

# Upper Nehalem Watershed Council

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024

## 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 WATERSHED:

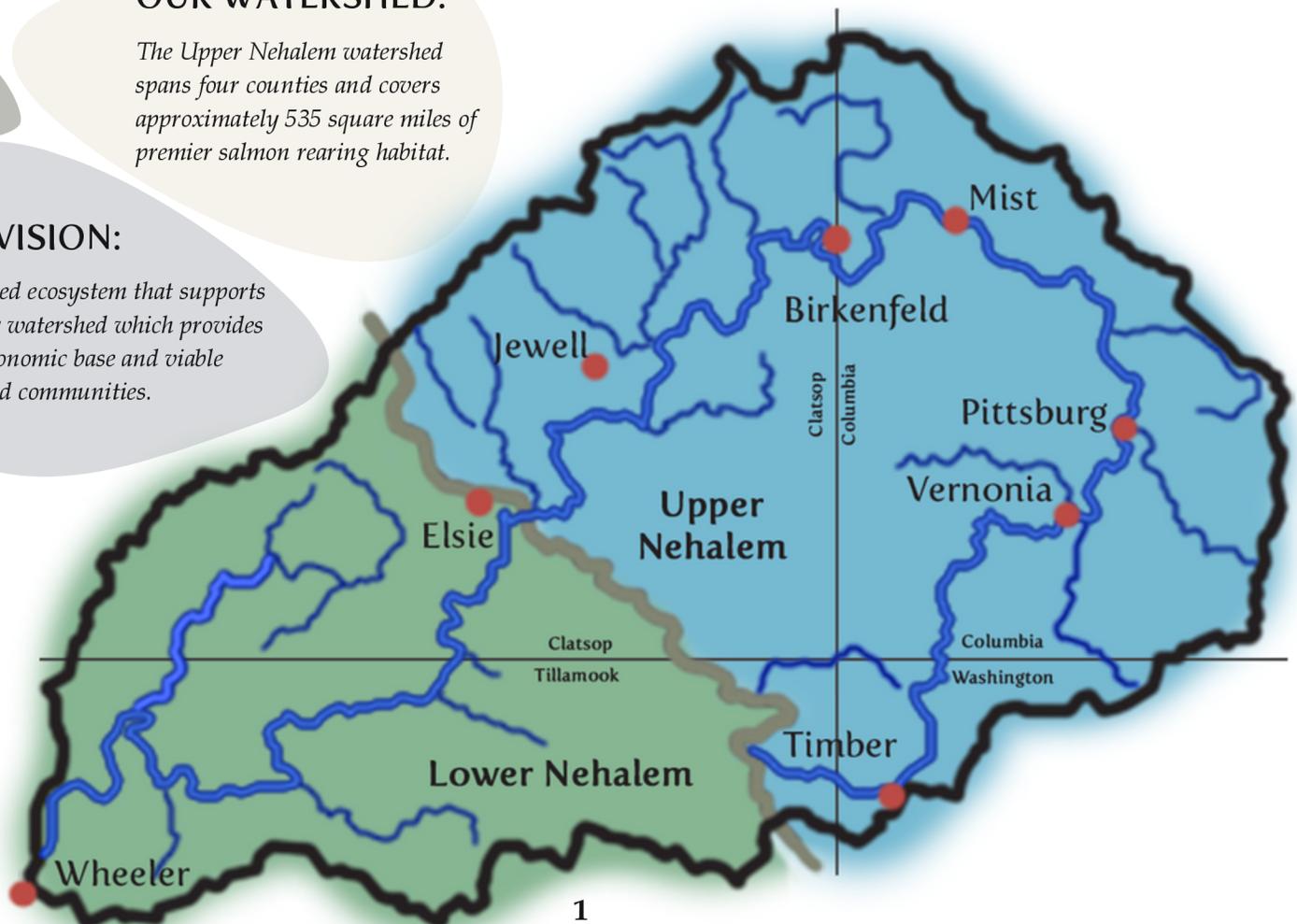
*The Upper Nehalem watershed spans four counties and covers approximately 535 square miles of premier salmon rearing habitat.*

## OUR VISION:

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

**F**ounded in 1996 to help maintain the health of the waterways and wildlife in the Upper Nehalem Valley, the UNWC works with stakeholders, community members, and other organizations 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.

Nestled in the northwest corner of Oregon, the Nehalem watershed nurtures a vibrant aquatic ecosystem that includes coastal Coho salmon, winter steelhead, summer Chinook salmon, brook lamprey, and Cutthroat trout, to name a few. Through restoration and enhancement of critical stronghold habitats, the UNWC and its partners work to ensure these species and others will survive for future generations.



OUR STAFF

**Maggie Peyton**  
*Executive Director*



**Susan Spicer Pond**  
*Fiscal Administrator*



**Mark Hall**  
*Reforestation Crew Leader*



**Sebastian Heselton**  
*Reforestation Crew*



OUR BOARD

**Spencer Kroll**  
*Board Chair*



**Eric DeWitt**  
*Treasurer*



**Diane Turner Maller**  
*Secretary*



**Thomas Dee III**  
*Member-at-Large*



**Charise Ash**  
*Member-at-Large*



The world of the Nehalem watershed continues to be a fascinating and productive place to live, work, worship and play. I am entering my 30th year of commitment to the formation and ongoing administration of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council organization. I am looking into the future for citizens to emerge who will continue the prosperous relationship within this unique landscape and vibrant community as I transition into the fabled golden years over the next 3 years.

As for the UNWC tree of life I believe we have grown our roots deep and wide to provide nutrients for a wide array of stakeholders to blossom, bear good fruit and produce viable seeds for future generations of resilient watershed warriors. I am confident in saying, "We are well on our way to saving native species from extinction." We must keep up the pace and scale of the restoration work we are engaging in as we build ever stronger bonds with our network of concerned citizens locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Together we have successfully navigated the high flows and lows flows and built viable habitat for civil society to form and prosper in our midst. This is our gift to future generations who will rise to meet a new day filled with challenges and the blessings of a job well done.

Maggie Peyton  
Executive Director

## OUR COMMITMENT

UNWC is committed to continuing to learn from and honor the Tribes, especially when it comes to stewardship of the Nehalem watershed. The sovereignty, well-being, cultures, and languages of Indigenous peoples are born of their homelands and that makes these lands and waters cherished to Native communities. All of us have a responsibility to treat the lands and waters with respect and care so they can be stewarded for the future generations. This is a living statement, meant to grow and evolve as our understanding grows and evolves.

We recognize the Indigenous People and Tribes that persist today and honor their resilient spirit as they continue to preserve their cultures, spiritual practices, and languages for themselves and their children.

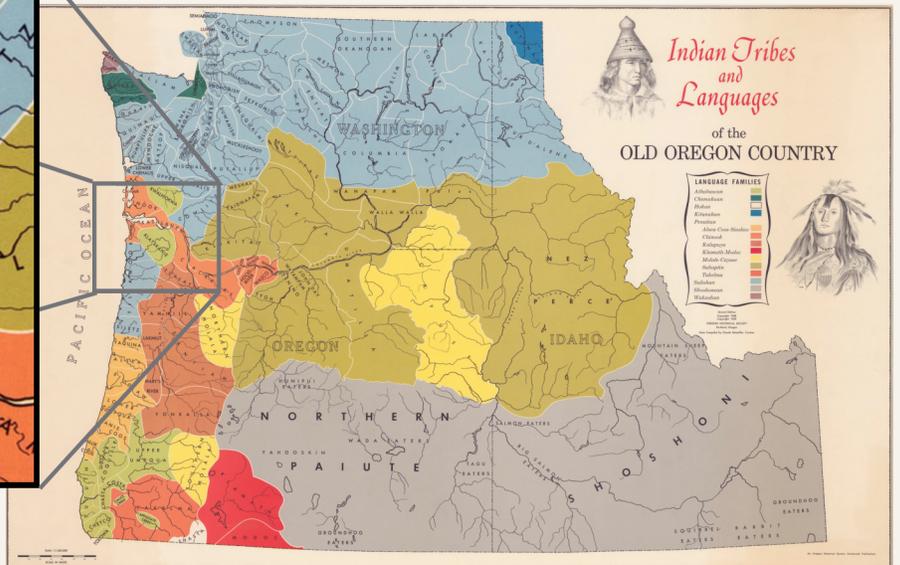
## WHO LIVED IN THE NEHALEM BASIN?

