

23-24

Annual Report



A Look Back at our Yearly Programs & Progress



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible progress we have made here at the Calapooia Watershed Council. This year has been both impactful and fulfilling, with our efforts continuing to deepen relationships with our partners and further our mission of restoring and protecting and investing in the future of our environment.

One of the highlights of the year has been the addition of a new member to our team, Alex Rice, who has joined us as our Restoration Program Manager. While Alex is new to our organization, he brings with him four years of experience as the Restoration Program Manager for the North Fork of the John Day Watershed Council. His expertise in environmental restoration will undoubtedly enhance the important work we are doing. We are thrilled to have him aboard as we continue to focus on projects such as the restoration of Periwinkle Creek, Simpson Park, and the Albany Oxbows in the city of Albany.

Additionally, we are excited to announce a significant achievement in partnership. The Mid-Valley River Connections (MVRC)—a collaborative effort involving five watershed councils, including the Calapooia, Luckiamute, Marys, North, and South Watershed Councils—was awarded nearly 9 million dollars in grant funding for Fish Passage removal projects. This grant opportunity was highly competitive, and we are proud to be part of this initiative as we work together to improve fish habitat and water quality in our region.

Our Youth Education Program continues to be a source of inspiration and fulfillment. Environmental education remains the most rewarding aspect of my role as Executive Director. From Salmon Watch trips to Urban Ecology field trips, each event is a reminder of the deep impact we have on the next generation of environmental stewards. I am particularly grateful for the dedication and passion of our award-winning educator, Kristen Daly. Her work in leading our Education Program is truly a labor of love, and I am continually inspired by her commitment to our mission. While the full impact of our education efforts is immeasurable, we are proud to share that this year alone, we have reached over 2,000 students. One of our core values at CWC is ensuring that these transformative programs remain free of charge, reducing a significant barrier to accessing outdoor education. Kristen's leadership and our collective work in this area are what drive us to continually strive for a brighter, more sustainable future.

I want to take a moment to highlight the exceptional contributions of our Operations Coordinator, Fiona Julian. Behind the scenes, Fiona plays an indispensable role in ensuring that our organization runs smoothly and efficiently. Her attention to detail and dedication to our mission are evident in the way she manages the daily administrative and logistical functions of our office. Fiona's ability to juggle these responsibilities while maintaining a unified approach to our work has been instrumental in advancing our goals.

As I reflect on all that we have accomplished this year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible support of our staff, partners, students, Board, funders, and donors. Your dedication makes all of this possible, and I am truly grateful for each of you. Thank you for your continued commitment to the Calapooia Watershed Council and the work we do. We are excited for the year ahead and look forward to all that we can achieve together.

