riparian vegetation. It was clear that these particular stands of knotweed had not been treated for some time, if ever. Seeing the extent of these patches further justified the need to complete this trip. Well over a dozen sites were cataloged and treated, ranging in size from single plants to very large patches. Treatments continued all the way to the takeout at Foster bar. In years past our efforts led us above Foster in the power boat, but several sites were difficult to reach due to low water or rocky obstructions. Expert rafting skills and a resilient rubber boat proved no match for this dedicated team of knotweed knockouts. As our excursion came to an end, the eagerness and anticipation to continue this mission still thrived among us. Being able to link this upper section with our Japanese knotweed management project on the lower Rogue is a huge win. The more connectivity we can offer in a large watershed such as the Rogue, the better chance we have at keeping knotweed under control.



Contractors deploy an Acoustic Doppler Coupled Profiler to measure discharge during a moderately high flow in Pistol River (~4,000 cfs).

Staff plate and crest gage installed in Pistol River.

Understanding How Water and Sediment Move Through a Watershed

Understanding the distribution and movement of water and sediment is crucial to many aspects of our work, from designing drainage improvements on roads, to livestock fencing on floodplains, to fish habitat restoration in rivers. Unfortunately, sufficient data to support a good understanding of these parameters, such as the recurrence intervals of peak discharges (e.g., 2-year, 5-year, 10-year flow events) and sediment mobilization during these storm events, are available for only a few of the rivers in Curry County. This paucity of data can inhibit our ability to develop well-informed project designs.

As part of our work in the Pistol River watershed, we have been collecting data to help us better understand the hydrology of the watershed. To start collecting this data, the US Geological Survey (USGS) installed a crest-stage gage near River Mile 4 in Pistol River. Curry SWCD then deployed a pressure transducer to collect continuous stage data at the gage site between October 2020 and April 2021. Additionally, five discharge measurements were made at various river stages during that period. From those data, USGS developed a rating curve to describe the stage-discharge relationship at the gage.

The stage-discharge rating curve and continuous stage data from last winter have given us our first quantifiable look at the hydrology of Pistol River. While it will take the continued collection of these data to more fully refine our understanding, this first look has led to a couple of important realizations. First, it appears that the methods commonly used to estimate peak discharge values in coastal watersheds underestimate those values for Pistol River. Additionally, when plotting the hydrograph of Pistol River from the winter of 2020-2021 alongside that of the Chetco River, we see similarities in the responses to hydrologic events. These similarities may allow us to use the relatively long record of hydrologic data from the Chetco River to more closely estimate hydrologic characteristics of Pistol River than would otherwise be possible with only one year of data. While many more years of data collection are necessary to fully quantify the hydrology of Pistol River, we have a much better understanding of it now than we did a year ago.



Volunteers hard at work collecting water samples from bridge sites

This year we also successfully started up our ‘Storm Chasers’ program, which is a volunteer monitoring project aimed at helping us better understand sediment mobilization in our watersheds during large storm events. Volunteers go out after large storms and collect water samples from designated sites, which we then

process for turbidity and specific conductivity (two water quality parameters related to sediment). We are also collecting data on water levels and velocities to help us understand the strength of each storm and compare results over time. The results of these efforts will help us better understand the dynamics of sediment mobilization in each watershed, and identify potential areas of concern.

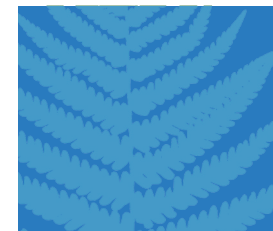


Robbie Lascheck uses a specialized radar gun to measure the velocity of a stream from the safety of a bridge.

So far this season we’ve sampled two storms with the help of 17 volunteers who have sampled 44 sites throughout 5 watersheds. Our efforts this year are focused in northern Curry County, with most sites located in the Elk, Sixes, and Floras Creek watersheds. We’re actively pursuing funding to expand Storm Chasers throughout the rest of the county, and hope to do so in the next year or two.

If you’d like to become a Storm Chaser to help in these efforts, sign up to volunteer on the Monitoring page at our website:

www.currywatersheds.org/programs/monitoring/





Riley Creek students preparing garlic to plant.



Riley Creek 3rd graders prepped a garden bed for 2nd graders to plant.

Connecting Students with Outside Classrooms

Our Youth Education Program has stepped up to help North & Central Curry School Districts with what we do best - connecting students with outside classrooms. Helping teachers connect classroom studies with outside systems has been a wonderful way to give students a break from Covid restrictions inside the classroom. Students at Driftwood and Riley Creek schools have learned that straw mulch and fava bean cover crops protect our soil from winter rains and cold temperatures, and the tender fava bean tops have become their favorite snack in the garden. Outside, they have planted winter crops like kale, chard, winter broccoli, and garlic, and hydroponic lettuce grows inside their greenhouse. Every time the kids come out to the garden they ask what is available to eat.

Driftwood 5th graders are exploring and building a trail in the wetland beside their school. Learning about the many functions wetlands provide, and identification of native and invasive species in this habitat, are just some of the values of getting kids into this outside classroom. This spring, they will be getting the wetland ready for other grades to come out and learn, and will be asking the community to help them clear invasive weeds.



Cathy Boden teaches a lesson to 5th graders at the Driftwood School wetland.

You can help these kids learn more about the watersheds they live in by volunteering at one of our community events, or donating to our Youth Education Program on our website.



CURRY WATERSHEDS PARTNERSHIP STAFF & CONTRACTORS

Cathy Boden, Youth Education Specialist

Liesl Coleman, Curry Soil and Water Conservation District Manager

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

Miranda Gray, South Coast Watershed Council Coordinator

Matthew Hubbard, Field Technician

Drew Harper, Riparian Management Coordinator

Erin Minster, Technical Coordinator

Robbie Lascheck, Monitoring Coordinator

Mary Spini, Administrative Assistant

Matt Swanson, Contracted Restoration Project Manager

Kelly Timchak, Lower Rogue Watershed Council Coordinator

Dustin Williams, Vegetation Management Program Project Implementation Manager

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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 or contacting us at the information listed above.