The Nehalem Basin was home to many Indigenous peoples dating back 11,000 years including Chinook, Clatskanie, Clatsop, Cowlitz, Grand Ronde, Nehalem, Salish, Siletz & Tillamook.



The Clatskanie, who spoke Athapaskan and were related to the Kwalhioqua in SW Washington, inhabited the eastern portion of the Nehalem basin. They lived south of the Columbia River near the Klaskanine and Clatskanie Rivers and fished with spears, weirs, and traps. They constructed short-nose canoes. There is no record of what they called themselves, known only now by versions of their Chinookan names including "itáckani" meaning "those of the region of small oaks." In 1780, a rough estimation of their population was 1,600, but by 1851 only 13 individuals remained. Historic accounts tell how those who remained were removed and taken to the Grand Ronde Reservation. It is unknown if any Clatskanie survived, but they did marry into other Tribes, including the Chinook, so their genetic legacy may yet live on.

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*Indian Tribes and Languages Map, Oregon Historical Society, Copyright 1959*

**LEARN MORE** For more tribal information and history, check out these sources:

- [Chinooknation.org](http://Chinooknation.org) - Chinook Indian Nation
- [Clatsop-Nehalem.com](http://Clatsop-Nehalem.com) - Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes
- [Cowlitz.org](http://Cowlitz.org) - Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- [Grandronde.org](http://Grandronde.org) - The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
- [Ctsi.nsn.us](http://Ctsi.nsn.us) - Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
- [Native-land.ca](http://Native-land.ca) - Native Land Digital - map project



*Obsidian spear point found in Vernonia on Rock Creek in 2016*

2024  
FINANCIALS

Every year comes with its own challenges and rewards. By the end of 2024, UNWC had completed 3 projects with 10 still underway and three additional grants pending.

Most of our core operations funding comes from our OWEB Council Capacity grant and the balance comes from the “indirect” line item from our various grants. Usually this is 10% of the direct costs needed to complete the project. Indirect funds are used to help cover the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant but are necessary for the general operation of the organization. The “direct” costs portion of a grant are used for whatever is needed to physically complete the project. Generally, this also

includes funds for personnel, crew, and travel costs that relate to the project. Having our own crew this year to work in the nursery and on-site on the various projects has helped to lower our project costs since we haven’t had to hire expensive contractors. Additionally, we have been able to sell native trees and native plants, grown in our own nursery, for use on the projects, further reducing our costs.

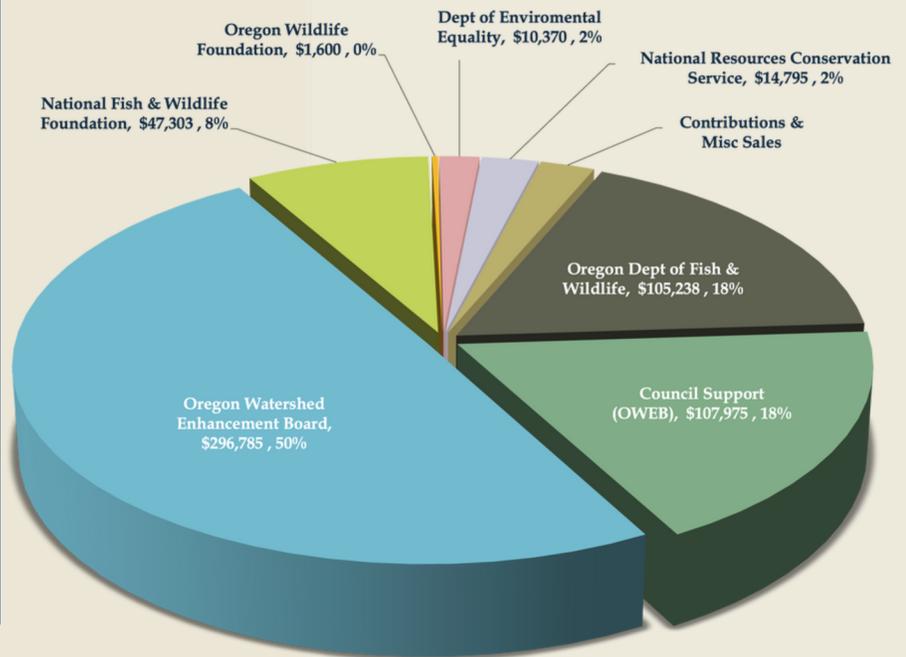
Once again, we were able to finish the year under budget due to careful cash flow management. Some of our challenges for next year will be to continue to sustain and enhance our Nehalem Native Nursery, develop new projects, and obtain funding for them.

*Susan Spicer Pond*  
Fiscal Administrator

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council  
Summary Balance Sheet  
As of December 31, 2024

	Dec 31, 24
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	42,706.39
Total Current Assets	42,706.39
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>42,706.39</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	6,434.99
Total Current Liabilities	6,434.99
Total Liabilities	6,434.99
Equity	36,271.40
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>42,706.39</b>

FUNDS RECEIVED IN 2024  
(01/01/2024 - 12/31/2024)



- Oregon Dept of Fish & Wildlife
- Council Support (OWEB)
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Oregon Wildlife Foundation
- Dept of Environmental Equality
- National Resources Conservation Service
- Contributions & Misc Sales

Throughout the years the UNWC has developed many vital relationships that enrich and sustain all aspects of the organization, from daily administrative tasks to deep project development. These funders, partners, and supporters not only make the work possible, but also elevate it, and for that we are sincerely grateful. Thank you.

### AGENCIES

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Clatsop County
- Columbia County
- National Oceanic Atmospheric Admin. (NOAA)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
- Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)
- Oregon Division of State Lands (DSL)
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFW)

### ORGANIZATIONS

- Clatsop Soil & Water Conservation Dist. (SWCD)
- Columbia Soil & Water Conservation Dist. (SWCD)
- Lower Nehalem Community Trust (LNCT)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- Necanicum Watershed Council (NWC)
- Nehalem Bay Watershed Council (NBWC)
- Nestucca, Neskowin & Sand Lake Watersheds Council (NNSLWC)
- North Coast Watershed Association (NCWA)
- Northern OR Restoration Partnership (NORP)
- One Tree Planted
- Oregon Wildlife Foundation (OWF)
- Samuel S. Johnson Foundation
- Tillamook Estuaries Partnership (TEP)
- Vernonia Grange #305
- Vernonia School District (VSD)
- Wild Salmon Center (WSC)

### CONTRACTORS

- Aiuto Designs
- Ash Creek Forest Management, LLC
- BioHabitats
- Bio-Surveys, LLC
- "Carvin" Marvin Howard
- Dougall Conrادية, LLC
- Drift Awake
- Tim Enyart
- True Value Hardware - Vernonia
- Lower Columbia Engineering
- Portland Community College (PCC) - Sylvania Campus Geography Department
- Rob Walton Consulting
- Simply Delicious
- Swanson Bark
- Vernonia Hardware

### LANDOWNERS

- Armstrong Family
- Berg Family
- Carmichael Family
- City of Vernonia
- Fishhawk Lake Reserve & Community (FLRC)
- Galassi Family
- Hayes Family/Hyla Woods
- Johnson Family
- Justice Family
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) - Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area
- Oregon State University - Blodgett Tract (OSU)
- Schmidlin Family
- Semerjian Family
- TTG Forestry Services
- Weller Family
- Weyerhaeuser
- Younger Family

### ACRONYM DEFINITIONS *Acronyms are everywhere in watershed work; even we need have reminders! Some definitions:*

- BDA - Beaver Dam Analogue: A human-made structure designed to encourage beaver activity in a given area.
- FIP - Focused Investment Partnership: A multi-million dollar funding opportunity offered by OWEB for targeted habitats.
- LWD - Large Woody Debris: Large trees, often with root-wads intact, placed in-stream to increase habitat complexity.
- MOU - Memorandum of Understanding: A document signed by partners, specifying details of a shared plan.
- NBP - Nehalem Basin Partnership: A group of organizations working together for the implementation of the NSAP.
- NSAP - Nehalem Strategic Action Plan: A document advancing the Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan in the Nehalem Basin.

