



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**" The River  
Links Us  
All "**

[www.mckenziwc.org](http://www.mckenziwc.org)  
PO Box 70166  
Springfield, OR, 97475  
(458) 201-8150



# MISSION

Our mission is to foster better stewardship of the McKenzie River watershed resources, deal with issues in advance of resource degradation, and ensure sustainable watershed health, function, and use. The McKenzie Watershed Council was formed in 1993 to help address watershed management issues in the McKenzie River watershed, as well as provide a framework for voluntary coordination and cooperation among key interests in the development and implementation of a watershed action plan.

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The McKenzie River Valley is incredibly blessed with strong local partnerships that were able to pivot their time, dedication, and resources in response to the impacts of the Holiday Farm Fire. The McKenzie Watershed Council is proud to be a part of this work and privileged to be able to serve local communities. The river, and our collective work to protect it, link us all.



*Water flows over the recently completed Deer Creek Floodplain Restoration Project.*

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

The McKenzie Watershed Council recognizes the reality of modern-day systemic racism and the fact that U.S. society has largely failed to address or acknowledge a history that has created and maintained disparities and barriers that limit opportunities for certain groups of people based on race, culture, and other characteristics.

For over 25-years, the Council has worked to ensure a sustainable watershed through stewardship of its natural resources with the understanding that nature knows no boundaries, and that we are all connected regardless of where we live. Our current programs, partnerships, and funding priorities are however constructs of the society in which they were developed and reflect systemic elements of power and privilege. More can be done to help ensure the fundamental human rights of clean water and healthy habitats for all.

It is in that spirit that we affirm our commitment to the community and stand in support of the social justice movement lead by Black Lives Matter and others. We commit to continuing to listen, learn, and grow with our community. We will do this with a deliberate focus on equitable treatment, access, and opportunity for all residents of the McKenzie watershed. The river links us all.

## COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Covid pandemic disrupted the Council's traditional monthly meeting schedule in 2020, forcing the cancellation of meetings March through September. The Council resumed meeting in October over Zoom with a focus on the impacts of the Holiday Farm Fire and coordinated recovery efforts. The success of virtual meetings presents interesting options for the Council moving into 2021, and beyond. The possibility of holding a percentage of monthly meetings online may be an avenue to increase access and participation.

Meetings occur on the second Thursday of the month. Agenda, minutes, and past presentations are available on the Council website.

To learn more about attending current virtual meetings contact the Council at [chase@mckenziawc.org](mailto:chase@mckenziawc.org)



# McKENZIE RIVER CLEANUP

The Council's largest public event is the Annual McKenzie River Clean-up. The modified social-distanced 2020 version was remarkably successful despite a range of challenges.

Typically volunteers in drift boats, rafts, and on foot, partner to pick-up trash and debris along established float routes and public access points. The temporary closure of the Hendricks Wayside made some of the float routes inaccessible, but the effort still covered 55 river miles and most of the traditional land-based sites. A huge thank you to International Paper for helping fund the event and to McKenzie Disposal for once again helping with the trash. Lane County Park Division and EWEB staff also led site clean-ups at Armitage Park and Lloyd Know Park, respectfully. We are looking forward to hosting an amazing BBQ in the future!



*Volunteers proudly show off what trash they removed from the river, with the largest piles securing bragging rights until next year's event!*

# YOUTH EDUCATION

The Council's Salmon Watch program, which typically hosts 35 field trips for local youth to see wild salmon spawning, was cancelled in 2020. With the strong support from local partners like EWEB, McKenzie Fly Fishers, ODFW, and many volunteer environmental educators we hope to resume field trips in the fall of 2021.

The Watershed Action Teams for Enhancement Restoration and Stewardship (WATERS) program is designed to engage students in watershed restoration projects. The program was off to a great start in early 2020 involving students from the McKenzie and Springfield public school districts in a collaborative planting project on the South Fork McKenzie River, with support from the USFS and International Paper Foundation. With the onset of the pandemic, the program is currently on hold and Council staff are working with partners to explore options for a regional approach to youth environmental education in the Upper Willamette River Basin.



