



Upper Nehalem Watershed Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

Founded in 1996 to help maintain the health of the waterways and wildlife in the Upper Nehalem Valley. Nestled in the northwest corner of Oregon, the UNWC works with other organizations, community members, and stakeholders to complete projects and share information. The UNWC provides a framework for all stakeholder voices to be heard and to coordinate efforts towards shared goals.

OUR MISSION:

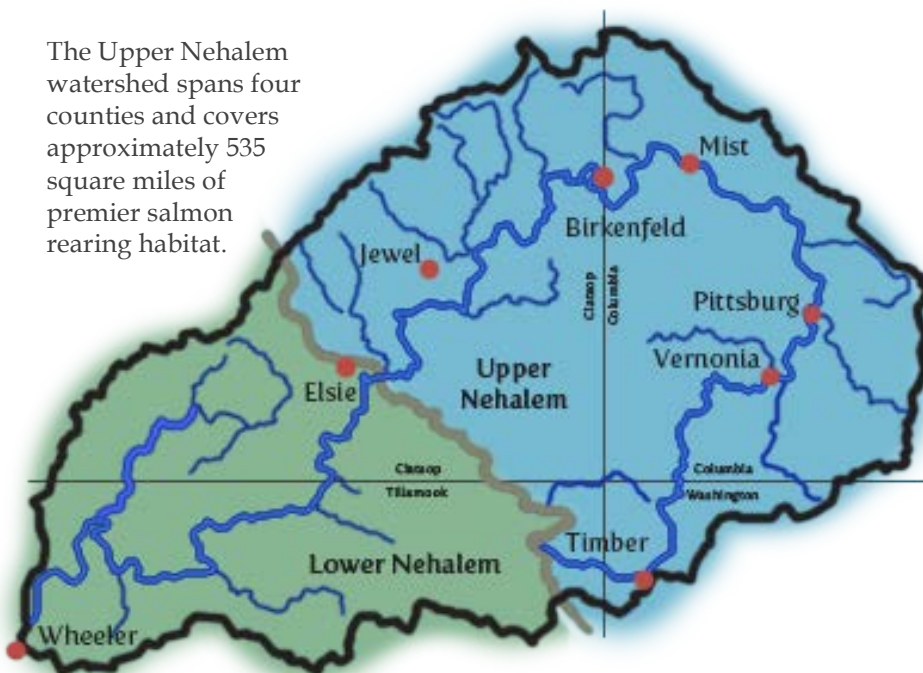
To foster stewardship and understanding of the natural resources of the Upper Nehalem Watershed among the stakeholders of the watershed communities in order to protect, conserve, restore and sustain the health and functions of the watershed.

OUR VISION:

A balanced ecosystem that supports a healthy watershed which provides for an economic base and viable watershed communities.

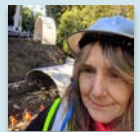
OUR WATERSHED

The Upper Nehalem watershed spans four counties and covers approximately 535 square miles of premier salmon rearing habitat.

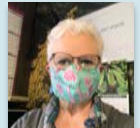


OUR PEOPLE

Maggie Peyton
Executive Director



Susan Spicer-Pond
Office Manager



Jeff Walton
Board Chair



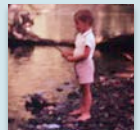
Sye Laird
Board Vice-Chair



Jim Crawford
Treasurer



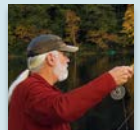
Wade Bullier
Board Member



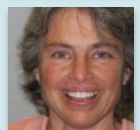
Brenda Lisle
Board Member



Rick Osborne
Board Member



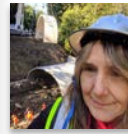
Susan Schmidlin
Board Member



Upper Nehalem Watershed Council
Summary Balance Sheet
 As of December 20, 2020

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	25,187.23
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	5,092.71
Grants Receivable	307,349.33
Total Accounts Receivable	312,442.04
Other Current Assets	224.99
Total Current Assets	337,854.26
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>337,854.26</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Payroll Liabilities	2,261.04
Total Current Liabilities	2,261.04
Total Liabilities	2,261.04
Equity	
Retained Earnings	351,635.76
Net Income	-16,042.54
Total Equity	335,593.22
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>337,854.26</u>

DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS



This year has provided numerous opportunities for fresh air and sunshine, exploration, reflection, inspiration and creative community building, and innovation in the navigation of the local effects of a novel virus running wild on the world stage. In isolation we planted good seeds in rich soil with our bare hands and are tending the tender shoots full of promise for a sustainable vibrant future in the heart of the Nehalem watershed. Be well. Be encouraged. Be safe.