## NEHALEM BASIN PARTNERSHIP (NBP)

**DESCRIPTION:** *The Nehalem Basin Partnership, funded in 2021 for a 3-year collaboration, continues to implement the Nehalem Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) to improve Coho Salmon habitat. Visit [nehalembasinpartnership.com](http://nehalembasinpartnership.com).*

**PARTNERS:** *BLM, Clatsop SWCD, Columbia SWCD, DEQ, Giustinia Land Management, Hyla Woods, LNCT, NBWC, North Coast Land Conservancy, ODF, ODFW, Stimson, Tillamook County County Creamery Association, TEP, Tillamook SWCD, Trout Unlimited, UNWC, USFW, Weyerhaeuser*

**FUNDERS/AMOUNTS:** *OWEB - \$149,512*

**TIMEFRAME:** *Ongoing*

CAPACITY



To expand restoration efforts, the NBP submitted the following funding proposals:

- OWEB's Technical Assistance Grant - Nehalem Landowner Engagement Initiative, which seeks funding for targeted outreach to landowners for riparian reforestation and salmon habitat improvement.
- Network for Landscape Conservation - Nehalem Landowner Engagement Initiative
- NFWF Coastal Resilience Grant - Nehalem Landowner Engagement Initiative
  - Invited NBP to submit a full proposal for funding for one biennium of implementation of the FIP work plan focused on large wood and riparian plantings.
- Oregon Wildlife Foundation -
  - Clear Creek Fish Passage
  - Upper Nehalem Riparian Restoration
- Private Forest Accord
  - Clear Creek Anchor Habitat Restoration

The Portland Community College GIS interns continue to help complete projects through funding from the National Science Foundation.

Maggie began work with ODFW Commissioner Dr. Leslie King and Corrie Aiuto of Aiuto Designs to produce a presentation discussing environmental justice in the Nehalem Basin to be featured at the February 2025 quarterly meeting.

The NBP team diligently continued working in 2024, developing plans and projects that will further the implementation of the NSAP.

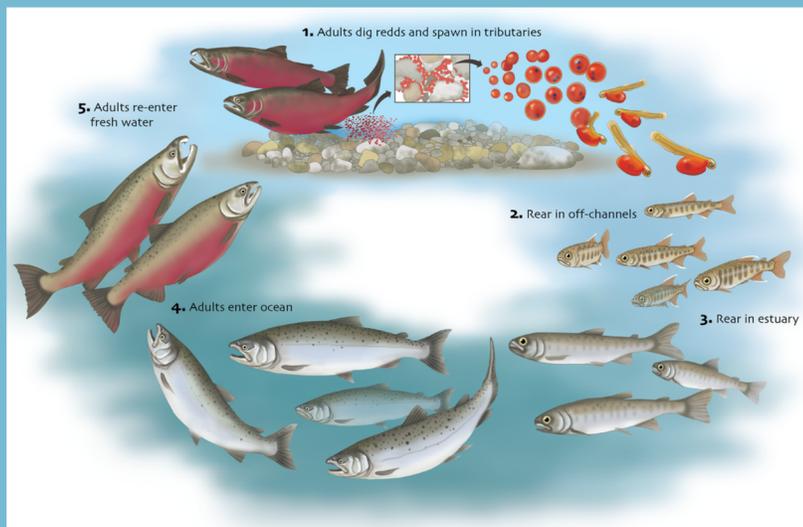
The core team continued weekly meetings, including the UNWC's Maggie Peyton, Zac Mallon of the NBWC, and facilitator Rob Walton, the quarterly meetings for the full partnership were held in February, May and August 2024.

The FIP application, prepared and submitted to OWEB in October 2023, was not funded, but made it to the final round of selections. See page 7 for full details.

## COHO SALMON

Coho have a unique life cycle among Pacific Salmon that makes them an excellent indicator of watershed health. Adult Coho return from the ocean to the Nehalem River each fall, spawning in the basin's low-gradient tributaries. The resulting offspring emerge from the gravel the following spring, then – unlike other Pacific Salmon – most spend a full year in freshwater before migrating to the ocean. This extended freshwater residency requires a watershed that is functioning sufficiently to maintain a variety of habitat types throughout the year, especially “off-channel” areas such as beaver ponds, oxbows, and side channels.

*-Nehalem Strategic Action Plan, 1.2 “Why Coho?”*



## FOCUSED INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (FIP)

*DESCRIPTION: (From the Oregon.gov FIP overview)  
A Focused Investment Partnership is an OWEB investment that:  
1) Addresses a board-identified Focused Investment Priority of significance to the state; 2) Achieves clear and measurable ecological outcomes; 3) Uses integrated, results-oriented approaches as identified through a strategic action plan; 4) Is implemented by a high-performing partnership.*

*Implementation funding supports partnerships with up to \$12 million over 3 biennia (6 years). Initiatives must demonstrate clear and measurable restoration outputs and ecological outcomes that support limiting factors outlined in a federal recovery and/or state conservation plan(s).*

*PARTNERS: Columbia SWCD, Giustina Timber, LNCT, NBWC, ODE, ODFW, TEP, Tillamook County Creamery, UNWC, Weyerhaeuser*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: OWEB - Requested \$10.6 million*

*TIMEFRAME: 6 years*

CAPACITY



In October 2023, the NBP submitted a FIP application to OWEB that falls under the “Coho Habitat Populations along the Oregon Coast” Priority Habitats for FIP funding. The review and selection process ended in March 2024, and while the partnership’s application made it to the final round of potential recipients, it was ultimately ranked 5 out of 5.

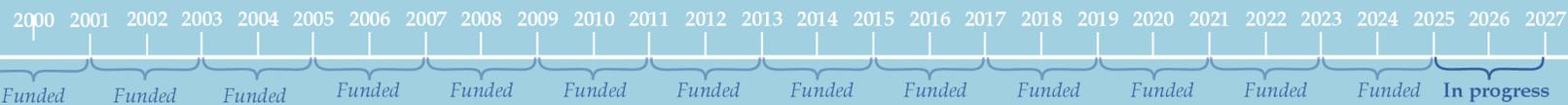
While not awarded for this funding cycle, the application received feedback from the OWEB FIP team that provides a path forward. Feedback included the necessity that the partnership successfully develop and implement projects together to provide evidence of efficient and effective teamwork.

The partnership reviewed all feedback from OWEB and is already planning which projects outlined in the FIP application should be pursued first to build that track record of successful project implementation.

Ash Creek Forest Management, LLC will assist with grant writing and after bolstering the NBP’s reputation of success the team will reapply for the 2026 grant cycle.

## OWEB COUNCIL CAPACITY

*The UNWC has received Council Capacity support for 28 years, beginning in 1997.  
The funding provides vital operational stability for many Oregon watershed councils.*



*DESCRIPTION: OWEB’s Council Capacity grant funds part of the UNWC’s day-to-day operations, board support, community outreach, and project development.*

*PARTNERS: Stakeholders, UNWC Board of Directors, Vernonia School District, Volunteers*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: OWEB - \$131,465*

*TIMEFRAME: 2023-2025 Biennium*

CAPACITY



As the 2023-2025 biennium comes to a close, the UNWC prepares to submit all necessary completion reports and the Council Capacity application for the 2026-2028 biennium grant cycle.

OWEB’s Council Capacity grant is designed to assist Oregon’s watershed councils with operational funding. Councils must demonstrate effective governance and management, project planning and implementation, and stakeholder engagement to be eligible for Council Capacity support. Funds are awarded in two-year cycles.

# NORTH COAST BASIN COLLABORATION – LOG SALVAGE

*DESCRIPTION: This collaboration was originally funded by an OWEB grant through the NBWC and intends to elevate partnerships among watershed councils in the North Coast Basin.*

*PARTNERS: NBWC, NCWC, NNSLWC, NWC, TEP, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: TBD*

*TIMEFRAME: Ongoing*

CAPACITY



Forging on beyond the initial OWEB grant funding, this collaboration continues to work together to build plans, systems, and networks that enhance and increase the efficiency of partners and their projects.