*International Paper volunteers present the Council and WATERS students with a check to support the Council's education program.*



# HOLIDAY FARM FIRE

The Holiday Farm Fire (HFF) began on September 7, 2020, during a strong east wind event that passed through western Oregon. The fire started west of McKenzie Bridge, before moving downriver through the communities of Blue River, Finn Rock, Nimrod, and Vida. The fire encompassed over 173,000 acres, destroyed over 400 structures, and dramatically altered the lives of the people who call the McKenzie River Valley home. A series of strong and dynamic networks of local and regional partnerships emerged out of the aftermath of the fire to help support people and the communities impacted by the wildfire, protect McKenzie River water quality, and begin the process of habitat restoration.

One of these partnerships was the Watershed Recovery Task Force, a Eugene Water & Electric Board-led effort to protect McKenzie River water quality and restore habitats on private property impacted by the wildfire. The Task Force relied upon existing relationships and an operational framework established through the Pure Water Partners (PWP), a program established in 2016 to support riparian restoration projects on private lands along the McKenzie River. The McKenzie Watershed Council is proud to be part of the partnership along with EWEB, the McKenzie River Trust, and the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District. This effort has led to voluntary and cooperative partnerships with over 200 landowners within the HFF burn perimeter. Task Force members, working in partnership with the Northwest Youth Corps and local private contractors, installed erosion control treatments on over 100 of these properties and are in the process of implementing native tree and shrub planting projects on upwards of 80 acres. The intent of the Task Force is to use the PWP framework to provide long-term support for residents as we all seek to recover native habitats, enhance resiliency to wildfire, and protect McKenzie River water quality. To learn more about the work of the Task Force and the PWP, please visit , [www.purewaterpartners.org](http://www.purewaterpartners.org).



*Hazard trees pose a threat to structures and those working in the basin*



*Crews place jute waddles to mitigate erosion at a private residence.*



*Oregon Woods staff replanting a hillslope following hazard tree removal.*



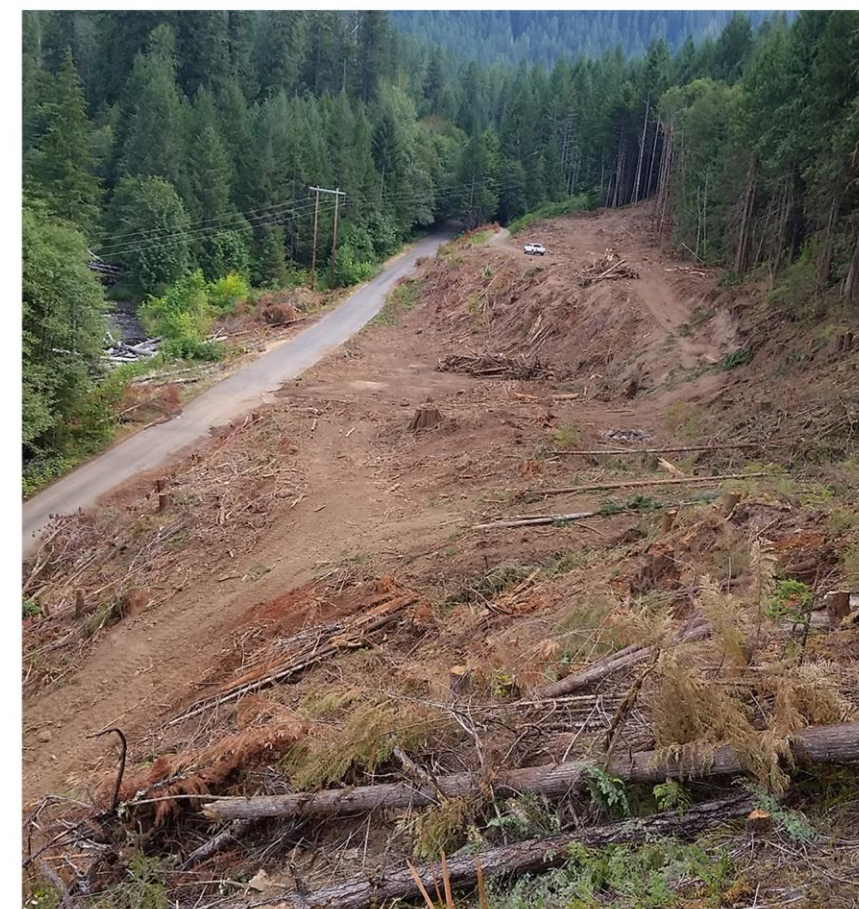
*Hydroseeding a steep bank adjacent to the McKenzie River.*