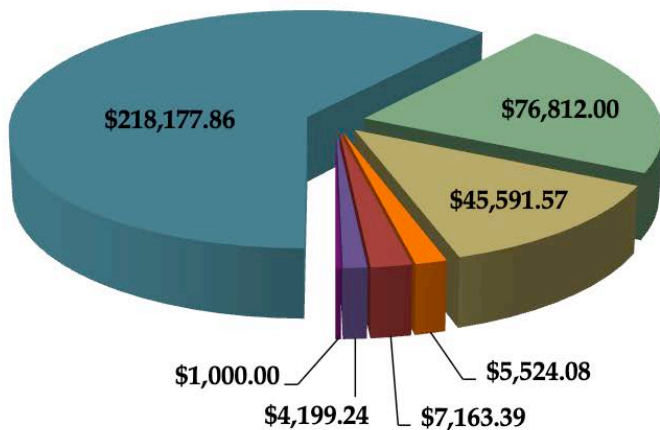
Maggie Peyton, Executive Director

THANK YOU to our Partners & Funders!

In addition to the funders listed at the left, we thank:

- Carmichael Family
- Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Fishhawk Lake Reserve and Community (FLRC)
 - Hauck Trust
 - Hayes Family
- Olympic Resource Management (ORM)
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)
 - Oregon State University College of Forestry - Blodgett Tract (OSU)
- Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD)
 - Pacific University
 - Trask Consulting, LLC
- Trask Construction and Design, LLC
 - US Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Vernonia School District
 - Weyerhaeuser
- Zucker Engineering, Inc.

FUNDS RECEIVED IN FY 20-21 (as of 12/20/2020)



- Wild Salmon Center (NOAA funds)
- Council Support (OWEB)
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Department of Environmental Quality
- Bureau of Land Management
- Public Contributions

BEAVER DAM ANALOGUES (BDA)

The Beaver Dam Analogue Pilot Project, which began in 2018, addresses the loss of legacy beaver habitat that at one time provided exceptional Oregon Coast Coho salmon rearing potential, by placing “fake” beaver dam structures in streams to entice beaver to return to their historic building sites.

In terms of anchor habitat improvement, BDA structures are cost effective by encouraging the work of a keystone species, beaver, and their irrefutable ability to create a cascade of events that benefit the stream ecology.

The general project goals, outlined by the UNWC and Trask Consulting, LLC are:

- Increase instream habitat complexity for salmonids spawning/rearing.
- Reconnect floodplains to provide access to

off-channel winter/summer habitat.

- Improve hyporheic connectivity to sustain cooler summer flows.

The initial installation in 2018 included 27 BDAs along four stream reaches with an additional 30 structures installed in 2019. The 2020 monitoring report found 15 out of 57 BDA sites were colonized by beaver with an additional 30 natural beaver dams constructed between the BDAs. This has added over 30,000 square feet of pool surface area and greatly increased the Coho salmon rearing potential.

In 2021, eight more BDAs are slated to be installed along the south fork of Rock Creek, which will complete this pilot project. Meanwhile, the 2020 annual report to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is in progress and we are excited to continue encouraging the beaver.

LARGE WOODY DEBRIS (LWD)

This anchor habitat improvement project focuses on reviving vital stream dynamics by placing large wood structures in the stream. This mimics what would naturally occur to streams running through mature forests and provides gravel retention, floodplain connectivity, and habitat complexity.

62 LDW structures were installed along approximately 5.9 miles along three different priority stream reaches (Lousignont/Deer/Fishhawk). These reaches are known to host Coho, Summer Chinook, Winter Steelhead, Cutthroat Trout and Brook and Pacific Lamprey.

LWD project goals are the same as the BDA: increasing instream habitat complexity, reconnecting floodplains for off-channel winter/summer habitat, and improving hyporheic connectivity that sustains cooler summer flows.

This year Maggie and ODFW Restoration Biologist Troy Laws ventured out to see how the LWDs fared and saw the log jams settled into the stream dynamic, performing admirably. The final report to NOAA is underway.

HYLA WOODS RESTORATION

The Hyla Woods project utilized LWDs and riparian planting to improve and rebuild complex native Coho habitat and encourage the beaver within Lousignont Creek.

The site is valuable as Lousignont provides essential



spawning, rearing, and refuge habitat to salmonids and Hyla Woods is a showcase for sustainable forestry practices.

Riparian planting was completed this year and the completion report is in progress.

