

# Wasco County Watershed Councils Annual Report FY 2014/2015

## About Wasco County Area Watersheds

Wasco Area Watershed Councils are made up of five active watershed councils covering the largest watersheds in Wasco County. The council service areas encompass key drainages to the Columbia River in Mosier, The Dalles, and Fifteenmile Watersheds and the Lower Deschutes River in the White River and Bakeoven/Buck Hollow Watersheds. Combined, the five watershed areas cover more than 861,716 acres of vital fish and wildlife habitat.

The watershed environments extend beyond the streams, riparian vegetation, and floodplains reaching from ridge top to ridge top. The unique geology and variable climate of Wasco County creates a diverse landscape that ranges from mountain forests to juniper and sage rangelands.

All of the local watershed council drainages, with the exception of Bakeoven/Buck Hollow, originate on the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains in the Mt. Hood National Forest. Bakeoven and Buck Hollow Creeks originate on private lands to the east of the Deschutes River, an area of open range and agricultural lands.



## Watershed Coordinator & Technical Staff



The resignation of Watershed Coordinator Anna Buckley last Fiscal Year facilitated many changes. District management, recognizing the heavy burden placed upon a single Watershed Coordinator managing five Watershed Councils, saw it as an opportunity to make needed changes and to strengthen the local conservation partnerships.

Abbie Forrest, who had been assisting Anna through all facets of the Coordinator position for two-years, was promoted to Watershed Coordinator and District Technicians were assigned to each of the Watershed Councils to provide individualized technical assistance. District Technicians and the WS Coordinator are NRCS certified conservation planners with a combined 59 years of experience. Karen Lamson was assigned to the Mosier Watershed Council and Bakeoven/Buck Hollow Watershed Council; Ryan Bessette to The Dalles Watershed Council; Shilah Olson the Fifteenmile Watershed Council; and Josh Thompson the White River Watershed Council.

## Watershed Council Chairs



Watershed Councils Coordinating Board Chair : Pat Davis  
Mosier Watershed Council Co-Chairs : Kristen McNall & Bryce Molesworth  
The Dalles Watershed Council Co-Chairs : Ken Bailey & Bruce Lumper  
Fifteenmile Watershed Council Co-Chairs : Bill Hammel & Phil Kaser  
White River Watershed Council Co-Chairs : Pat Davis & Herb Snodgrass  
Bakeoven / Buck Hollow Watershed Council Chair : Bob Krein

## Watershed Councils Coordinating Board

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is the main funder for watershed councils in Oregon. In order to streamline reporting, increase council accountability, achieve conservation goals and make funding more efficient, the concept of creating an umbrella group to oversee councils was developed. The funding would go to the Council Coordinating Board and they would be responsible for ensuring the conditions of the grant would be achieved.

The Wasco County Coordinating Board is comprised of representatives from each of the local councils: Pat Davis, Kristen McNall, Bryce Molesworth, Ken Bailey, Bruce Lumper, Bill Hammel, Phil Kaser, Herb Snodgrass and Bob Krein.

The Coordinating Board has adopted new bylaws, approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the watershed councils and the Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District for fiscal responsibilities, to employ staff, secure funding and to manage projects that the watershed councils undertake. In the last fiscal year the Coordinating Board finalized a Wasco County Watershed Councils Watershed Restoration Action Plan. The Action Plan advances the local councils' mission to improve watershed health by protecting, enhancing, maintaining and restoring watershed functions across all land uses while supporting a sustainable economy. The Action plan is a strategic framework and roadmap to guide activities over the next five years.



