

Spring 2022

SIUSLAW

WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWS

What's Happening in Your Watershed?

Spring Foraging in the Siuslaw

Spring is here and it's the time for new beginnings and new growth! With the weather warming, trees are starting to bud and flowers are starting to bloom. This is a great time to get outdoors and start foraging. I used to think of only late summer and fall for foraging, mainly for mushrooms and berries; but I have learned that spring has many of its own gifts to offer for foraging.

The first thing to know is exactly what you're harvesting. There are a lot of poisonous plants out there, so you want to make sure you know the plant with certainty before consuming it. I wouldn't identify something in one particular way. I carry an identification book in my vehicle and do my best to key out the plant. Then I research the ethnobotany.



I have also taken pictures and sometimes pieces of the plant to show someone with more knowledge than me if I'm unsure. Also, try to make sure that you are harvesting from a clean location, free from toxins, pesticides, and road runoff.

My first and favorite plant to harvest in spring is stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). It is a perennial plant that can grow three to seven feet tall in the summer and dies to the ground in the winter. The leaves are serrated and somewhat oval shaped, growing opposite off an erect wiry green stem. Nettles tend to like wet stream banks and disturbed areas. This plant is fairly easy to identify and, as far as I know, there are no poisonous look-alikes. It's best to harvest between March and May, and, when doing so, make sure to wear thick gloves so you don't get stung. The leaves and stems on this plant are edible, so, when cooking with this plant, the fresh new growth seems to be best when the leaves are young and tender. I have had nettle sautéed into my eggs and am hoping to try a couple new recipes this year, including making a nettle pesto.

My favorite thing to do with the nettle is drying it to make tea so I can have it all year long, and it is known to help with allergies.
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You can dry them by laying them on a drying board, or by using a dehydrator. I have done both. In the past, when offering friends and family a hot cup of nettle tea, they tended to automatically say no and that they didn't want their mouth stinging! I have to explain that once you cook or dry the nettle the stinging component goes away. So do not consume it in raw form; it must be cooked, blanched, or dried!

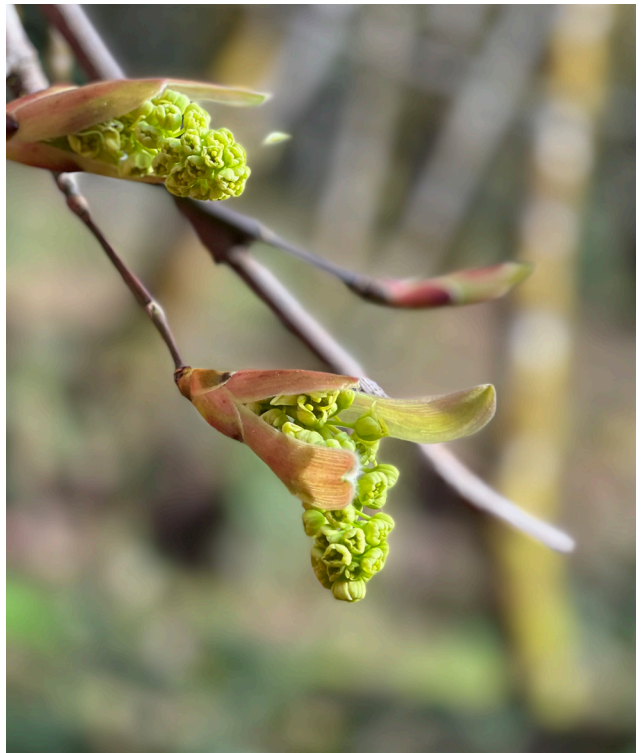
Another good green in early spring is fiddlehead. Fiddleheads are fronds of a young fern and are harvested before they unfurl, about one to four inches in height. The most common fern in our area is lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*). The ferns must be tightly coiled; you do not want to harvest them if they are totally unfurled. They should have a brown papery covering on them that you will want to clean off before consuming; and never eat fiddlehead raw. They contain a toxin that could make you sick! I have blanched them and put them on salad, and boiled them and doused them with salt and pepper. It tastes somewhat like asparagus.



This spring I am looking forward to harvesting a particular flower that a previous coworker had told me about. It's the maple flower from the bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). Its flowering period is March through April, before the leaves appear. The flowers are greenish-yellow, hanging in clusters that resemble tiny bird nests. I was told that, when in bloom, the maple flowers should have a sweet taste from their prolific nectar. The recipe I am eager to try is maple flower fritters; though I have read that you can put them directly into salads, use them as a garnish, or add them into baked goods.