ODA SIA RIPARIAN RESTORATION

In 2015, and in cooperation with landowners Johnson and Armstrong, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) designated a Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) in the Mist and Birkenfeld areas. This includes Fishhawk Creek, Lundgren Creek and an extended portion of the Nehalem mainstem.

Two sites selected for riparian restoration due to summer temperature water quality issues have now been completely planted and the final report to OWEB and ODA is in progress.

Special thanks to the Columbia River Youth Corps for their work on this and many other riparian planting projects.

SHADE OUR STREAMS

This program came to us from the Clackamas River Basin Council (CRBC), which successfully planted native plants along over 30 miles of streams and six years. They graciously gave the UNWC permission to use all its branded content for the program and adjust it to our needs.

This newest adaptation to riparian planting, launched in November, seeks to



bring the native plant stock, knowledge, and resources to landowners in the Upper Nehalem watershed to successfully implement their restoration projects. We hope to expand this program over the coming years and see many more trees reach the "Free To Grow" stage, when they begin shading the streams and cooling the Nehalem.

YOUNGER RIPARIAN RESTORATION

The Younger family owns 198 acres of farm and forest land in the Birkenfeld area of the Upper Nehalem Valley where portions of the mainstem Nehalem, Fishhawk Creek and Beaver Creek flow through the property. Once upon a time the floodplain and riparian areas were utilized to pasture dairy cows and were cleared of trees and vegetation. This allowed invasive plants like Reed Canary Grass and Japanese Knotweed to thrive.

Over the last six years the UNWC, in cooperation with the landowners, worked to improve riparian conditions by interplanting 8,000+ native plants and shrubs across 27 acres within the ODA SIA (mentioned above).

This year, the riparian restoration crew led by Mark Hall completed planting at the Younger site.

VOLUNTEER Highlight

Volunteers played a key role in watershed work this year. From community members joining us at three SOLVE planting and tree give-away events to Forestry Class students working in the nursery, volunteers filled vital roles. For sticking with us in this challenging year, we thank:

- Columbia River Youth Corps
- Community volunteers
- Landowners
- SOLVE volunteers
- Vernonia Forestry Class and Students



FISHHAWK LAKE FISHLADDER

Constructed in 1969 and managed by Fishhawk Lake Reserve and Community (FLRC), the 52 year old fish ladder at Fishhawk Lake does not meet current fish passage standards and effectively blocks juvenile Coho Salmon and Pacific Lamprey from 34.4 miles of upstream habitat.

This year, the UNWC and Fishhawk partners requested financial support from BLM, ODFW, ORWD, OWEB, and the Weyerhaeuser Foundation

for the construction of a new fish ladder which is parallel to and designed in coordination with a new spillway.

Funds are secured from ODFW and Weyerhaeuser Foundation, OWEB did not fund, and we await details from ORWD and BLM. We will continue to pursue funding options and are hopeful that the project will break ground in 2021.

GALASSI WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

The Galassi Wetland Enhancement project aims to convert pasture back to semi forested wetland in Mist along the Nehalem over five years. We are hopeful that a grant agreement will be signed between Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) and UNWC in December or January. The easement agreement between NRCS and landowner still needs to be finalized, but qualified contractor BioHabitats is waiting to get started in the early spring.

NEHALEM NATIVE NURSERY

In response to COVID-19, the Nehalem Native Nursery tried something new: growing vegetable starts for the community to fill gardens in a manner reminiscent of the Victory Gardens grown during WWII. With help from the Rachel Organ and the Community Garden volunteers many plants found homes in Vernonia gardens.

Most of our healthy tree stock has been planted at project sites by our hard working crew led by Mark Hall rather than go to waste from lack of staff and funding.



Sebastian Heselton, a Vernonia High School

student, is enrolled in WorkSource program for 120 hours of employment in our nursery and is doing an excellent job organizing, cleaning, and preparing the greenhouse and outdoor nursery for spring planting.

We were excited to announce that the BLM Resource Advisory Committee Title II grant, awarded in December, will fund the ongoing operation of the nursery and local riparian projects.

We recently requested surplus seedlings from the BLM. If granted, they would restock the nursery to provide to interested landowners this winter.

TWEEDLE CREEK MEANDER

The Tweedle Creek wetland reconnection proposes to realign the lower 1,280 ft of Tweedle Creek into a historic toe slope channel that would add 4,800 ft of low gradient stream channel. This would increase the availability of low velocity off-channel winter habitat and cool summer refuge for Oregon Coast Coho.