One such plan under development is for log salvage in the North Coast Basin. Log salvage programs streamline wood acquisition by organizing resource and contact information, identifying roles and responsibilities, developing MOUs and necessary documents, and finding appropriate storage for the wood once found.

Once completed, this log salvage plan will benefit all partners with large wood placement projects.

## CHALLENGE GIFT CAMPAIGN

We are excited to announce a special opportunity to amplify your support for the UNWC with our upcoming Challenge Gift Campaign!

The Oregon Wildlife Foundation has pledged a \$15,000 grant to fund riparian reforestation in the Upper Nehalem, IF we can secure an additional \$15,000 in matching funds.

Please donate today and help us reach our goal!

## WAYS TO DONATE

Make your check payable to:

**Upper Nehalem Watershed Council**  
**Memo line: "OWF Match"**

Mail to:

**1201 Texas Avenue, Suite A**  
**Vernonia, OR 97064**

Scan the QR code:



# NORTH COAST WATERSHED COUNCILS RESTORATION ASSISTANCE

*DESCRIPTION: A technical assistance grant awarded to NNSLWC to hire a professional grant writer to assist with capacity building efforts for multiple watershed councils.*

*PARTNERS: NBWC, NCWA, NNSLWC, NWC, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: OWEB - \$73,240*

*TIMEFRAME: 2021 - 2024*

CAPACITY



In 2023, the Nestucca, Neskowin & Sand Lake Watersheds Council hired a new grant writer. Ken Bierly, a private consultant and former OWEB Deputy Director will continue writing grants on behalf of the North Coast Basin Collaboration to increase project implementation capacity.

In 2024, Melissa Rowe of Ash Creek Forest Management LLC was contracted to assist with the next FIP application for the NBP and assisted with the Watershed Health and Coho Recovery Riparian Reforestation project grant.

## ROCK CREEK/BEAR CREEK IMPROVEMENT

*DESCRIPTION: A City of Vernonia sewer improvement project offered opportunities to remove fish passage barriers in Rock Creek and Bear Creek within city limits.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: City of Vernonia, ODFW, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: City of Vernonia, Community Development Block Grant via OR Business Development Dept., Infrastructure Finance Authority - \$3,700,000* **FISH PASSAGE**  
*OWEB - \$268,158*

*TIMEFRAME: Summer 2024*



In 2024 the City of Vernonia implemented a \$3.9 million Sewer Upgrade Project which included rerouting and replacing sewer pipes, installing a new overflow system, and building a new sewer pump station.

The City partnered with the UNWC and ODFW to ensure that amid the sewer improvements, two fish passage barriers in Rock Creek and Bear Creek were removed. Two educational signs will be installed near the project sites for visitors to learn about the improvements. See page 10 for a sign example.

### Bear Creek/Adams Avenue Stream Crossing Upgrade



*Before: Before improvement, the culvert under the Adams Avenue crossing of Bear Creek blocked passage of juvenile salmon.*

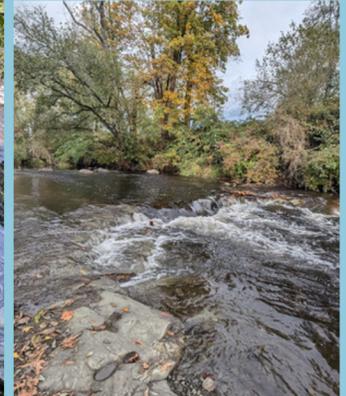


*After: The improved crossing sports an open-bottom design that allows salmon to freely pass upstream to critical spawning and rearing habitat.*

### Rock Creek Sewer Pipe Removal



*Before: Before improvement, a sewer pipe crossing Rock Creek created a small falls that blocked passage for juvenile Coho salmon.*



*After: Rock Creek now flows over a recreation of the natural gradient slope in the stream bed and allows passage for all life stages of salmon.*

## ROCK CREEK DEWEY POOL FISH PASSAGE

*DESCRIPTION: A City of Vernonia project focusing on fish passage improvement at the Dewey Pool, a community swimming pool created in the summer months by erecting a temporary dam in Rock Creek that blocks fish passage.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: City of Vernonia, ODFW, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: TBD*

*TIMEFRAME: Summer 2025 - Winter 2027*

**FISH PASSAGE**



The City of Vernonia is working to improve fish passage within Rock Creek at the temporary dam installed in the summer months for the Dewey community swimming pool. Rock Creek is critical migratory and spawning habitat for Fall and Spring Chinook, Coho, Coastal Cutthroat Trout, Winter Steelhead, Lamprey, and more.

The dam is a fish passage barrier from early June through September in a vital cool-water tributary to the Nehalem River. The proposed improvements aim to mitigate the barrier and provide suitable fish migration conditions while maintaining the pool functionality by creating a fish passage side channel that will be opened during the dam's operational months.

# SALMON LIVE HERE TOO...

...and are closer than you think! Every year anadromous fish such as Chinook and Coho salmon, Steelhead, Sea-run cutthroat and Pacific lamprey return to spawn in Rock Creek, Bear Creek, and other tributaries of the Nehalem River. Unless engineered to allow fish passage, city infrastructure can create barriers to salmon on their way to habitats critical for survival during different life stages. But infrastructure update projects offer an opportunity to remove barriers and improve passage for all species that return to freshwater streams.

## COHO SALMON LIFE CYCLE

**SPAWNERS** re-enter freshwater Oct-Jan and return to their natal stream as 3 year olds. They do not eat and their bodies transform as all energy is used to swim upstream and spawn. They die after spawning and their decomposing bodies deliver vital oceanic nutrients to upriver ecosystems.

**CHALLENGES:** Physical barriers such as dams, road crossings and low flows may impede spawners from reaching their destination and chemical barriers such as road runoff may cause pre-spawn mortality.

**EGGS** are laid from Nov-Jan, and require sediment-free gravel and cold, oxygen-rich water for survival. **CHALLENGES:** Gravel nests, or *redds*, can be washed away or eggs suffocated with sediment during peak flow seasons and flood events.

**ALEVINs** emerge from eggs after 1.5-3 months and stay in the gravel beds, absorbing the nutrient-rich egg sac, until they become fry.

**CHALLENGES:** Predators, excessive sediment, and swift currents are fatal to alevins.

**FRY/PARR** rear in slow-moving, cold pools and slow side channels that provide refuge from predators, excessive heat, and flood events.

**CHALLENGES:** Human land uses can cut off streams from the flood plain, reducing refuge habitat for juveniles. Excessive heat and low summer flows can force them to move to cooler side channels where they can become easy prey in disconnected pools.

**ADULTS** spend two summers in the ocean before returning to fresh water spawning habitats ("jacks" return after just 6 months).

**CHALLENGES:** The ocean holds many predators for salmon, including humans, and both food sources and water quality are impacted by warming oceans.

**SMOLTS** migrate to the ocean April-June after 12-18 months in freshwater and 1-4 weeks in estuary.

**CHALLENGES:** Outmigrating smolts face predators, a significant downstream journey, and physiological changes to a new saltwater environment.

## ROCK CREEK CONFLUENCE FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



**TOP:** Before improvement, the culvert under the Adams Avenue crossing of Bear Creek blocked passage of juvenile salmon.