Is there a particular green or flower you have had your eye or mind on that you would like to get out and forage for? Don't wait too long. The seasons change before our eyes and we miss our window of opportunity. We live in a beautiful place with many different wild edibles. Get out there and explore! Remember to be safe and know exactly what you're harvesting before you consume it, and be a responsible steward of the land. Enjoy!

Contributed by Britnee Church, Restoration Technician



2022 Native Plant Distribution Review

2022 marks the 23rd anniversary of one of the Siuslaw Watershed Council's (SWC's) longest-running restoration programs. The Native Plant Distribution (NPD) program began with dedicated SWC member volunteers who wrote the original grant to fund a tree giveaway for landowners interested in restoring their land on their own terms. Look around the Siuslaw region and you can see the original NPD trees, over 20 years old, growing strong on riverbanks throughout the watershed, thanks to the hard work of the landowners who cared for the small seedlings they received.

NPD has grown in the last 23 years and now gives away around 10,000 plants annually. This year the NPD program distributed 9,520 plants to the Siuslaw Watershed community. Our 2022 distribution had 108 participants with 28% of them new to the program. We welcomed many new members to the community who were eager to get involved. This program relies heavily on community participation and I am always surprised at how well this community embraces the NPD program. Thanks to our volunteers, we were able to get orders made the day before the distribution and even got to enjoy some good food together. Saturday, February 5th, the day of the event, also went very smoothly thanks to our volunteer help. The SWC is dedicated to helping our community continue with this program. With continued community support, we hope to keep this program going for another 23 years. Thank you to this year's funder, Coast Range Stewardship Fund, and everyone who participated or showed their support. We hope to see you again next year!

Contributed by Jesse Jones,
Project Manager



Reading the Siuslaw River Hydrograph

Wild guess: how many gallons of water do you think flowed through the Siuslaw River at Brickerville over the last year? Hint: there are 7.8 gallons of water per cubic foot. Answer: since March of 2021, the Siuslaw River at Brickerville yielded a total of more than 36.2 trillion gallons of water. For reference, that is approximately 11 times the maximum capacity of Fern Ridge Reservoir.

What percentage of total annual runoff will occur in the next six months? If the 2022 water year in the Siuslaw River is anything like 2021, **only about 10% of total annual runoff will occur in the next six months** (April through the end of September). That equates to about 35 billion gallons, the amount of water yielded in three weeks in March.