Colin McCandless

Habitat Restoration

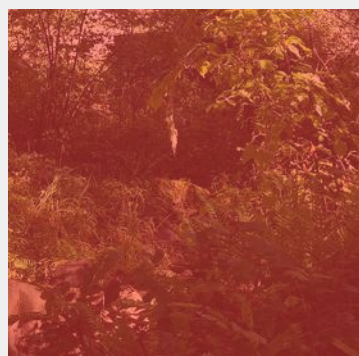
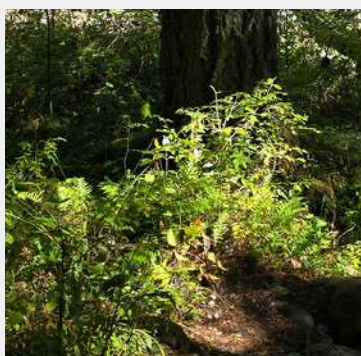
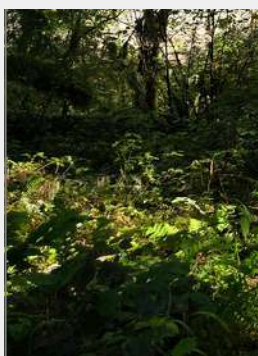
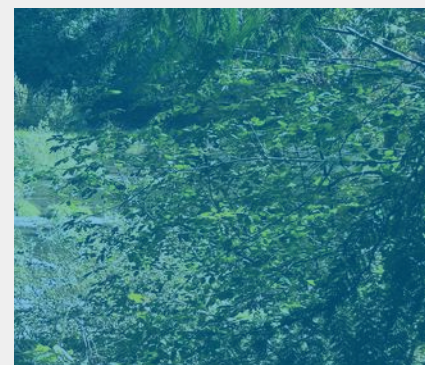
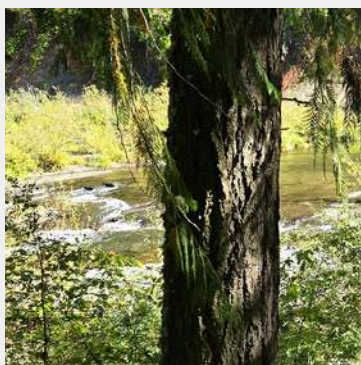
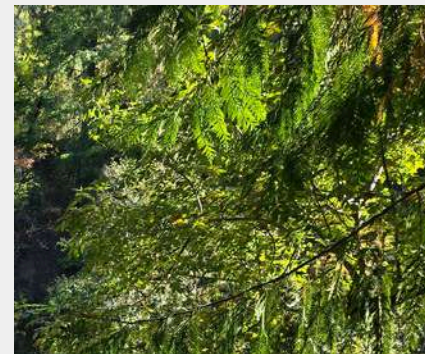
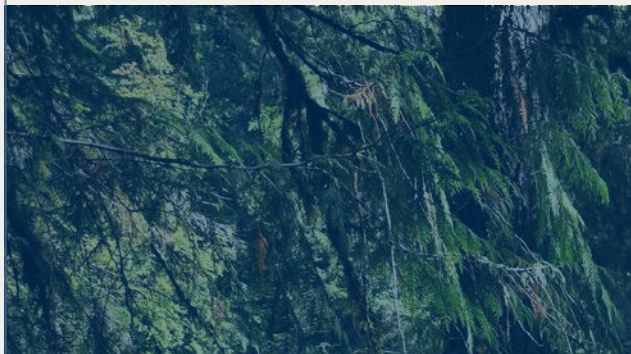
The Restoration Program is continuing to do valuable work across our operating area.

CWC has a number of active restoration projects currently including: wet prairie restoration, fish passage enhancements, riparian and wetland planting, and fish habitat improvements.

In 2025 we will be doing a lot of planting and seeding across the valley as we prepare for large restoration projects. We have multiple culvert replacement and stream crossing improvement projects slated for 2026 as well as a large scale habitat restoration.



Alex Rice, Habitat Restoration Program Manager



TRUAX ISLAND

Our long-term restoration efforts at Truax Island Greenway have included large-scale native plantings and maintenance, and now we are embarking on exciting new progress to address the fish passage barriers present at this public property.

Truax offers many outdoor classroom opportunities to understand the importance of adequate fish passage as well as drainage from the Truax site back into the Willamette.

We have secured funding from NOAA to replace two crossings which constitute fish passage barriers, as well as at Murder Creek and the Central Floodplain within the Albany Oxbows Complex.

The Truax crossing has been fairly impassable for years (see photo, right), but our interventions aim to remedy that (in lower flows).



Truax Island Crossing completely underwater as well as the Cox Creek Crossing (as close as we can get). This is what everything looks like when the Willamette River at Albany is at 58,000 CFS.

We aim to also encourage the understanding that there are things that can be done locally, that benefit native, threatened, & endangered salmonids.

This is a local solution that is tied to other initiatives all over the state that work together to help salmonids!



ALBANY OXBOWS

CWC has secured funding from the Bonneville Power administration to complete designs and permitting and begin implementation on a project to breach berms impounding relict log-corralling ponds within the Albany Oxbows complex near Third and Fourth Lakes.

These derelict ponds constitute massive fish traps as they are connected to the Willamette River during high flows but as flows recede, water levels drop far too quickly for migratory fish to escape.