Implementation includes plugging the existing channel and excavating a new channel that "re-links" it with the wetland.

In cooperation with the landowner and advisors we are seeking cost share to match awarded NOAA funds; the permits have been submitted and are under review and the Cultural Resource Survey is complete.

NEHALEM STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The Nehalem Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) aims to advance federal and state Oregon Coast Coho Salmon conservation efforts by identifying the specific locations where habitat protection and restoration will have the greatest benefit to watershed function and Coho production.

The development process for the NSAP began in 2015 when partners working to restore the Nehalem basin convened to:

- Determine specific locations where protection and restoration strategies should be targeted to promote watershed function and increase habitat productivity over the long term, and
- Coordinate project implementation and leverage funding.

Through implementation of the NSAP, local

partners hope to achieve two long term outcomes:

- Protect and restore summer, winter, and incubation habitats sufficient to produce a detectable change in Coho productivity, and
- Protect and restore watershed processes to ensure sufficient habitat diversity for the expression of multiple life history strategies in Nehalem Coho.

As of this writing, a Memorandum of Understanding for the Nehalem Basin Partnership is being drafted with the support of the Lower Nehalem Watershed Council and OWEB and will include implementation of anchor habitat and fish passage improvement projects identified in the NSAP watershed analysis field reconnaissance process.

The NSAP document is nearing the final draft stage and we can't wait to share it with our stakeholders and partners.

SPECIAL THANKS

We thank the Wild Salmon Center and Trask Consulting, LLC for their wide-ranging and dedicated support through multiple initiatives. We are able to advance our mission because their support facilitated state of the art watershed analysis that wrought restoration work that stands the test of time and feeds measurable ecological uplift.

FOCUSED INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program, created and offered by OWEB, invests in conservation approaches that strategizes restoration actions among partners and measures ecological outcomes. It encourages local partners to collaborate, plan, prioritize, implement and monitor projects around a common purpose and monitoring framework.

A FIP initiative is an OWEB investment that:

- Addresses a board-identified Focused Investment priority of significance to the state,
- Achieves clear and measureable ecological outcomes,
- Uses integrated, results-oriented approaches as identified through a strategic action plan,
- Is implemented by a high-performing

partnership with a formal decision-making process.

In late 2019 the UNWC decided to apply for a FIP to fund and implement the goals of the NSAP which was developed with a vision of healthy ecological, economic, and social conditions in the Nehalem Basin to ensure a sustainable future for native Coho Salmon.

All this year Maggie has been working hard on the FIP application. She and Zac Mallon, the Lower Nehalem Watershed Council Executive Director, with support from Renee Coxen of the ODFW Coastal Coho Conservation, have been working to further the application and mission.

The Nehalem Basin Partnership MOU and the NSAP (mentioned above) are key components of the FIP application, the deadline for which is tentatively set for June 2021.

SNAPSHOTS



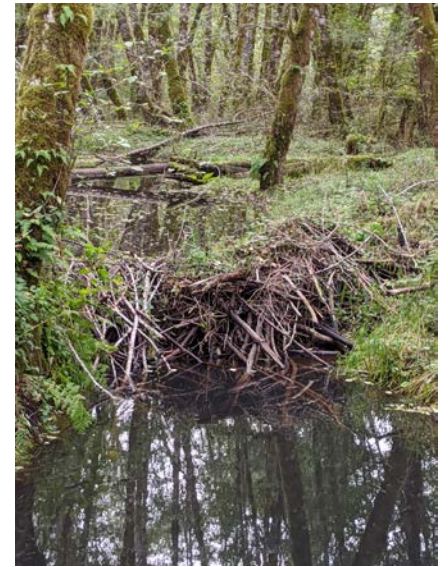
Troy Laws inspecting BDAs and LWDs



Beaver Dam Analogue in upper Rock Creek



Maggie masked up at the Nehalem Native Nursery



Beaver dam on Deer Creek between log jams



Sunshine and rainbows



Galassi Wetland Enhancement project area



Volunteers at the October SOLVE tree planting event



Mark Hall with volunteers at the October SOLVE tree planting event

Contact the UNWC

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Vernonia, OR 97064

(503) 429-0869

Maggie@nehalem.org

unwc.nehalem.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

January Board Meeting

Thursday, January 28th
5:30 - 7:30 pm via Zoom

February Board Meeting

Thursday, February 25th
5:30 - 7:30 pm via Zoom

March Board Meeting

Thursday, March 25th
5:30 - 7:30 pm via Zoom

