



# COOS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023

381 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St • Coos Bay, Oregon 97420 • 541-888-5922

[cooswa@cooswatershed.org](mailto:cooswa@cooswatershed.org) • [www.cooswatershed.org](http://www.cooswatershed.org)



## A note from our Director

Our 29<sup>th</sup> year was marked by many highlights, such as the return of the Mayfly Festival to Mingus Park, a successful birthday bash fundraiser, a move into a new (and MUCH bigger office), and numerous improvements to the Coos watershed's habitats through restoration, monitoring, and outreach projects. We said goodbye to some board and staff members who moved on to new adventures, but we also welcomed new people onto our team who bring new ideas, passions, and expertise.

We are excited to share some of our 2023 high points with you in the report that follows. As always, we are grateful to our community and partners who work alongside us to improve the health of our watershed in a manner that is sustainable, resilient, and supportive of our local economy and culture. None of this work is possible without you, and we continue to be grateful for all the ways that you continue to support us.

We hope you enjoy our annual report and look forward to working alongside you in 2024!

With gratitude,

*Haley Lutz*



*Top:* board tour of Tioga Falls. *Bottom:* human-sized coho scales Tioga Falls in search of high-quality upstream habitat.



## 2023 Staff Members

1. Haley Lutz, Executive Director
2. Chris Bauman, Financial and Office Manager
3. Mindy Vetter, Financial and Office Manager
4. Alexa Carleton, Outreach Program Manager
5. Kara Klietz, Community Engagement Specialist
6. Dan Draper, Fish Habitat Specialist
7. Freelin Reasor, Hydrological Specialist
8. Andy Cortese, Monitoring Program Manager
9. Jesse Jones, Monitoring Specialist
10. Kevin Whittaker, Fisheries Research Assistant
11. Allison Tarbox, Restoration Project Manager
12. Ed Cope, Plant Programs Manager
13. Dave Nelson, Restoration Crew Leader
14. Jack Scothern, Restoration Crew Leader
15. Anders Hansen, Noxious Weeds Coordinator
16. Eric Perry, Plants Restoration Technician

*Thank you to our 2023 seasonal crew members:*

Addisyn Carlstrom, Kate Danielson, Sydney Elizalde, Kayla Hayes, AJ Kliewer, Makenna Johnson, Sabrina McNeely, Alexa Orr, Kaileb Pickett, Aubrey Turner, Mckinley Warncke, Hayden Yockey.

*Thank you to our 2023 interns:*

Jayden Felton, Nicole Lehto, Avery Pex, and Jace Phillips.

## 2023 Board Members

1. Jeff Messerle, President (Agriculture)
2. Bradford McKeown, Vice President (Member-at-large)
3. Kristopher Murphy, Secretary (Coquille Indian Tribe)
4. Don Yost, Treasurer (Member-at-large)
5. Amy Burgess (Southwestern Oregon Community College)
6. Mike Dunning (OR International Port of Coos Bay)
7. Marty Giles (Recreation & Tourism)
8. Elise Hamner (Southwestern Oregon Community College)
9. Rishia Latta (City of Coos Bay)
10. Joan Mahaffy (Agriculture)
11. Joe Metzler (Cape Arago Audubon Society)
12. Rebecca Muse (South Slough Reserve)
13. Jason Richardson, PE (Weyerhaeuser Company)
14. Randy Smith (Oregon Department of Forestry)
15. Al Solomon, Ph.D. (Member-at-large)
16. Stephan Stys (Member-at-large)
17. John Sweet (County Commissioner, Coos County)

*\*\*Parentheses indicate the stakeholder group represented by each member of the Board.*



Coos Watershed Association staff members (and office dogs) at the end of 2023, from left to right: Kara Klietz (and Bandit), Haley Lutz (and Barnacle), Anders Hansen, Chris Bauman, Freelin Reasor, Ed Cope (and Fiddle), Dan Draper, Allison Tarbox, Kevin Whittaker, Jesse Jones, Jack Scothern, Mindy Vetter, Alexa Carleton. Not pictured: Eric Perry.



# Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2023

## Statement of Activities

for the year ending December 2023

### Revenues

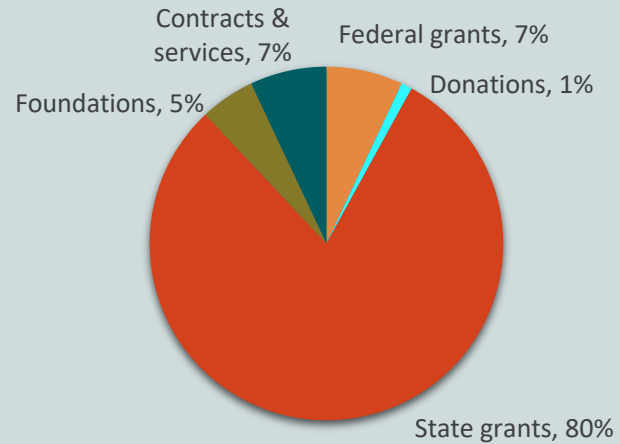
Grants	\$3,022,837
Contributions	\$24,164
Other income	\$242,069
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$3,289,070</b>

### Expenses

Program services	\$2,885,921
Support services	\$279,503
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$3,165,424</b>

Net assets, beginning of year	\$643,659
Net assets, end of year	\$695,512
Change in assets	\$51,853

## 2023 Revenue by Source \$3,289,070



## Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2023

### Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$319,776
Grants receivable	\$751,558
Other assets	\$7,210
Office and field equipment	\$411,727
(less accumulated depreciation)	<\$169,971>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$1,320,300</b>

### Liabilities

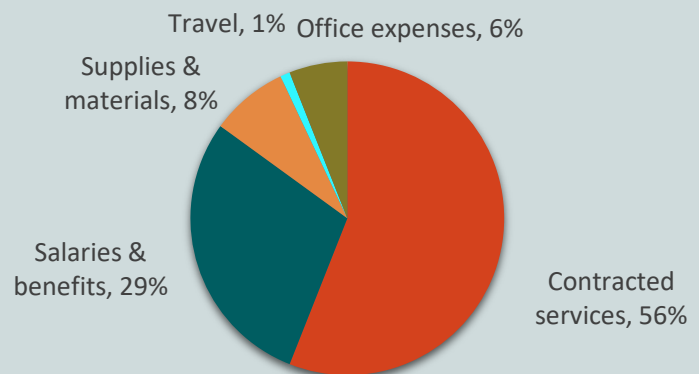
Accounts payable	\$300,891
Accrued payroll taxes and benefits	\$45,651
Accrued leave	\$83,599
Deferred grant advances	\$194,647
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$624,788</b>

### Equity

Restricted	\$307,832
Unrestricted	\$387,680
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>\$695,512</b>

<b>Total liabilities and equity</b>	<b>\$1,320,300</b>
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## 2023 Expenditures by Category \$3,165,424





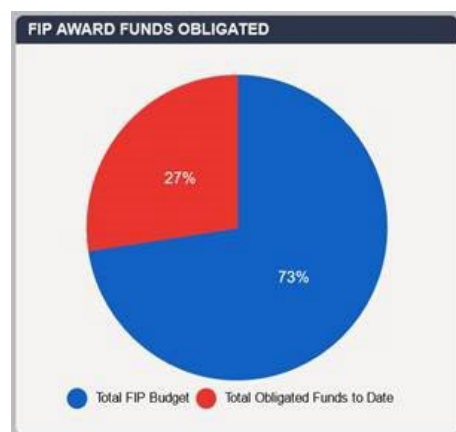
# Coos Basin Coho Partnership: A Plan for Coho Salmon Recovery in the Coos Basin

The Coos Basin is comprised of dynamic rivers, productive agricultural lands, and the largest estuary completely in Oregon (the Columbia Slough estuary is much bigger but spans across both Oregon and Washington). The Coos Basin Coho Partnership is a grassroots group that is at the forefront of coho conservation in the Coos Basin. Composed of 15 members (Tribal, state, federal, non-profit, and private), with CoosWA serving as the convening organization, the Partnership came together to develop the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for coho salmon recovery in our watershed. The plan outlines the long-term strategies that need to be enacted over the next 25 years to sustain our coastal coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) population into the future. With a focus on supporting working agricultural lands, while at the same time increasing and improving ecological conditions for coho salmon, this plan balances the needs of the local economy and salmon restoration efforts.



