

SIUSLAW WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWS

AUGUST 2004

www.siuslaw.org

watershed@siuslaw.org

P.O. Box 422 • Mapleton, Oregon 97453 • 541-268-3044

• Community • Economy • Environment

Message from the Coordinator

On the first Monday of this month, about twenty people spent their evening with me and Laura Brophy, the project coordinator for the Siuslaw tidal wetlands prioritization, down at the library in Florence. Ms. Brophy shared a wonderful slide show with the attendees, exhibiting the tidal habitats in the Siuslaw and other Oregon estuaries, as well as the wildlife uses and benefits, the variety of habitat and wetland types, the losses and degradation of habitat, and ways that tidal wetland functions can be preserved and restored. The purpose of the meeting was to share with the community this project which will identify existing and historic tidal wetland areas, characterize their water resource and ecosystem function (or potential function), and develop a strategy that works with the community on how to best protect and restore tidal wetlands in the Siuslaw estuary.

The values of wetlands have been extolled over the past several decades: water purifiers, flood pulse reservoirs, highly productive habitats, essential linkages between the terrestrial and aquatic worlds. The tidal wetlands of the Siuslaw estuary are all that and more. And like many areas that have been attractive for human use and development, specialized habitats in the estuary have been fragmented, compromised, and lost. Certain species find value in all wetlands, while others find their niche in a narrow range. Among the tidal wetlands historically mapped in much greater acreage than present in the Siuslaw estuary are spruce swamp and crab apple swamp. Crab apple swamp? Ms. Brophy informed the audience that this habitat, a particularly impenetrable and unappealing landscape for human exploration, is equally a barrier for predators. The free-flowing network of streams and inlets within make for great salmon habitat, where salmon can rear and adjust to the salinity of the tidal waters.

Questions from community members tended to range away from the nuance of habitat type to

much broader considerations for the estuary, however. Sea level rise, both real and forecast, was suggested as a mechanism for reclamation of low lands by the water. Decaying agricultural infrastructure has resulted in the natural breaching of levees. Diked and drained lands have subsided in the absence of saturation, and the soil has irreversibly compressed up to several feet. These factors seem to indicate that wetland reclamation should not only be easy, but actually ongoing. Consider also that the entire coast is undergoing uplift due to ocean plate subduction, outpacing sea level rise and perhaps resulting in a retreating head of tide. Estuary infill due to siltation, especially in light of elevated erosion rates over the past century, further confounds pinpointing where appropriate wetland habitats should be. Add to that the impending subduction zone earthquake that we could possibly experience in our lifetime, which may thrust the coast and estuary downward several feet or more.

This does not daunt Ms. Brophy in her prioritization. In fact, it underscores the need to identify areas appropriate for hosting a gradient of wetland types, from fully inundated to slightly marshy. Not only does this habitat variety provide the greatest ecosystem benefit, it allows for estuary dynamics. No matter how much sea level rises and falls in response to various factors over the upcoming centuries, the ideal wetland sites will change with it. Furthermore, a highly diverse pool of restored and preserved tidal wetlands will ensure that the Siuslaw estuary maintains a healthy and robust fishery and wildlife population.

The Siuslaw Watershed Council will be hosting a community meeting some time this fall to discuss the prioritization process and knowledge accumulated to date. Please keep posted for more news on this exciting and important project.

Todd Miller

LETTERS FROM CAMP...

Here are some excerpts from letters that participants in the Siuslaw Watershed Exploration Camp sent to the Council:

- "Thank you for a wonderful week of adventure and fun." —Heather
- "She's already taught me some correct plant names and indigenous plants"—McKenzie's Mom
- "You and your team have made ecology 'very cool' to her..." Jocelyn's Mom
- "It's funny how many species of plant life I have walked by but really not seen, because I wasn't looking."—Jocelyn
- "She came home each day spilling of exciting fun, information and news of her day." —Heather's Mom

Thank you to all who were involved with this year's camp, from participants to presenters. You all helped to make it successful and fun.—SWC

July General Council Meeting Highlights...