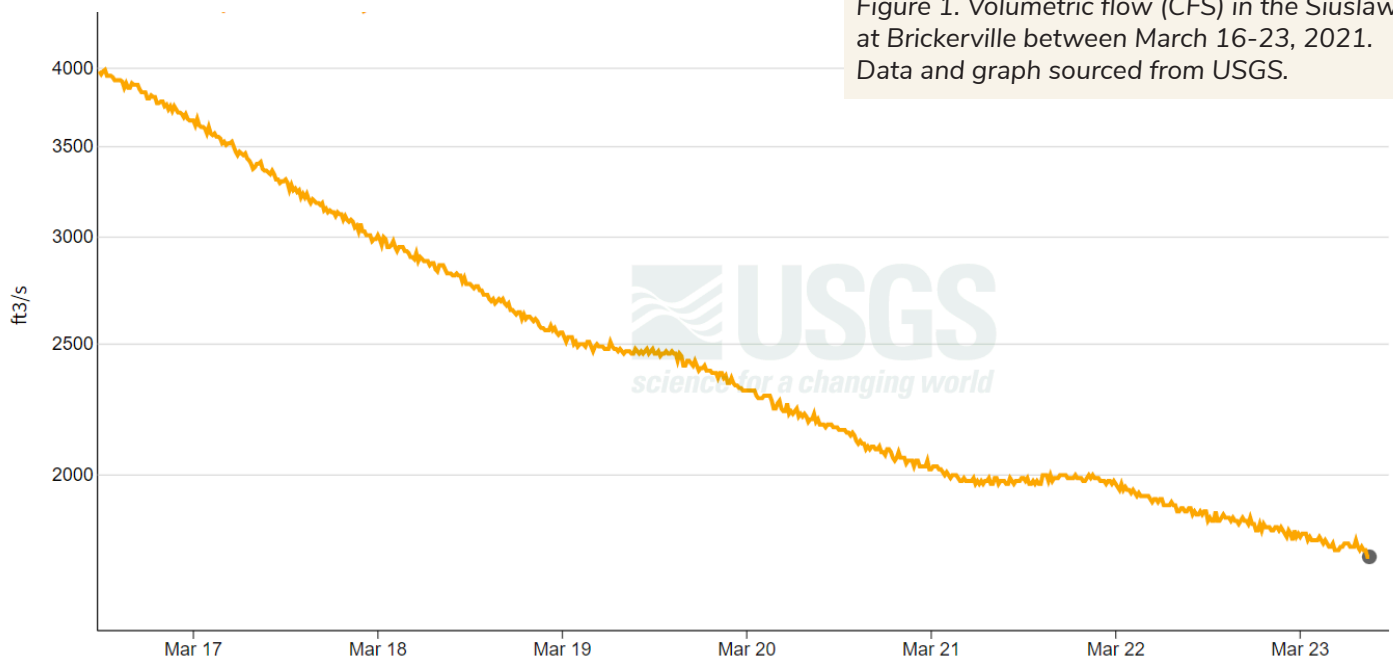


Figure 1. Volumetric flow (CFS) in the Siuslaw River at Brickerville between March 16-23, 2021. Data and graph sourced from USGS.

These hydrometric numbers are all derived from the Siuslaw River hydrograph, a graph of flow over time at a specific point in the watershed. In the Siuslaw Watershed, the data is collected by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) a few miles upstream of Mapleton. The gauge (Figure 2) has been in operation since 1986 and automatically measures the water level of the river every fifteen minutes. Water level provides important information about the hydrological conditions in the watershed. For example, **the Siuslaw River reaches minor flood stage when the gauge reads 18 feet and action stage at 15 feet.**

Water level can be converted to volumetric flow (cubic feet per second, CFS) using a site-specific rating curve, or the statistical relationship between water level and manual measurements of volumetric flow. Volumetric flow is the volume of water coming out of the watershed at the gauge site over a specific time interval.

Figure 1 shows volumetric flow between March 16th, 2022, and March 23rd, 2022. Over the duration of

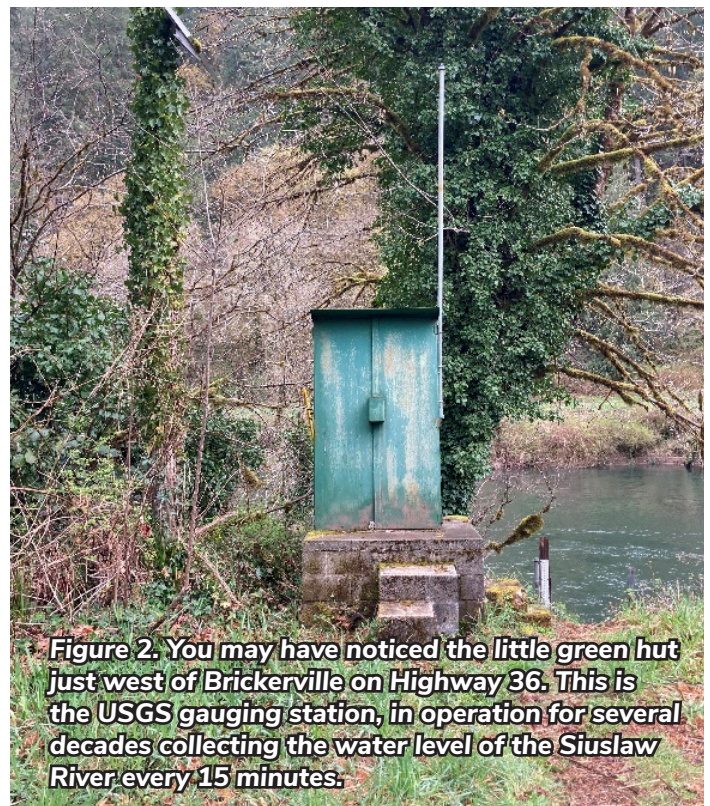


Figure 2. You may have noticed the little green hut just west of Brickerville on Highway 36. This is the USGS gauging station, in operation for several decades collecting the water level of the Siuslaw River every 15 minutes.

those eight days, volumetric flow in the Siuslaw River at the gauge site averaged 2491 cubic feet per second. To put that number in perspective, on average, **18,636 gallons of water passed by Brickerville every second!** In total, **more than 13 billion gallons of water flowed out of the Siuslaw River that week!** And those numbers increase with drainage area the farther you go downstream.