Davis Slough, one of the Coos Basin's dynamic lowland habitats. Photo credit: Wild Salmon Center/Brian Kelly.

In 2022, the SAP was published, and we received news that the Coos Basin Coho Partnership had been chosen for a Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) funding award through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to begin carrying out the actions in the plan. The \$11 million grant (with nearly \$12 in matching funds) is intended to accelerate high-priority restoration, monitoring, and community engagement projects in the Coos watershed over a six-year period, with the aim to recover local populations of threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon.



At the end of 2023, the Partnership had used 27% of the OWEB-allocated FIP funds on restoration, technical assistance, capacity, and engagement projects.

**Partnership progress and process.** The Partnership got right to work in 2023. In the spring and fall, we submitted grant proposals for our OWEB technical team and full Coos Basin Coho Partnership members to review: even though the funds have been allocated to our Partnership, we still need to ensure our projects are technically sound and go through a robust approval process. Projects thus far have fallen into five main categories: restoration, technical assistance (typically used to plan for restoration), monitoring, capacity, and engagement. Many of the projects you read about in this report were



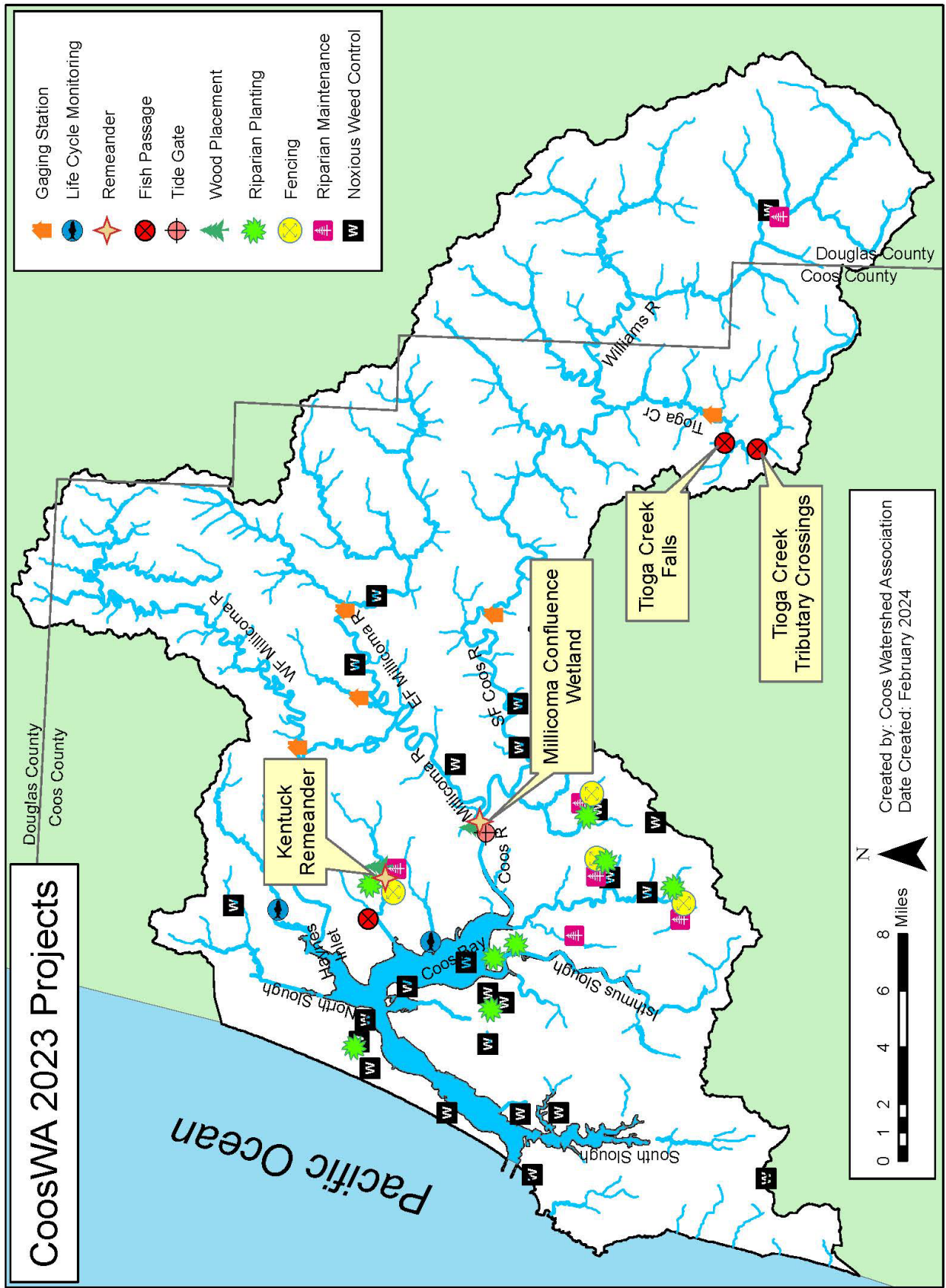
Breakdown of funding by project type in 2023.