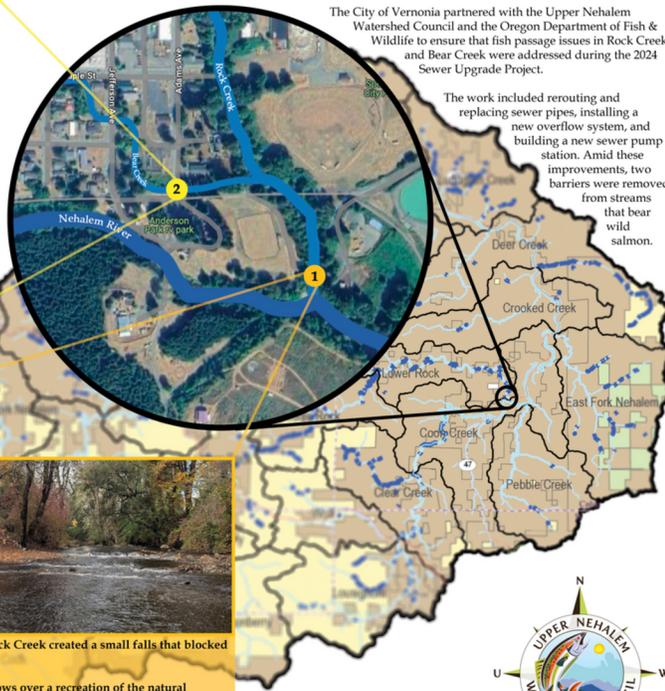
**BOTTOM:** Afterward, the improved crossing sports an open-bottom design that allows salmon to freely pass upstream to critical spawning and rearing habitat.



**LEFT:** Before improvement, a sewer pipe crossing Rock Creek created a small falls that blocked passage for juvenile Coho salmon.



**RIGHT:** After removing the pipe, Rock Creek now flows over a recreation of the natural gradient slope in the stream bed and allows passage for all life stages of salmon.



The City of Vernonia partnered with the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife to ensure that fish passage issues in Rock Creek and Bear Creek were addressed during the 2024 Sewer Upgrade Project.

The work included rerouting and replacing sewer pipes, installing a new overflow system, and building a new sewer pump station. Amid these improvements, two barriers were removed from streams that bear wild salmon.



### PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Partners:** City of Vernonia, Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife  
**Contractors:** Lower Columbia Engineering, Lyda Excavating, Inc.  
**Funders:** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Business Oregon Community Development Block Grant



This is an example of the educational signage explaining the Rock Creek and Bear Creek fish passage improvement project in Vernonia.

Look for them near Anderson Park, one at each creek!

# CLEAR CREEK LARGE WOOD & FISH PASSAGE RESTORATION

*DESCRIPTION: A project on Weyerhaeuser land to install 25 LWD structures, decommission a stream crossing, and replace three undersized culverts.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: ODFW, OWE, UNWC, Weyerhaeuser*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: ODFW - \$74,759, OWE - \$150,000, Weyerhaeuser*

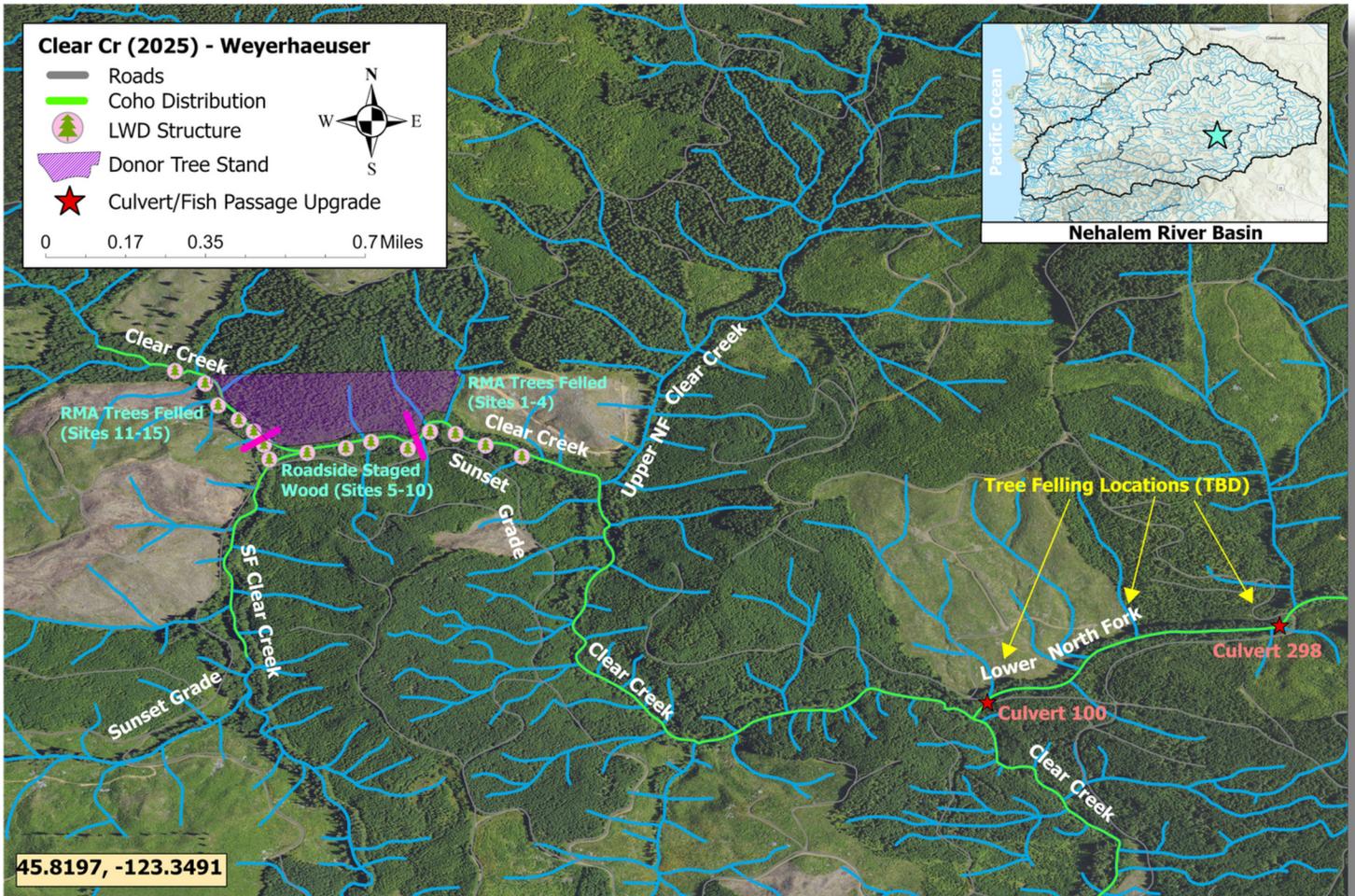
*TIMEFRAME: 2024 - 2025*

**FISH  
PASSAGE**



Starting in 2024, this project focuses on Clear Creek, a tributary to the Nehalem. The work involves replacing undersized culverts, decommissioning a road crossing, and removing infrastructure remaining in the stream channel. This will provide one mile of improved upstream access for coho and additional habitat access for coastal cutthroat trout and other species.

Additionally, 15 large wood structures will be installed along certain reaches; 15 in Clear Creek and 21 trees felled into the Lower North Fork to increase stream complexity and elevate these areas to ODFW standards for off-channel habitat.



Clear Creek project map 2025

## TWEEDLE CREEK CHANNEL MEANDER

*DESCRIPTION: The Tweedle Creek Channel Meander project relocated the creek into a low gradient stream and floodplain, which aims to increase off-channel habitat nearly fourfold.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: Carmichael Family, NFWF, NOAA, ODFW, OWF, UNWC, WSC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: DEQ, NFWF, NOAA, WSC - \$338,000*