The seasonal patterns of volumetric flow represented in the annual hydrograph provide clues about the origin of water at different times of the year. In the wet season, the answer is obvious: rain. The comparison between the hyetograph (rainfall over time) and the hydrograph in Figure 3 demonstrates how closely streamflow tracks rainfall in this watershed. Volumetric flow starts to increase in the late fall after adequate rain has soaked into the ground and replenished subsurface storage. Peak flow occurs in the wintertime when big storm events and a saturated landscape cause the river to surge. In the spring, the rain becomes lighter and streams begin to recede, eventually reaching baseflow in the summer. In the Siuslaw Watershed, we are currently at the beginning of the stream recession period and stream flows will exponentially decline in the coming months. During this period with little to no rainfall, stream water originates largely from water that accumulated in subsurface storage over the winter.

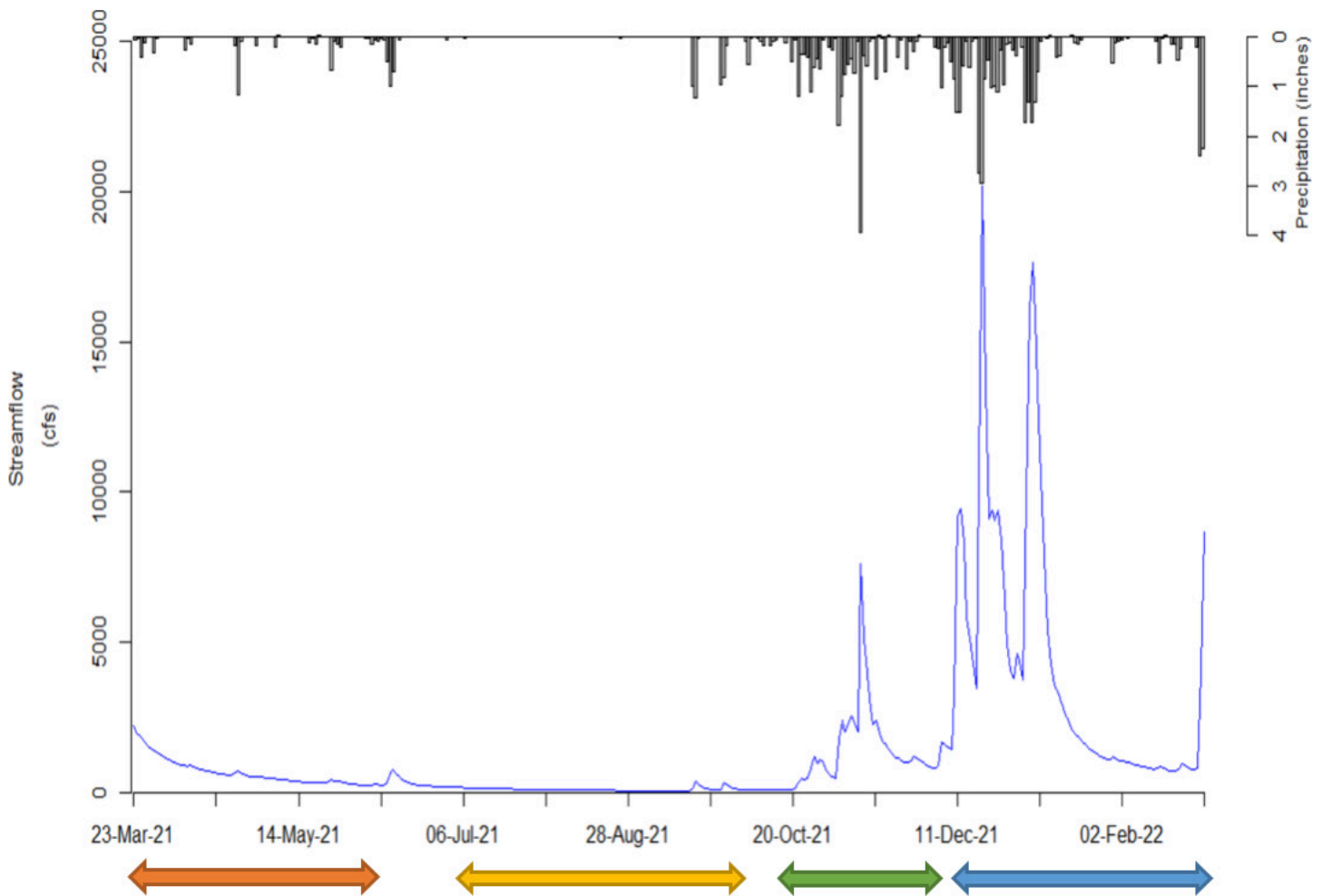


Figure 3. Volumetric flow (blue) in the Siuslaw River and modeled precipitation (black) at Brickerville over the last year. Precipitation data is derived from the PRISM database and encompasses a 4 square kilometer area around the Siuslaw gauge. The orange arrow represents the recession period, the yellow represents baseflow, the green represents the wet-up in the fall, and the blue arrow represents peak flow season (note that these are approximated).

One of the most impressive attributes of the Siuslaw Watershed is the abundance of water. The hydrograph helps us get to know exactly how much surface water there is, and how hydrological conditions change through seasons, years, and decades. Check out the Siuslaw River gauge on the USGS website to look at current stream flow as well as comparisons with last year.

Contributed by Rosemary Pazdral, Executive Director

Upcoming Activities & Events



Siuslaw Saunter at PAWN Old Growth Trail

May 7th 2pm-4pm

Join the Siuslaw Saunterers for a leisurely walk and talk on Siuslaw National Forest's PAWN Old Growth Trail in Minerva. Jim Grano and Tim Moffett from the Siuslaw Watershed Council and interpretive rangers from the US Forest Service will lead an informative stroll and highlight recent trail improvements, including the new "log walk." This short trail makes a 4000-foot loop through old-growth forest along Taylor Creek and the North Fork Siuslaw River.

From Hwy 126 in Florence, turn north onto North Fork Road. Continue approximately 17 miles to Forest Service Road 2553 on your right. After turning onto FS 2553, trailhead parking will be on your right. Please consider carpooling to ensure adequate parking.