funded through this FIP process, taking up about ¼ of the FIP funds allocated to the Partnership.

**A logo to connect fish and people.** One of our first steps in 2023 was contracting with PacWest Media Company to develop a logo and communications plan for the Partnership, and we will be announcing a website for the Partnership in 2024. The logo's fingerprint design is meant to represent the many connections between humans and coho salmon, both in our present day and through the millennia. ***The goal of the Partnership is to restore parts of our watershed that are important to salmon, but the truth is that these high priority restoration areas have been important to humans for just as long.*** The miluk people (today within the Federally Recognized Sovereign Nations of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians) still call these streams and forests home, and salmon are a critical piece to this home. As a Partnership, we strive to bring back the habitat that has supported both fish and people since time immemorial.







Restoration project sites for CoosWA in 2023, including Coos Basin Coho Partnership projects.

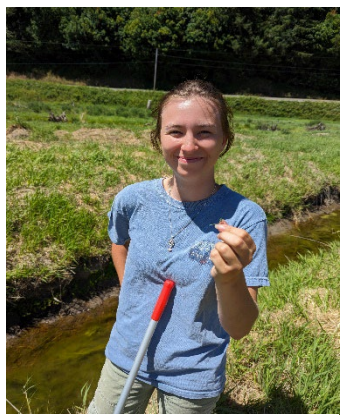


# Restoration Highlights

## Instream & Riparian Restoration

Here at CoosWA, we take two main approaches to habitat restoration, and the two often happen in conjunction to holistically restore streams and their surrounding habitat. In-stream projects take place right in the stream itself, such as building log jams, reshaping creeks that have been channelized, removing barriers to migrating fish, and reducing the amount of sediment that enters the water from surrounding areas. We have been implementing these types of projects since the mid-1990s to improve the quality and quantity of habitat for a wide range of aquatic species, including salmon. But restoring the streams themselves is only half of the puzzle—a healthy stream also needs plants! Through riparian restoration, we create diverse native plant zones along the stream bank that offer shade, lower stream temperatures, reduce erosion, filter runoff, and provide critical habitat for wildlife. Here are two examples of restoration in action in 2023!

You may remember the **Kentuck Creek project** that was featured in our 2022 annual report. The Kentuck Creek sub-basin is situated along a narrow agricultural valley that drains into the Coos estuary and has been heavily impacted by past land management practices. In 2022, we teamed up with two enthusiastic landowners to start reshaping the creek back to its original S-curve position in the valley and reconnect migratory fish with habitat upstream of the project site. This multi-year, multi-stage project saw some exciting highlights in 2023: we created four freshwater ponds (complete with turtle basking logs and root wad logs for habitat), installed 10 habitat structures in the creek (root wads and gravel), established over 10 acres of riparian habitat along the newly created stream banks, planted them with 15,000 native trees and shrubs, and installed 9,000 feet of fencing to protect the new plants from predation.



Crew member Makenna catches a damselfly during an insect survey at Millicoma Confluence.