*TIMEFRAME: 2019 - 2023*

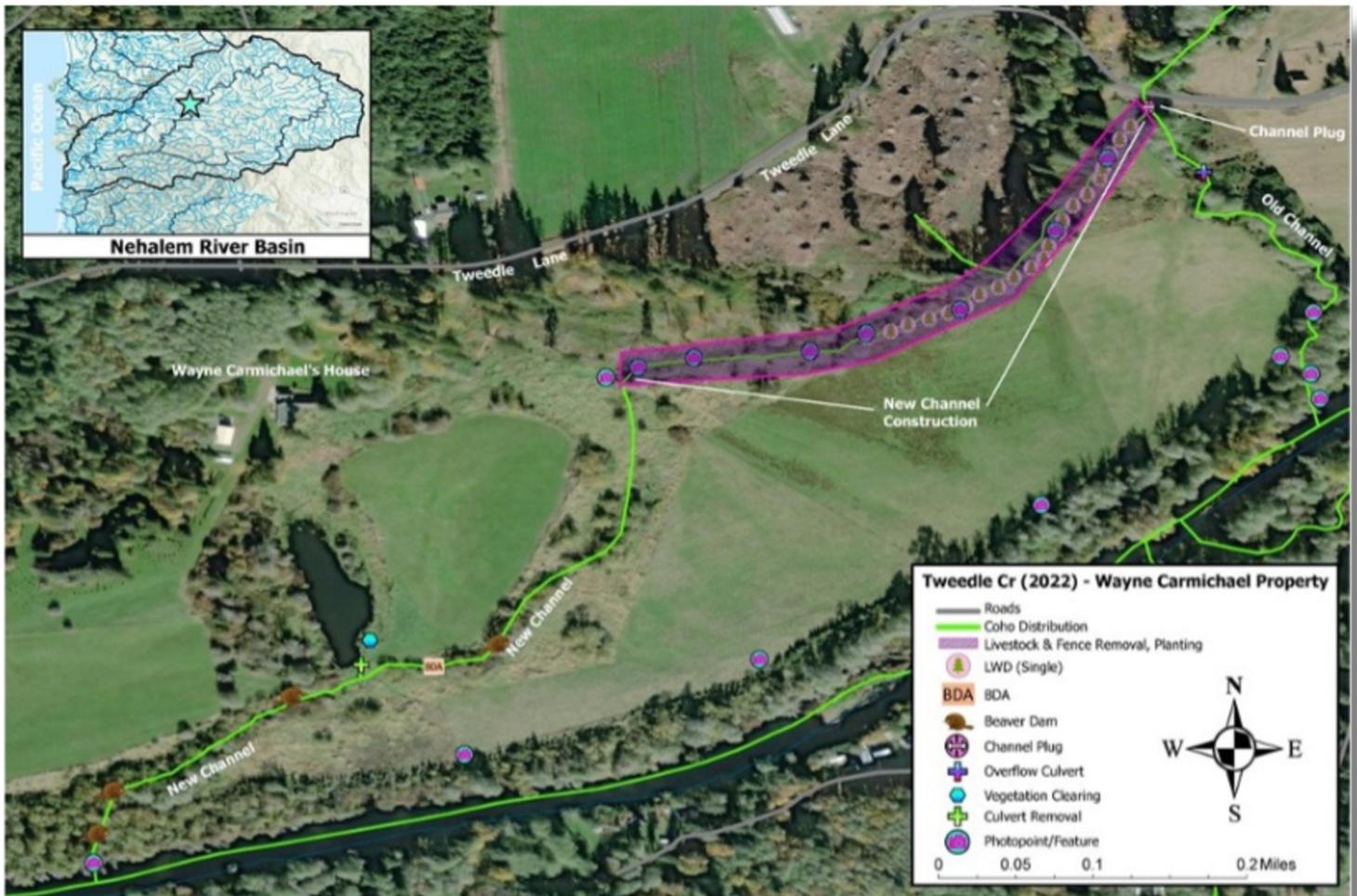
ANCHOR



Data gathered thus far shows that winter habitat in the area has greatly benefited from the project, creating ideal conditions for salmon. Spawners, smolts, and fry coho have all been seen in the reach. Temperature monitors at eight different sites so far indicate that temperatures, while cooler than the mainstem Nehalem, fluctuate and surface flows dry up in the summer. This means the reach does not yet deliver cold water to the Nehalem when it is most needed and fish can become trapped in disconnected pools. While this is a natural function of streams, the project review team will determine actions to mitigate risks to aquatic life during summer.

Beaver are active in the area and the native plantings of hardwoods are surviving with additional plantings ongoing. The UNWC Reforestation Crew planted many willows in 2024 that will grow quickly and assist in shading the creek.

The Tweedle Creek Meander Project was completed in 2022 and is now in the post-project monitoring phase which is slated for the next 10 years. Additional funding is needed for monitoring beyond 2024 and the UNWC is actively seeking grants for additional riparian planting and monitoring.



Tweedle Creek Meander Project Map

## GALASSI WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

*DESCRIPTION: The Galassi Project will convert 52.5 acres of farm land into wetland habitat through land contouring and reforestation along the main stem of the Nehalem near Mist.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: BioHabitats, Galassi family, NRCS, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: NRCS - \$375,000*

*TIMEFRAME: 2022- 2027*

RIPARIAN



The Galassi Wetland Enhancement project continues to towards converting farmland back to wetland. In 2024 the majority of the work involved applying herbicide and disking the fields to exhaust the seedbeds of invasive plant species, mostly reed canary grass, and prepare for the installation of native trees and shrubs.

The next phase of work will involve more invasive plant removal and moving earth to plug the drainage ditch which will, eventually, impound water and form micro-highs and lows to create wetland pools.

## JEWELL MEADOWS WILDLIFE AREA - HUMBUG TRACT

*DESCRIPTION: This is a straightforward riparian reforestation project in the pristine Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: DEQ, ODFW, OWEB, UNWC, Vernonia HS Forestry Class*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: DEQ - \$13,000  
OWEB small grants - \$15,000*

*TIMEFRAME: 2022 - 2025*

RIPARIAN



This riparian reforestation project at Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area along Humbug Creek, now completed, treated 6.2 acres with native species plantings. Funded by the DEQ 319 Non-Point Source Reduction program and the OWEB Small Grant program, the work included planting 2,200 conifer seedlings, planting 235 hardwoods and 235 mixed species, constructing 290 wooden wildlife browse protection structures, and treating a total of 4,447 feet (.82 miles) of Humbug Creek.

The goal is to both shade the creek, which helps reduce water temperatures that rise to lethal levels in the summer, and to stabilize eroding banks. It is estimated to take at least 15 years for effective shade to appear on the water.

Additional help from ODFW, by providing labor and equipment, and from the Vernonia High School Forestry Class, which volunteered labor, enabled the project to increase the number of plantings from 1,500 to 2,670 and protective structures from 244 to 290. A big thank you to all who helped with this effort!

*Top: Protected plantings along an eroding bank of Humbug Creek.  
Bottom: Protected plantings expand the riparian zone.*



## NEHALEM NATIVE NURSERY (NNN)

*DESCRIPTION: The Nehalem Native Nursery is the UNWC's beautiful, on-site facility for growing and housing native trees, plants, and vegetable starts and is a favorite of our volunteers.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: BLM, NORP, ODF, VSD & Forestry Class*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: BLM RAC - \$42,108*

*TIMEFRAME: Ongoing*

RIPARIAN



*Top: Facing east overlooking the nursery and greenhouse*

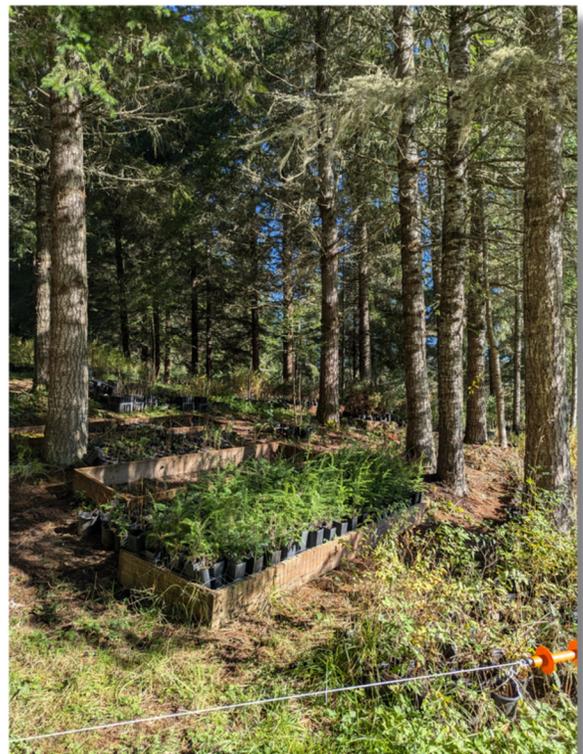
*Bottom: Nursery stock under shade and protected from elk and deer browse.*

The Nehalem Native Nursery continues to grow native plants and house tree donations that are eventually planted during one of many kinds of projects. Whether for volunteer tree planting events, projects solely focused on riparian reforestation, or for plantings that are a smaller part of an overall initiative, the nursery is an essential part of UNWC functions.