Participants for the hike must be able to traverse uneven surfaces, including brief sections of steepness and switchbacks. There is no restroom on site. The event is free, but donations are accepted. Registration is not required.

Jig Tying Workshop

May 21st 11am-1pm

In recognition of World Fish Migration Day, May 21st, we are hosting a free jig tying workshop with project manager Caleb Mentzer and Council friend Evan Moso, proprietor of Spin-X Designs Tackle!

This will be an outdoor lunchtime event at a private residence on the Siuslaw River in Mapleton. A light lunch of grill foods will be provided. Space is limited to the first 15 participants who register. So don't wait, and please specify the number attending with your party when registering. Table space and a jig vise will be available for each person. An address and directions will be provided once registration has closed.

River access will be available on site to test your new jigs for those who bring their rods and reels (remember your license!). In the event of poor weather, the workshop will be held in the Siuslaw Watershed Council (SWC) office meeting room (10868 E Mapleton Rd). Please monitor your email if the weather looks questionable.



Siuslaw Watershed Council Mission Statement

SWC 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.

May 2022 Watershed Gathering

May 25th 5:30pm-7:30pm

Join us for a 2 for 1! Aquatic ecologist Holden Reinert will present "Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Ecology and Identification," followed by fisheries biologist Chris Mayes who will present "Macroinvertebrate Identification in the Siuslaw Watershed."

The meeting will be hosted via Zoom and is free to attend. Registration is required and easy to complete. Visit our Events page [siuslaw.org/events] to register in advance. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. If you have questions, please email Rosemary at coordinator@siuslaw.org or Tim at outreach@siuslaw.org, or call 541-268-3044.



Photo by Morgan Heim

NOW HIRING

Siuslaw Watershed Council is hiring a **restoration technician**. More information can be found by visiting the employment page of our website [siuslaw.org/employment].



Thank You!

Western Lane Community Foundation and the BOGS Impact Fund have awarded grants to Siuslaw Watershed Council for the purchase of an enclosed cargo trailer to support our Community Outreach, Recreation & Education (CORE) and Native Plant Distribution (NPD) programs.





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