This project will breach the berms at key locations, improving throughflow and hydrologic connectivity and turning what was a fish trap into a valuable piece of floodplain habitat for salmon, steelhead, and other species

Simpson Park & Albany Oxbows are our local living classrooms! Helping us understand how these areas contribute to the health of local rivers, support native wildlife, and how important these areas are to the ~500 students per year who visit on one of our field trips!

Youth Education Urban Ecology Field Trips have been supported over the years by the City of Albany, The Nature Conservancy, OCF, Gray Family, and NOAA

THORNTON LAKE

This 8.5 acre habitat enhancement and community engagement project is a partnership with the City of Albany, that incorporates habitat restoration and community engagement (and enjoyment!) in raising awareness of native oak prairie habitats, as well as Oregon's two native turtle species; *the Western Pond* and *Western Painted Turtles*.

The habitat restoration plan includes planting scattered Oregon White Oak and seeding a mix of native grasses and forbs. The restored natural area will be drought tolerant and provide wildlife benefits for numerous species of declining grassland birds, pollinating insects, and reptiles.

The local community will be invited to assist with habitat restoration work, including weed removal, native plantings, and turtle nesting enhancements! Two educational signs and one pet waste station will also be installed to further awareness and appreciation of Oregon's native habitats and wildlife species.

The project is funded through The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund.

PERIWINKLE CREEK

The CWC has also been partnering with the Albany community, especially South Albany HS, to enhance the native habitats around Periwinkle Creek since 2014.

Periwinkle Creek receives more stormwater runoff than any other waterbody in the City of Albany, which can carry pollutants through the entire channel and into the Willamette River. Enhancements made throughout the channel can both reduce pollutants, enhance native habitat, and provide natural spaces for the community to enjoy.

Increasing shade along the Periwinkle corridor not only enhances stream health, but also provides solace and opportunities for local residents looking for ways to cool off on our increasingly hot summer days.

Thousands of native plants have been installed at Bowman and Periwinkle Parks, and we are actively seeking funding to include Kinder and Grand Prairie Parks. We have been thrilled by the survival of these plants, which has far exceeded our expectations,

This on-going project has been supported by OWEB, SOLVE, the City of Albany, The Nature Conservancy, Oregon Community Foundation, Gray Family Foundation, and SEP funds from the City of Albany over the years.

TUB RUN

Tub Run Riparian & Wetland Prairie Restoration Project is located 8 miles south of Brownsville. Tub Run Creek is a tributary to the Little Muddy River. Tub Run Creek is outside of the Calapooia Watershed, although it is within the Calapooia Watershed Council's service area.

Once an abundant ecosystem within the Willamette Valley, native wetland prairies have declined dramatically in extent since the mid-1800s due to a variety of factors including agricultural conversion, urbanization, drainage, and colonization by invasive and woody vegetation.

Today, wetland prairie habitat is regarded as one of the most imperiled in the Willamette Valley ecoregion, with less than 2% of its historic range remaining (Johannessen et al. 1971, Towle 1982).

Degraded water resources from past and current land-use practices, such as high summer water temperatures, erosion, and nutrient inputs, are chronic issues throughout the Muddy Creek basin. These types of problems have negatively affected populations of anadromous and resident salmonids and lamprey in the greater Willamette Basin.

A number of bird species are dependent on the now rare wetland habitat type and are, as a result, now threatened. These species include: Wilson's snipe, Western bluebird, short-eared owl, and Western Meadowlark along with other prairie dependent species.

The restoration site was previously wetland prairie habitat prior to alteration from agriculture. This project sought to return the project site to functional wetland prairie to support threatened bird species in the Willamette Valley.

Restoration components implemented to-date include: restoration of 36 acres of farmland to wetland prairie, and restoration of 37 acres of degraded riparian habitat.

Project partners included a private land owner, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Linn Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Calapooia Watershed Council.

BOWERS ROCK

As we entered the final year of current funding for this project, we're proud to have been successful in achieving the project goals!

The purpose of this project was to address connectivity issues within a 40-acre gravel pond, and the sloughs at Bowers Rock State Park east of Albany, OR on the main-stem of the Willamette River. This project connected the gravel pit to the main-stem Willamette through enhancement of an existing floodplain channel at the southwest corner of the pond and by creating a broad swale to act as the outlet channel and disperse flow.

