



# NECANICUM WATERSHED COUNCIL

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The Necanicum Watershed Council is a non-profit organization of community volunteers whose mission is to ensure that the watershed is a healthy and functioning ecosystem. The NWC is a one-staff operation, supported by a diverse board and an amazing community. In turn, the council strives to be a resource to the public by offering many engaging outreach programs and education opportunities, along with landowner partnerships that support on-the-ground habitat development projects, all while ultimately working to further understanding about the Necanicum Watershed and to make sure it has a sustainable future.

Like so many other organizations, 2020 brought some challenges for the Necanicum Watershed Council. Despite the challenges, we also had many accomplishments with positive effects within the watershed.

Due to the pandemic, we were unable to do a lot of our usual outreach activities. Our winter speaker series called Listening to the Land at the Seaside Public Library had to be cancelled due to safety reasons, and the 2021 series has been postponed. As the pandemic persisted, tabling at farmer's markets and other outdoor events were postponed or cancelled along with our annual Bird Discovery Day. While it has been difficult not interacting with the public, we are learning how to navigate in this new environment and adapting our projects and programs to fit this new reality.

We accomplished many things throughout the year despite the pandemic and we would like to share these accomplishments with you. The Necanicum Watershed Council has an Action Plan that identifies 5 key actions (in no particular order), and each biennium the council sets a number of goals and projects for each action. This report will detail many of the projects established for each action, as well as any identified future actions.

### **ACTION 1: ENHANCE FISH PASSAGE & HABITAT**



*Coho Creek* - In the summer of 2021, we will be partnering with the City of Seaside to do a fish passage project on Coho Creek. Coho Creek is a tributary to Neawanna Creek in the Necanicum River watershed within Seaside city limits in Clatsop County. The culverts to be replaced are juvenile and adult fish passage barriers under certain flow conditions and impair natural channel processes impacting ESA listed coho, Chinook, chum, Pacific lamprey, winter steelhead and cutthroat trout. The project involves three existing, undersized culverts. The project will permanently remove two culverts and relocate the City's sewer main which currently is installed over the top of the culverts. In addition, the project will replace the existing undersized culvert crossing under Wahanna Road with a 19' open bottom, multi-plate arch. This project will improve fish access to 1.4 miles of stream habitat and restore full tidal exchange to the

site's tidally influenced stream-wetland complex.

This project complements a previous project on Coho creek that the Necanicum Watershed Council

completed with the Seaside school district. The 2013 project has provided the opportunity for Seaside students at all grade levels to interact with a salmon stream that literally runs through campus. Since the implementation of the upstream Coho Creek Culvert replacement project, the school has increased their usage of the stream as an outdoor classroom, teaching children about the importance of healthy streams and habitat. Prior to the culvert project, only one teacher utilized the stream, now most teachers recognize the benefits of this outdoor classroom right on school property. As part of a learning unit, the students raise fry in the classroom (Chinook and winter steelhead) for release in the stream. In addition to the school, this stream has significant value to the entire community of Seaside.

Another benefit to the community the 2021 project will provide is safety. The project replaces the old rusty culvert currently under Wahanna road with a new stronger more durable arch. This will reduce flooding and make passage on the road safer. This is especially important because Wahanna road provides access to the school, the hospital and is a tsunami evacuation route. We are extremely excited to install this project with our great partners at the City of Seaside this coming summer.

*Bergsvik Creek* – An additional fish passage project is planned for Summer 2021 installation. Bergsvik Creek is a 2nd order -"key" salmonid spawning/rearing tributary of the Upper Necanicum River that confluences with the Necanicum River at Road mile 18. This stream supports ESA listed Coho, Fall Chinook, Winter Steelhead, Cutthroat Trout and two species of Lamprey (Brook and Pacific). The stream is currently deficient in large woody debris (LWD), lacking adequate materials that are essential for habitat complexity, streambed gravel retention, and floodplain/hyporheic connectivity as verified in a recent ODFW survey conducted in Fall 2016. We have previously completed two LWD placement projects on Bergsvik creek. This project will complete the entire reach of Bergsvik creek that was identified as needing large woody debris.