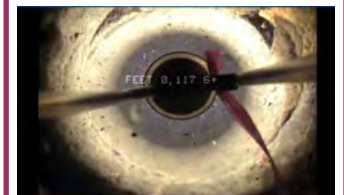
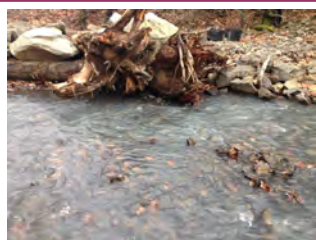
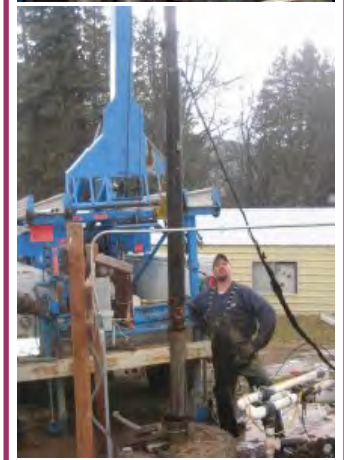
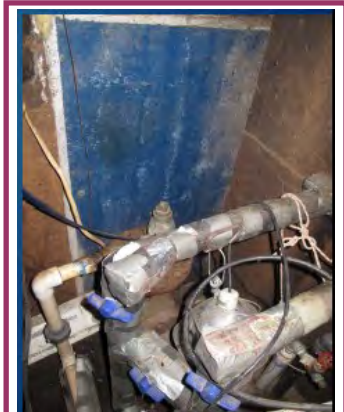
## Mosier Watershed Council



The Mosier Watershed Council has continued to make progress towards addressing Mosier's declining groundwater problem. The watershed council members reached out to their neighbors and friends to help inform the community on this issue and took concerns to the state legislature. Through countless phone calls and emails the watershed council secured \$1 Million dollars. These funds will help cover the cost of repairing or replacing commingling wells. Through these efforts the watershed council also was able to have Special Area Well Construction Standards approved for the Mosier area impacted by commingling wells. The new Well Construction Standards will require drillers to give notice prior to any kind of construction or well reconstruction.

Mosier Watershed Council and the District along with many other partners including ODOT, DEQ, OPRD, OWEB and The City of Mosier, successfully completed the Rock Creek Steelhead Habitat Enhancement Project. Through this enhancement project banks were re-sloped and stabilized with large wood and boulder ballast and spawning gravels were added to the stream channel. Although heavy rains pushed some of the boulders, debris and spawning gravel downstream the Steelhead were seen using the area almost as soon as water returned.

Volunteers continue efforts on the Oregon White Oak and planting for the future.



## The Dalles Watershed Council

The Dalles Watershed Council recently completed the restoration of the Mill Creek Side Channel. This project was designed to provide fish spawning habitat and relieve flood burdens for landowners downstream. The council will be planting the site this spring.

After many years of investigation that involved thousands of dollars, man hours, and tests that included dyes, smoke, and optical brighteners, and ground penetrating radar, the origins of the discharge from the “Mystery Pipe” was finally solved — a broken sewer pipe leaking into an underground spring diversion. Although high concentrations of *E.coli* are still problematic in Mill Creek, sampling efforts will continue with a focus on agricultural lands. In the last two years the council has also continued their interest in the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership and samples 4 locations in Mill and Three Mile Creeks.

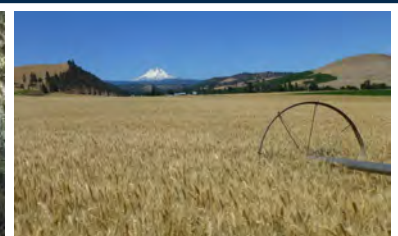
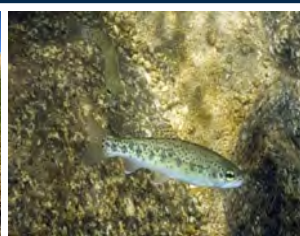
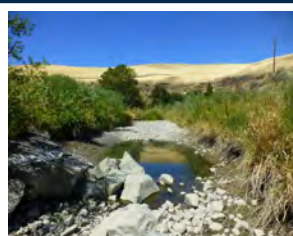
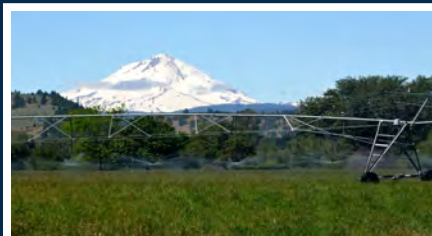
The Dalles Watershed Council has also kept a strong interest in many restoration opportunities throughout the watershed including the Government Flat fire; maintenance and educational workshops along Riverfront; planting days and work parties along Mill Creek; Oak Woodlands Partnerships and Steelhead and Lamprey monitoring with ODFW and The Confederate Tribes of Warm Springs.