The NNN continues to produce the plants that are supplied to various projects at cost and covered by grant funds, which then pays for the ongoing maintenance of the nursery. This has proven to be an important part of sustaining salaries for the UNWC Reforestation Crew, led by Mark Hall, who diligently maintain the nursery and greenhouse and preform most of the plant installations during various projects.



*Native plants north of the greenhouse under shade and protected from elk and deer browse*



# NEHALEM WATERSHED HEALTH & COHO RECOVERY PROJECT

*DESCRIPTION: The Nehalem Watershed Health & Coho Recovery Project identifies three reaches for additional riparian restoration work and includes a door-to-door landowner engagement initiative.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: Ash Creek Forest Management, LLC, OWF, ODFW, Private rural residential and farm landowners, UNWC*

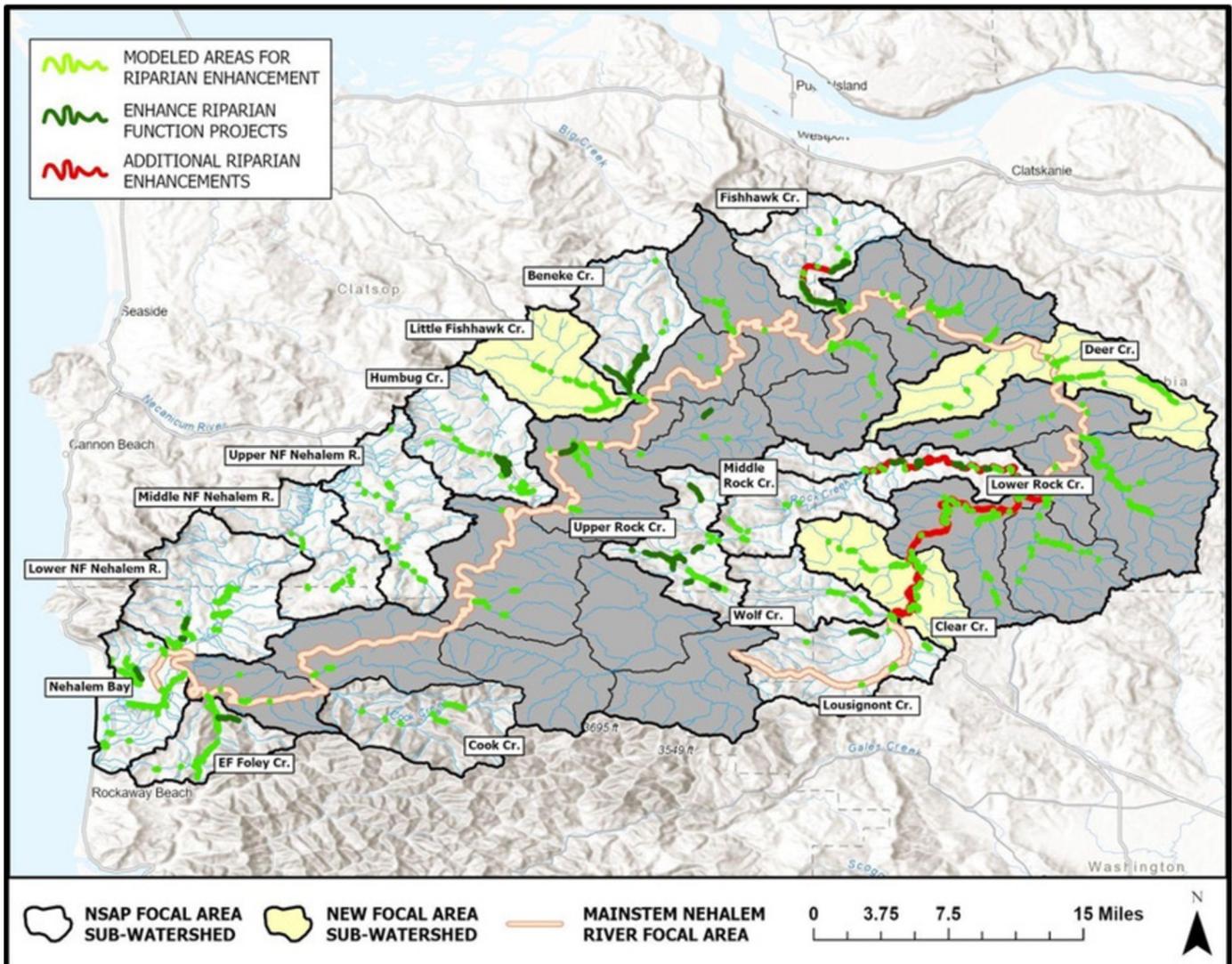
*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: OWF - \$188,120* **RIPARIAN**

*TIMEFRAME: 2025 - 2028*



In October 2024 the UNWC submitted a grant application to the Oregon Wildlife Foundation for focused riparian reforestation efforts in three identified high-priority reaches: the main stem Nehalem, Rock Creek, and Fishhawk Creek. The overall goals of this project are to: 1) restore selected riparian areas by suppressing weeds, 2) plant native conifer and deciduous trees and shrubs, 3) monitor and maintain plantings, and 4) improve availability of beaver forage.

60 properties along these reaches have been identified and a door-to-door campaign conducted by Ash Creek Forest Management, LLC will engage landowners. The objective is to gain 12 participating landowners and plant at least 1.5 miles of riparian area over a three-year timeline.



High-priority riparian reforestation areas map

# BDA MONITORING

*DESCRIPTION: The Beaver Dam Analogue pilot project, which addresses the loss of legacy beaver habitat and started in 2018, continues to be monitored in an effort to produce 10 years of BDA effectiveness data.*

*LANDOWNER/PARTNERS: NFWF, NOAA, ODF, ODFW, OWEB, OWE, Trask Consulting, LLC, UNWC, WSC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: ODFW internal - \$8,000, ODFW Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund - \$35,920*