**ACTION 2: ENHANCE RIPARIAN CORRIDORS:**

*Arresting Policeman’s Helmet:* 2020 saw the completion of the final year of a three-year project to eradicate Policeman’s Helmet in the Necanicum Watershed. The Necanicum Watershed Council (NWC) and the North Coast Land Conservancy (NCLC) partnered to conduct a 3-year project from 2017 to 2020 to treat policeman’s helmet (*Impatiens glandulifera*) in the Necanicum watershed. We decided to undertake this project as we had observed policeman’s helmet spread in recent years throughout the Necanicum River corridor. The project was funded by an \$81,000 grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and a \$5,000 grant from Oregon Wildlife Foundation (OWF). In 2017, we conducted a thorough outreach campaign, mailing letters to all river-fronting landowners of the Necanicum and its tributaries, describing the project and asking for their support. We sent out over 2000 informational flyers and magnets to further put the word out. We gained the support of important landowners with large and public lands on the Necanicum, such as Clatsop County Parks, the City of Seaside, ODFW, and Lewis and Clark Timberlands. With the help of volunteers, we conducted river surveys prior to the treatment season to attempt to observe any populations we were not already aware of. Each year for the duration of the project, dedicated volunteers and interns removed



policeman’s helmet on public and private lands in the Necanicum River corridor, with permission from all participating landowners. NCLC hired a crew of 3-4 interns each year for the months of June and July to conduct this work in what were determined to be highest priority areas. Over three years, more than 7 river miles and 152 acres of policeman’s helmet in total were treated. 35 different private and public landowners participated by allowing us access to survey and remove policeman’s helmet from their properties, and 11 different landowners received native plants in that phase of the project, with 2,725 native trees and shrubs planted in the Necanicum riparian corridor, replacing areas of previously treated policeman’s helmet.

*Scotch Broom Bustin’/Invasive Species Removal:* This ongoing “guerilla-style” attack on the invasive started a number of years ago with a small group of devoted citizens who desired to make an impact on scotch broom in their neighborhood and continues to grow over the years. Our volunteer watershed steward works hard to control Scotch Broom at least a little every day. He is seeing a huge reduction of the plant in the areas that he treats by the water treatment plant, along the beach, the Prom, and up to the Cove. We are so thankful to have such a committed volunteer working so hard for the health of the watershed.



**ACTION 3: ENHANCE ESTUARY & WETLAND HABITAT.**



*Mill Ponds Trail Development:* The Mill Ponds in southern Seaside are a unique feature in the community; two ponds, separated by a narrow dike, with drastically different eco-systems. One pond is tidally influenced while the other is completely freshwater. These ponds are a popular stopover for migrating songbirds on the Pacific Flyway, and also a popular location for birders. The Necanicum Watershed Council in partnership with the Sunset Park & Recreation Foundation are helping support the Seaside Mill Ponds Natural History Project. The project organizers, with the help of

many local artists and volunteers have put together an amazing coloring book and educational short film featuring the diverse life and history that can be found in the Mill Ponds area. These materials can be found on our website at: <https://www.necanicumwatershed.org/millponds>



#### **ACTION 4: PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE COMMUNITY**



*Osprey Nest Camera:* At the end of 2019, we discovered that the osprey nest camera was damaged and inoperable. We tried everything we could think of to resurrect it, but it remained unusable. Unfortunately, that meant we were unable to view the nest for the entirety of the 2020 nesting season. That was a huge disappointment to not only us, but our loyal following of osprey fans. Despite that obstacle, our devoted local nest watchers shared personal photos and gave updates of the status of the osprey family, which I passed along through social media. This kept the public engaged through updates and photos on our Facebook page as we collectively shared in the successes in the nest. These are some of the pictures that were



shared during this season.

This year, the pair successfully fledged two young, with the last one heading south at the beginning of October. We now look forward to the pair returning in March of 2021 to raise another clutch of chicks and the offspring from this season will likely return to the area in two years to raise families of their own.



In the meantime, since the camera remains unresponsive, we are applying for grants to help pay for its replacement. Grant funding is highly competitive, and money is tight everywhere due to the pandemic, but we are continuing to try to secure funding. We are also accepting donations from the public to help in this effort at the link located at the top right of our webpage. It is our hope that we can replace the camera over the coming winter and hope to have a new camera up and running next year in time for the new nesting season.



#### **FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS**

2021 is shaping up to be a great year for the Necanicum Watershed. In addition to the summer projects that we have planned, the Council is exploring opportunities to partner with other entities and agencies to address habitat and water quality resource concerns in the watershed. Topics we are exploring include a citizen science program, pollinator habitat, invasive species control, native species plantings, reducing pollution, and education and outreach. We will also continue to work to identify and prioritize potential sites and/or actions by reviewing existing information about watershed conditions and processes.