Due to decades of regulated flows, the Willamette River no longer reaches the historic peak flows that once inundated the river's floodplain. Having lost much of this connection to off-channel and floodplain habitat, Upper Willamette DPS/ESU salmonids have consequently lost foraging opportunities in these productive areas and no longer have refuge from the fast moving currents of the main stem Willamette that occur during high flow events.

The restoration at Bowers Rock State Park sought to reclaim a portion of this floodplain and off-channel habitat by enhancing four under-performing stream crossings and connecting an adjacent, retired gravel pit to the Willamette River during high flow events. This increase in connectivity will once again allow juvenile salmonids access to a portion of the Willamette floodplain and improve their chances of survival in the basin. In addition, the site pre-project provided only marginal benefit to listed fish, and wildlife such as turtles, amphibians, and waterfowl, due to issues of stranding, invasive species, and lack of basking structures. Additionally Water Primrose (*Ludwigia* spp), an introduced aquatic invasive species had inundated two side channels that have mapped cold water points that are key habitat for native salmonids during warm summer flows.

Two undersized, failing culverts were also replaced, one low water ford was improved, and another culvert was completely removed to increase fish access to the floodplain.

10.5 acres of *Ludwigia* in Coon Creek and the Little Willamette were treated and a combined 20 acres of riparian revegetation was undertaken to mitigate disturbance associated with implementation.

Bowers Rock exists just outside the city limits and is accessible to all. We'd love to see more people take advantage of this special place!





Education Programs

Again, participation in our education programs exceeded pre-COVID levels, and we have strengthened our existing partnerships with Jackson St Youth Services, Linn County Juvenile Detention, Albany Library, South Albany High School and Ophelia's Place.

The Education Program's main grant funding ended this year, and the CWC has been hard at work applying for new funding sources to sustain our programs which are all provided at no-cost to participants.

We remain hopeful that funders and donors will see the value in our thoughtfully curated and impactful programs, and we will continue to serve the youth in our community for years to come.

**2,320
Youth
Served**

**253
hours
In-Person
Instruction**

**17
Schools**

**OVER 48,000
youth served
since 2014**



Salmon Watch

The Salmon Watch program is a seasonal favorite for everyone!

This year, the trips took place over 6 weeks in September and October at River Bend County Park.

Eight staff were hired & trained to guide 307 students from 6 schools in the CWC service area through their Salmon Watch experience.

Through our partnership with the South Santiam Watershed Council, we reached an additional 238 students from 4 schools.

Due to the success of the changes we implemented in the 2023 season, we retained many changes, including offering snacks, alternative activities, and a more direct focus on salmon biology, salmon life history, and macroinvertebrate discovery.



URBAN ECOLOGY

Our Program focus remains on connecting students with their watersheds, and to natural areas in the City.

Urban Ecology took place over 5 weeks in April and May, 2024. In addition to five returning Salmon Watch educators, three new staff members joined the education team for the Urban Ecology season. Excitingly, one staff member was previously a member of SAYA at South Albany HS. Again, our intensive training and team building before the trips resulted in an education team that was well prepared to guide and support students through their activities.

Staff guided 502 fifth grade students from 8 local schools through their construction of watershed and wetlands, and their explorations of Simpson Park and Talking Water Gardens. During their tours, students honed their observation skills, searching for baby animals, interesting plants, and turtles. Students were provided with time to sit and reflect on their experience. Waterproof notebooks were provided for students to make notes, drawings, or musings throughout the day.

YOUTH WATERSHED COUNCILS South Albany Youth Activism (saya)

The Youth Watershed Councils provide opportunities for youth to set goals, plan stewardship projects, and implement native habitat enhancement projects.

South Albany Youth Activism students continued their work to improve habitat diversity and water quality at Periwinkle Park in Albany. In this fourth year working at this site, students remarked on the progress of their previous work, noticing that the riparian area now looks much more natural and healthy than it did just 3 years ago.