## DEER CREEK PHASE II

The McKenzie is home to native species like Chinook salmon and bull trout who rely on the consistent flows of cold, clear water emerging from a series of springs throughout the high Cascades. Deer Creek, a tributary to the upper McKenzie River located 3 miles downstream from Trail Bridge Reservoir, flows through a relatively wide unconfined valley that historically contained as a braided network of channels that would move and change during periodic flooding. This complex and dynamic channel system provided habitat for Chinook, bull trout, and many other native species. A range of land management practices over the past 100 years including timber harvest, road building, and the construction of powerlines, transformed Deer Creek into a simplified, largely single-thread channel that rarely interacts with its floodplain. A local partnership between the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), the Willamette National Forest (WNF), and the McKenzie Watershed Council is working to restore the connection of Deer Creek to its floodplain through a multi-phased project begun in 2016.

Phase 2 of the project was completed in 2020 and involved the removal of over 30,000 cubic yards (over 1,000 dump truck loads) of material from 4.1 acres of streamside berms, and the placement of over 700 pieces of large wood and sediment from the berms along 0.8 miles of Deer Creek. The project reconnected nearly 28 acres of floodplain, providing important habitat to native fish and wildlife. The large wood used in the project was sourced from a hillslope along FS Road 2654 that will serve as a new corridor for the EWEB powerlines connecting the Carmen-Smith Hydroelectric Project to its downstream customers. The EWEB powerlines, which are currently partially located within the Deer Creek channel, will be relocated to the newly cleared roadside corridor in spring 2021. Once the powerline relocation is completed, Phase 3 of the Deer Creek restoration project will begin, likely in late June and continuing through early August 2021. The Phase 2 project was made possible with grants through the Intel Corporation, EWEB, WNF, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.



*The newly cleared powerline corridor.*



*Forest Service crews salvage stranded fish before dewatering pools.*



*Wood is placed in the newly connected floodplain.*



*The rewatered floodplain following project completion.*



# 2020 SUPPORTERS

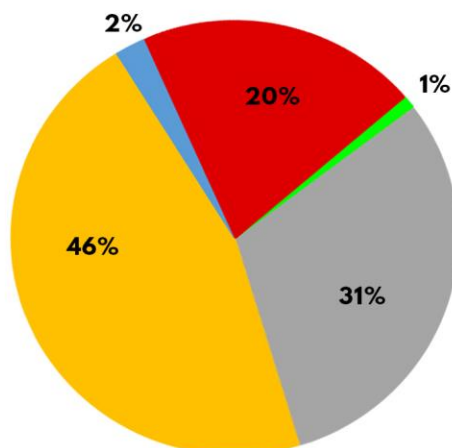
- Bureau of Land Management
- Cabela's
- Café Mam
- Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council
- City of Springfield
- City of Eugene
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Eugene Water & Electric Board
- International Paper
- Gray Family Foundation
- International Federation of Flyfishers
- Lane County
- Lane Education Service District
- McKenzie Community Track & Field
- McKenzie Disposal
- McKenzie Flyfishers
- McKenzie Masters
- McKenzie River Trust
- Meyer Memorial Trust
- Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Ninkasi Brewing
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Pacific Continental Bank
- Pac. States Marine Fishery Comsn.
- Planktown Brewing
- SOLVE
- Spirit Mt. Community Fund
- Springfield Public Schools
- Springfield Utility Board
- The Freshwater Trust
- The Intel Corporation
- Wayfarer Resort
- Weyerhaeuser Foundation
- Wildcraft Cider
- Wildish
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- Upper Willamette Stewardship Network
- & Many Individual Donors

## PARTNERS

- Bureau of Land Management
- City of Springfield
- City of Eugene
- Eugene Water & Electric Board
- HJ Andrews Experimental Forest
- International Paper
- Lane County
- McKenzie Flyfishers
- McKenzie River Guides
- McKenzie River Ranger District
- McKenzie River Trust
- McKenzie Schools
- Mohawk Watershed Partnership
- NW Steelheaders Association
- Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
- Rice Family Farms
- Upper Willamette SWCD
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Weyerhaeuser
- Wildish
- 8 Resident Partners

## 2020 FUNDING BY SOURCE

- Foundation**  
\$10,000
- Local**  
\$318,559
- State**  
\$476,716
- Federal**  
\$211,300
- Donations**  
\$23,278



## 2020 EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

- Admin/Operations**  
\$32,342
- Outreach**  
\$9,502
- Monitoring**  
\$66,859
- Restoration**  
\$699,126
- DEI Support**  
\$1,500