## Fifteenmile Watershed Council

The Fifteenmile Watershed Council is now on their third season of the Fifteenmile Action Plan to Stabilize Temperatures (FAST) Program. FAST was a program developed to alert irrigators when stream temperatures lethal to endangered Steelhead and low stream flows are predicted. Through this program irrigators along Fifteenmile Creek and Eight Mile Creek are financially compensated to voluntarily shut down their irrigation until temperatures stabilize. Irrigators receive emails that include stream temperature and flow predictions as well as an automated phone call alert when stream temperatures rise to lethal temperatures. Nate Woodard was hired last spring to coordinate the FAST program and is working diligently with landowners to participate. Irrigators also have the option to lease or transfer instream water rights. Both of the options are critical in providing sufficient flows during the summer months.

Water quality and quantity have been the main focus for the Fifteenmile WS Council. With funding from the Oregon Water Resources Department and engineering from Anderson Perry, they completed an off-channel storage feasibility study. The study looked at the option of three reservoir sites that would be capable of storing enough water through the irrigation season. There were many concerns that arose with the off-channel reservoir, so the council has redirected their attention to subsurface storage. They submitted a feasibility grant in January to explore this option further.



## White River Watershed Council



The White River Watershed was awarded 1.6 Million dollars through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). These funds will be used as match from other funding sources. This massive project involves several water conservation projects in the Tygh Valley and Wamic area. Projects will include the removal of a diversion dam that will allow for improved passage for the fish that inhabit Tygh Creek. The installation of a fish screen and fish ladder at an irrigation diversion on Three Mile Creek and a water saving conversion of an open irrigation ditch to a pipe system at the Rock Creek District irrigation project. There are also irrigation efficiency projects for private landowners to upgrade their current systems. The Juniper Flat Irrigation District has also met with engineers to start the planning for a project that could save over a million gallons of water a day that currently leaks from the ditch system.

The watershed council has been involved with the recently formed Wasco County Forest Collaborative Group. The watershed council has representatives including irrigators and private ranchers and landowners who are helping to direct the United States Forest Service (USFS) develop a plan to restore the forest and private lands that were burned in the Rocky Burn Fire. Many of the projects revolve around roads, grazing, logging, riparian areas and thinning plantations.

## Bakeoven / Buck Hollow Watershed Council

The Bakeoven and Buck Hollow Watershed Council reconvened after several years in hiatus. Prior to that, area landowners were heavily involved in a full watershed restoration project. In the early 2000's the Bakeoven and Buck Hollow Watershed Councils completed watershed assessments which led to the council and landowners participating in riparian improvements throughout the entire watershed.

The council held a work shop in the fall to develop a strategy for implementing Action Plan priorities. Landowners shared new resource concerns and discussed what opportunities were available. Juniper encroachment and treatments, spring developments, range seeding, cross fencing and grazing management were all top priorities. NRCS staff will be working with landowners to build conservation plans in hopes of building another great rangeland health project with funds like the RCPP or EQIP dollars.

In January the SWCD completed a Technical Assistance grant that will be used to fund the work of developing rangeland assessments. SWCD staff will partner with NRCS to complete the assessments and apply for implementation funding.