This year, students planted 155 new trees, shrubs, ferns, and sedges and rushes along the creek downstream of Periwinkle Park. As of this planting, this area of the creek restoration is complete, and very little interplanting has been needed, as the high rates of plant survival of the plants at this site has surprised us all.

In addition, SAYA members and the CWC supported the South Albany High School (SAHA) Horticulture teacher to begin a native plant garden at the school. This garden is adjacent to the planters that SAYA maintains of native edible plants. This will be an on-going project for the next several years.

SAYA students continue to work on having an Indigenous artist paint an educational mural at SAHS. The students met with Indigenous leaders in the community and at OSU to discuss and plan this project. They also attended the Portland State University Youth Ethnic Studies Conference to learn more about issues and pathways to improvement in how students of color interact with our society. From their participation, the students created a list of activities they would like to implement in the coming years to be more inclusive to students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and create a greater sense of community among Albany students.

WEST ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB

WAHSEC members conducted several cleanups around Albany, including at Grand Prairie and Kinder Parks, and on the WAHS campus. The students also assisted at planting at Periwinkle Park.

For the second year, CWC Youth Education Program Manager, Kristen Daly, accompanied a group of students from both WAHS and SAHS clubs to Hatfield Marine Science Day in Newport.

The students spent several hours learning about the research being done at Hatfield, listening to researchers and the Keynote speaker. Afterwards, the students cleaned up the picnic area and beach at Yaquina Bay State Recreation Site. This is an annual tradition that both clubs are excited to continue.

The Annual CWC Youth Education Program Scholarship was awarded to Kaylina Hernandez for their leadership and dedication to the South Albany Youth Activism Club and its Mission. Kaylina is now a freshman at OSU.


FRESHWATER SNORKELING

The summer of 2023 was an outstanding season for snorkeling in local rivers.

The program began in late June, and served youth from Jackson Street Youth Shelters, Linn and Benton County Juvenile Departments, Ophelia's Place, and one additional trip in September for Timber Ridge Titan Research and Eco Expedition (TREE) class.

In total, 140 youth participated in this program and were able to experience the underwater world of salmon as well as the many benefits to being outdoors and in the river.

Trips took place on the South Santiam River at Trout Creek, Yukwah, and House Rock campgrounds in the Willamette National Forest, and Moonshine Park on the Siletz River.



We often hear from youth who participate in this program that it is their favorite summer activity, that they want to do it again, and that they felt able to relax and enjoy their time in the river.

Environmental Leadership For Youth (ELY) & New Beginnings for Tribal Youth

34 youth from local Tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians participated in an afternoon of snorkeling with Tribal mentors and OSU faculty and Grad students at Moonshine Park.

This trip was part of their larger OSU experience, learning about western science practices, Tribal practices, and career paths into natural resource careers.

PROGRAMS WITH PARTNERS

Jackson Street Out-of-School Days partnership

This year, we again worked with the Positive Youth Engagement Coordinator at Jackson Street to set up a series of hikes throughout the school year.

One weekend per month and on select out-of-school days, CWC Education Program Manager led a group from Jackson Street on a hike at a local natural area.

This year, we visited Peavy Arboretum, McDonald-Dunn Forest, McDowell Creek Falls, Silver Falls, and Cascadia County Park. Youth spent 1-3 hours hiking through these areas and feeling the benefits of being outdoors.

The CWC provided snacks, hot cocoa, hand warmers, gloves, and other items to keep youth warm, cool, fed, and engaged.

ALBANY PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP (SPLASHY SCIENCE)

In partnership with the Albany Public Library over the summer, we provided engaging, fun activities for youth to do outdoors with their grown-ups.



The CWC worked with the Library to create a schedule of activities to serve Albany youth twice a month as part of the Library's summer reading program.

Families joined the CWC and Library at Bryant Park to take part in one of several activities; meet a tree, aquatic macroinvertebrate hunt, owl pellet dissection, nature art, or a conative seed planting, or a combination of two or more of these activities.

Participating children and families spent an hour or two exploring the natural areas of Bryant Park, learning how to engage with the natural world in new ways.

In July 2023, the programs focused on owl pellets and nature art, and in August, we created butterfly watering stations, and searched for macroinvertebrates in the Willamette River.