*TIMEFRAME: 2018 - 2028*

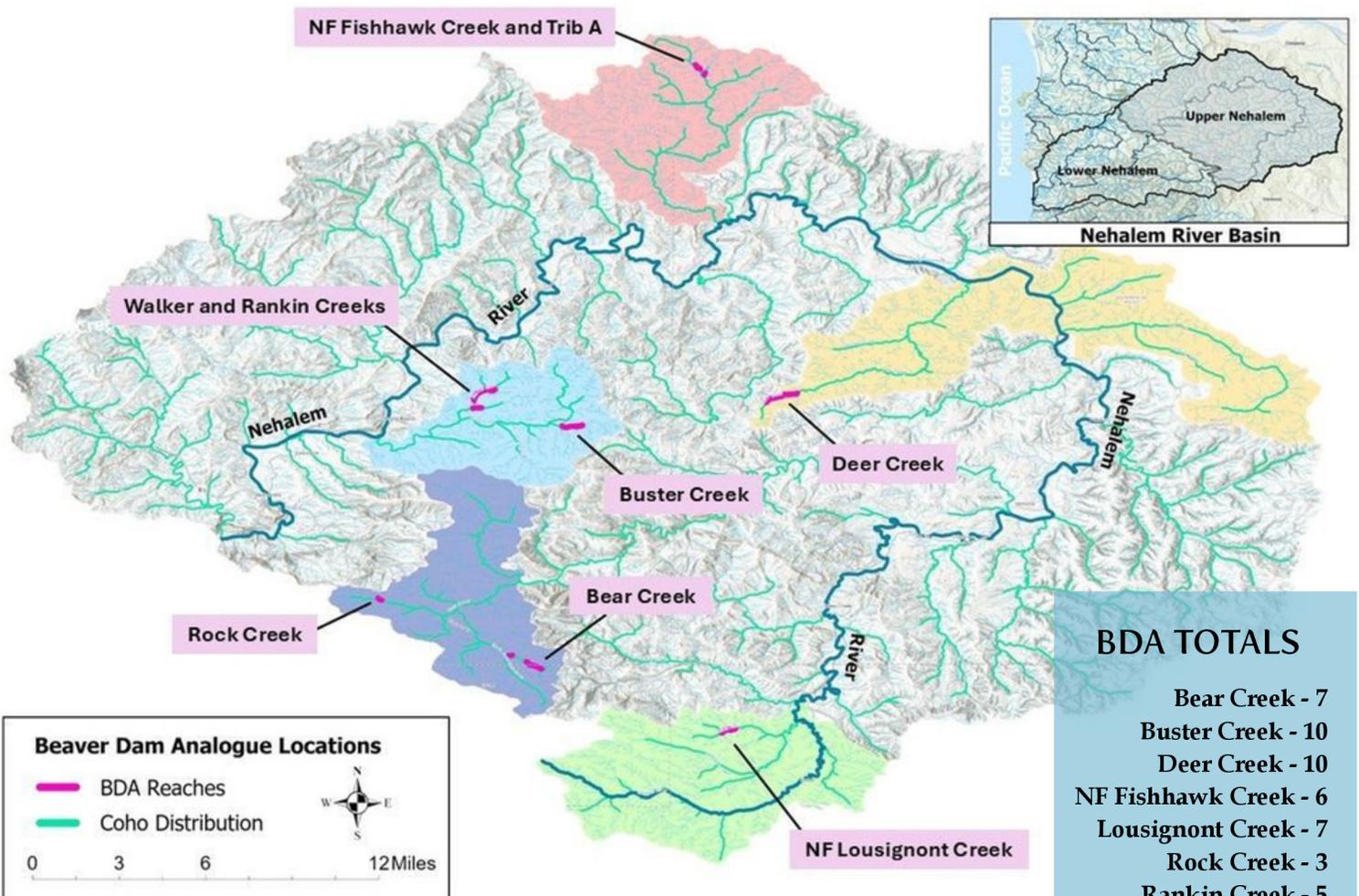
RESEARCH



2024 marks year 6 of monitoring the BDA pilot project. The initial 2018 installation included 27 BDAs along four stream reaches with an additional 30 structures installed in 2019.

The 2024 monitoring report states that the project “has shown that machine-placed BDAs can persist for multiple years, do not preclude beaver from constructing nearby dams, can be colonized by beaver and may increase pool surface area thereby improving potential overwinter habitat for juvenile coho.”

In March, the UNWC invited partners, agencies, and members of the public to a BDA site visit. The event was well attended, with over 20 attendees meeting at the Highway 26 Sunset Rest Area and hiking to the project sites to witness the progress (continued on page 18.)



BDA TOTALS	
Bear Creek	- 7
Buster Creek	- 10
Deer Creek	- 10
NF Fishhawk Creek	- 6
Lousignont Creek	- 7
Rock Creek	- 3
Rankin Creek	- 5
Walker Creek	- 9
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>57</b>

## BDA MONITORING, CONTINUED

The remaining years of monitoring funds are unclear and it is likely that the BDA pilot project will be monitored for 7 out of the original 10 years. If funding opportunities become available, the UNWC may pursue them.

Stay tuned for the final years of data to reveal how best to use BDA structures to create rich habitat for Coho and other aquatic species.



Above: A fully colonized BDA with high complexity rearing habitat, Rock Creek summer 2020



Top: BDA site tour in March 2024 with over 20 attendees

Bottom: Back-to-back BDA design on NF Lousignont Creek 2019

Pre-project (2017/18) and post-project (2020/21 and 2022/23) juvenile coho abundance comparison in Bear, Rock, and NF Lousignont Creeks.

	2017 Summer	2018 Winter	2020 Summer	2021 Winter	2022 Summer	2023 Winter
<b>Bear Creek</b>						
Random	8,580	1,962	3,462	1,262	4,008	1,039
BDA (Uncolonized)	0	0	29	155	0	533
BDA (Colonized)	0	0	0	0	557	168
Beaver Pool (Natural)	240	159	1,318	657	1,499	541
Total Coho	8,820	2,121	4,809	2,074	6,064	2,281
Total # of Beaver Dams	3	3	14	5	13	3
<b>OWR</b>		<b>24.0%</b>		<b>43.1%</b>		<b>37.6%</b>
<b>Rock Creek</b>						
Random	2,574	578	876	399	2,826	892
BDA (Uncolonized)	0	0	0	4	0	0
BDA (Colonized)	0	0	171	536	618	526
Beaver Pool (Natural)	167	109	833	16	280	93
Total Coho	2,741	687	1,880	955	3,724	1,511
Total # of Beaver Dams	2	2	8	4	2	1
<b>OWR</b>		<b>25.1%</b>		<b>50.8%</b>		<b>40.6%</b>
<b>NF Lousignont Creek</b>						
Random	3,253	480	2,514	510	3,564	418
BDA (Uncolonized)	0	0	0	44	0	0
BDA (Colonized)	0	0	102	84	0	0
Beaver Pool (Natural)	94	117	116	33	188	0
Total Coho	3,347	597	2,732	671	3,752	418
Total # of Beaver Dams	1	2	3	2	2	0
<b>OWR</b>		<b>17.8%</b>		<b>24.6%</b>		<b>11.1%</b>



# SALMON FESTIVAL

*DESCRIPTION: The annual Salmon Festival in Vernonia is a one day event celebrating the returning salmon with food, vendors, harvest-themed crafts, and a live auction. Coordinated by the Mitchell family and community members for 21 years, the UNWC now manages the event, continuing the tradition of education and fun.*

*PARTNERS: City of Vernonia, Josette & Casey Mitchell, Samuel S. Johnson Foundation, UNWC*

*FUNDERS/AMOUNTS: Former Salmon Festival committee - \$12,000*

*TIMEFRAME: Ongoing*

OUTREACH & EDUCATION



With the help of many volunteers in many different roles, the event boasted 46 unique vendors including a beer garden, food, and various artisans amidst a backdrop of live music and wild salmon spawning in the nearby Rock Creek.

Paid activities included the festival's traditional pumpkin carving, scarecrow stuffing, and the Jr. trout pond sponsored by Betsy Johnson. Free activities included carriage rides, bracelet making and a scavenger hunt, both of which educate about the salmon life-cycle. The Knee Deep in Salmon live auction featured 20 unique wooden salmon prepared by local artists and, as usual, was a big hit.

Want to be a volunteer or a vendor? Contact us today and mark your calendar for Saturday, October 4, for Salmon Festival 2025 and join us in the fun!

In October 2024 the UNWC hosted the annual Vernonia Salmon Festival for the first time and it was a resounding success!



Free carriage rides- very popular!



Volunteer Dale Webb at the busy Jr. Trout Pond



Volunteer board member and festival vendor coordinator Spencer Kroll setting up



Face-painting and face-making



Volunteer Ashley Plummer at the pumpkin carving station



Festival goes build scarecrows

# SNAPSHOTS

*Snorkeling for salmon presence*



*Volunteer tree planting at the Younger site*



*Family fun at Salmon Festival 2024*



*Discing at the Galassi Wetland site*



*Reforestation Crew Leader Mark Hall leading the charge at Jewell Wildlife Meadows*

## Contact the UNWC

1201 Texas Avenue, Suite A  
 Vernonia, OR 97064  
 (503) 429-0869  
 unwc.org  
 maggie@nehalem.org



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Annual/1st Qtr. Council Meeting**  
**Thursday, April 24 2025**  
 5:30 - 7:30 pm - Vernonia Grange  
 & Zoom Hybrid

**2nd Qtr. Council Meeting**  
**Thursday, July 24 2025**  
 5:30 - 7:30 pm - Vernonia Grange  
 & Zoom Hybrid

**Salmon Fest Planning Committee**  
 3rd Thursdays  
 5:30 - 6:30 pm - Vernonia Grange

**Salmon Festival**  
**Saturday, Oct. 4 2025**  
 10 am - 5 pm - Hawkins Park

**3rd Qtr. Council Meeting**  
**Thursday, Oct. 23 2025**  
 5:30 - 7:30 pm - Vernonia Grange  
 & Zoom Hybrid

**4th Qtr. Council Meeting**  
**Thursday, Jan. 22 2026**  
 5:30 - 7:30 pm - Vernonia Grange  
 & Zoom Hybrid