Presentation: Estuary Invaders, by Vanessa Howard

Our guest speaker for the July 28 general council meeting was Ms. Vanessa Howard from the Center for Research on Lakes and Reservoirs at Portland State University. Ms. Howard has past first-hand experience with controlling invasive cord grass on Cox Island in the Siuslaw estuary, and currently works on identifying invasive species issues that threaten aquatic resources and also works on educating the public about controlling the spread of problem species.

Ms. Howard exhibited specimens of crabs, mussels, and snails that have become prolific in other western lakes and estuaries, taking over habitat and disrupting the food web. Some species are even more of a nuisance to boaters and marine infrastructure, including clogging and encrusting intake pipes, water diversions, and docks. Ms. Howard also gave a computer slide show and entertained many questions with fascinating and alarming answers.

The Siuslaw estuary has the dubious distinction of being the only Oregon waterway known to host a population of *Spartina*, which is a cord grass genus with two locally invasive species undergoing control on Cox Island (only one species remains a problem at this time). The biggest threats tend to be shellfish and aquatic plants that adhere to boats, and are thus transported from one water body to another. Boaters should exercise vigilance in thoroughly cleaning boats and gear when removing them from the water.

Contact the watershed council if you are interested in learning more about invasive species.

Council Project Update—August 2004

Tidal Wetland Prioritization: please refer to the Coordinator's Message for details on this state Department of Environmental Quality funded project.

Fish Passage Prioritization: although this project will, it turns out, not be funded through the EPA Watershed Initiative grant announced last month, the Initiative may provide support for crucial data processing and sharing via GIS (a computer database that allows spatial relationship of data points). This will help further evaluate the fish passage conditions in the Siuslaw basin with all project partners, including the Forest Service, the BLM, and the State Department of Forestry.

Currently, the goal of 19 culvert prioritizations has been completed and the engineering evaluation and re-design effort is continuing through the end of August. We are pursuing OWEB restoration grants as the main source of funding for construction in 2005, and we are researching other funding sources (besides the contributions from project partners).

The Siuslaw Fish Passage Prioritization will be shared with the Oregon watershed community via two forums: 1) the biennial OWEB conference in Ashland this November, where the Council and Aquador Consulting (the engineering team) will co-present, and 2) on OWEB's prototype North Coast web portal some time in 2005. These are both exciting opportunities to share not only the end product of a Siuslaw project, but all of the research, evaluation, prioritizations, basin and sub-watershed linkages, and other efforts put into creating a well-considered project.

Helicopter Contracting: this Forest Service, OWEB, and National Forest Foundation supported project will place large wood in North Fork Siuslaw streams to enhance habitat. Tree selection has started and placement will occur in September and October. The Siuslaw SWCD is administering the project and providing the Forest Service with field supervision.

Eames Creek habitat enhancement: this Siuslaw Stewardship Fund supported project will be occurring in coming months under direction of Jason Kirchner (ODFW) to place woody debris and decommission culverts on Eames Creek to enhance fish habitat.

Karnowsky Creek vegetation management: native plant maintenance has been ongoing under direction of project manager Steve Elliot. The bulk of the work on this NFF funded project will be occurring in the upcoming planting season when the final reaches of restored creek are planted with native riparian plant species.

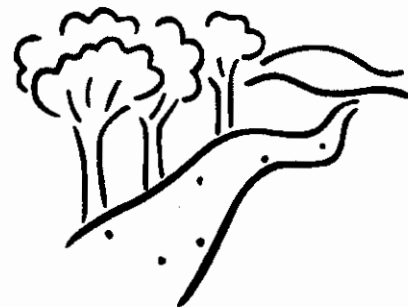
Riparian Restoration: release crews hired through this OWEB funded project along with crews provided by the Forest Service recently helped to clear grass and other vegetation away from newly planted native species placed along creeks by landowners who received them as part of the native plant giveaway. This annual event recently received funding for 2005 from the Siuslaw Stewardship Fund.

Watershed Exploration Camp: the second annual summer day camp was another success that was greatly appreciated by all attendees. Middle and high school students learned about water quality, habitat, coastal processes, geology, forestry and a host of other issues pertaining to the Siuslaw Watershed as a natural resource. Special thanks to camp coordinators Jim Grano and Cricket Crowder for putting together a great experience.