This summer, over 150 young people and their families took part in this program!

OPHELIA'S PLACE



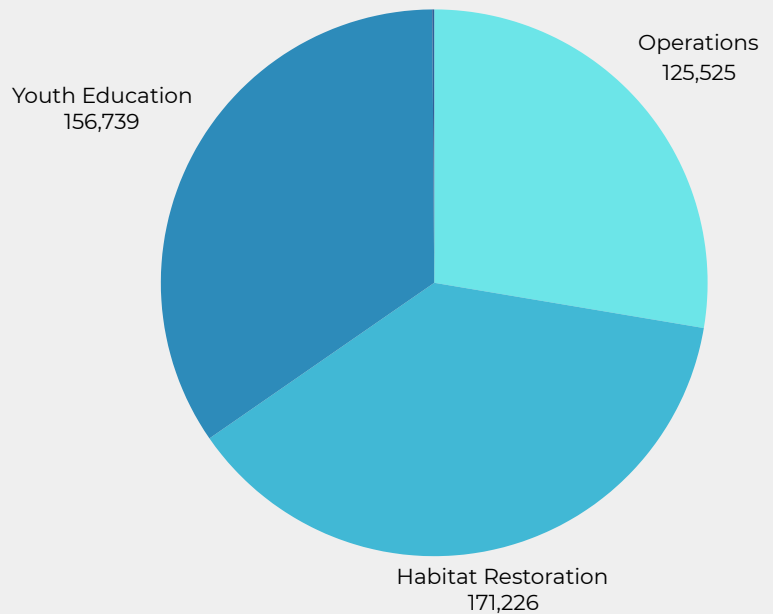
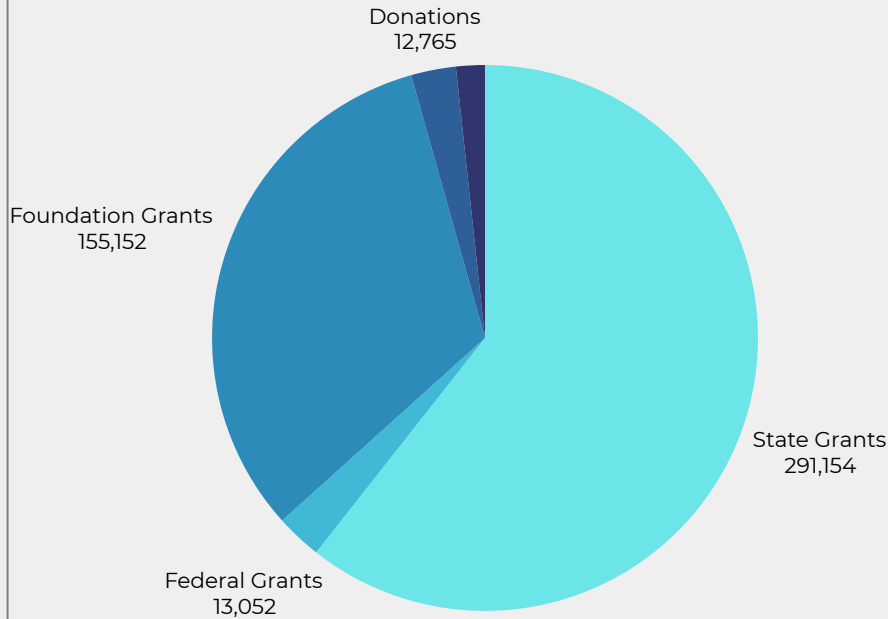
In addition to the snorkeling experience we provide for Ophelia's Place campers, the CWC was invited to provide an activity for an animal-centric summer camp hosted by the organization.

We brought owl pellets for dissecting, and supplies to create butterfly watering stations. The girls had a great time learning about owl biology, finding bones, and decorating essential watering holes for butterflies.





Consolidated Statements of Financial Position



REVENUE - \$470,356

EXPENSES - \$455,365

NET REVENUE - \$14,991

Thank You!

Our Impact was made possible this year with the support of the following -

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