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring: Beth Tanner has been doing a great job at enhancing this National Fish and Wildlife Federation funded program, already having recruited new volunteers in unmonitored parts of the watershed and holding special training programs. We can expect to see some data in user-friendly format from Beth on our web site soon.

Next month we will hopefully announce the placement of an Education and Outreach Specialist with the council. This placement is co-sponsored by the AmeriCorps program and the Northwest Service Academy.

Siuslaw Watershed Council
General Meeting Agenda
August 25, 2004
Mapleton Grange Hall
6:30 p.m.



6:30-6:40 **Welcome and Introductions**

6:40-7:40 **Presentation: Strategic Plan, Part Two—**

Strategy Plan timeline through Sept. 19

Review of Leadership Board role

Brief review of draft strategic plan

Presentation of SWOT analysis

Review of Goals & Objective and input session

Comment opportunity prior to Sept. 29 adoption of Strategic Plan

7:40-7:55 **Break and Refreshments**

7:55-8:05 **Reports and Updates**
 Coordinator's Report

8:05-8:20 **Open Mic (3-5 speakers, 3-5 minutes each)**

8:20-8:30 **Announcements**

8:30 **Adjourn**

Gauging the River

If you haven't checked out the Siuslaw River Gauge on the web, take a look. There is lots of historical information so you can easily tell if we are having a drier or wetter than normal month. Go to <http://or.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/rt>. Click on the Siuslaw River on the map for our local information.

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* **Monthly Raffle** *
* To help raise funds for the *
* Council, we are holding a *
* raffle of donated items at *
* each General Council meet- *
* ing. Tickets are a suggested *
* donation of \$1 each or 6 for *
* \$5. The winner will get to *
* choose from available *
* items. *
* * * * *

JULY 2004

Beginning Cash	\$30,510.32		
		JULY	YEAR TO DATE
INCOME			
Dues		\$10.00	\$880.00
Federal Grants		\$900.39	\$14,632.38
State Grants		\$32,702.00	\$93,339.94
Private Grants			\$1,086.15
Interest		\$23.79	\$159.66
Donations & Misc.		\$10.00	\$541.00
Administrative Funds		\$490.42	\$2,418.98
Reimbursements			\$567.63
Other			\$33.32
TOTAL INCOME		\$34,136.60	\$112,572.91
EXPENSES			
Grant Expenses		\$8,894.77	\$84,949.54
Other		\$724.68	\$2,325.02
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$9,619.45	\$87,274.56
Ending Cash		\$55,027.49*	

\$14,775.12—general, \$40,252.49—grants

Schedule of Events

August 25—Siuslaw Watershed Council General Meeting: 6:30 pm, Mapleton Grange, E. Mapleton Road.

September 2—SWC Technical Team Meeting: 9:30 am, Upper Compound, Mapleton.

September 13—Siuslaw SWCD Board Meeting: 7:30 pm, 1499 Bay Street, Florence

September 15— SWC Executive Committee Meeting: 5:30 pm., Upper Compound, Mapleton.

September 29—Siuslaw Watershed Council General Meeting: 6:30 pm, Mapleton Grange, E. Mapleton Road.

HAVE YOU DONE YOUR TREE MAINTENANCE?

If you have young riparian plantings, now is a good time to take a stroll along your creek, river or lake making those little adjustments that give trees a boost. Check to see if protective tubes are still in good shape with the bamboo stakes anchoring them firmly to the ground. Also check to make sure the tree tops are growing straight. Sometimes they grow out the side of the tubes. If they are still young and flexible you can work them back through the top. Otherwise, cut the tube so that the mesh doesn't damage the leader as it gets larger. The Council has replacement tubes for the ones that are damaged plus a special tool to get them around established trees. We also have some wire mesh to protect larger trees in areas where you see beaver activity. Call ahead (268-3044) to make sure the items you need are available and that someone will be there to get them to you.

Siuslaw Watershed Council Mission Statement

The Siuslaw Watershed Council supports sound economic, social and environmental uses of natural and human resources in the Siuslaw River Basin. The Council encourages cooperation among public and private watershed entities to promote awareness and understanding of watershed functions by adopting and implementing a total watershed approach to natural resource management and production.



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What's Happening In Your Watershed?