As you travel south from Kentuck Creek and head out towards Allegany (see map on page 11), you will find the special place where the Millicoma and South Fork Coos Rivers converge into the mainstem Coos River that flows out to the ocean. This is the site of our **Millicoma Confluence project**, which will restore tidal inundation to a part of the Coos estuary that has been kept dry by tide gates and levees in recent decades. In 2023, we finished digging a mile of new channel that will provide winter rearing habitat for salmon, placed root wads in those channels, set a new tide gate and culvert, and built a new levee that will eventually take the place of the existing one. When we finish this in 2024, we will have created over 10 acres of Sitka spruce swamp habitat that is fully open to tidal inundation.

**Up-and-coming projects.** Large-scale restoration projects, such as those outlined above, typically spend multiple years in the planning, funding, and development stage before we are able to start the on-the-ground work. We are always plotting and planning for future projects! Some projects currently in the development stage are a tide gate upgrade on Palouse Slough, a habitat complexity project on Lillian Slough, restoration projects on Seelander Creek and at Goose Point, and a really special and unique collaborative restoration project at South Slough's Wasson Creek. These projects address private and public infrastructure, improve water quality, promote juvenile fish rearing, and reconnect stream habitats while helping wildlife thrive in these lowland landscapes. We expect to break ground on all of the above this summer, so watch for updates in our newsletters, social media posts, and future annual reports!



Peerless Property Services LLC, creating pond habitat at Kentuck Creek.



New riparian habitat along re-meandered, re-sloped channel at Kentuck Creek.



Wood placement in newly dug channels at Millicoma Confluence project.



# Restoration Highlights continued

## Feature Story: Tioga Falls

The upper reaches of our watershed hold some of the best habitat: this is where we find our coldest, fastest-moving water, which is a beacon to migratory fish and a whole suite of other aquatic organisms. Tioga Creek is one such place, known for its high-quality habitat and high numbers of spawning adult salmon.

Tioga Falls is a 10-foot bedrock falls that has experienced heavy alterations, which have substantially hindered fish passage. In recent decades, removal of conifers, "stream cleaning," and "log driving" activities (modifying the stream to transport logs from forest to mill), have left their mark. These actions degraded aquatic habitat, scoured the stream bed, raised stream temperatures, and even caused water levels to drop, making Tioga Falls impassable to migrating fish. Something needed to change.

### Channeling through bedrock

CoosWA and our partners had the honor of leading a restoration project in this special area. This summer, we dug three new channels into the bedrock of the falls, thereby improving fish access to 14 miles of critical upstream habitat that was previously obstructed. We also widened the "jump hole," which has to be deep enough to give salmon the power to jump over the falls. As humans, we need to crouch down before jumping up—and salmon do something really similar! The final piece of the restoration will be removing a fish ladder this summer. It was installed to help fish navigate the falls but ended up being too ineffective and costly to maintain.

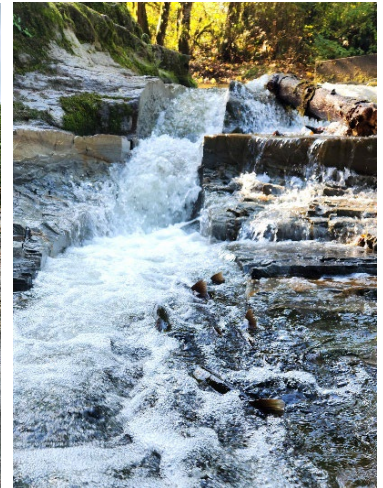
### Bridges provide safe passage

Further upstream on Tioga Creek, old culverts presented another hindrance to fish passage. In 2023, we installed bridges over three tributaries to the creek, which replaced the failing and undersized culverts that were removed in 2021. Bridges allow for free flow of water and better transport of sediment, along with providing much better fish passage to upstream habitat (a whole new mile was opened up by these bridges). These are repurposed railcar bridges, which can be a quick and effective way to get a bridge in place!

### It takes a village

Thank you to our partners for making this project possible: Bavarian Olympus Timber (BOT), Bureau of Land Management-Coos Bay District Office, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, Forest Investment Associates, Mason Bruce & Girard, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry, Wild Salmon Center, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Special thanks to our contractors, Kilgren Water Resources, Timber Roads, LLC, and TNT Construction & Excavation.

**Ready for more?** Our partners at Wild Salmon Center wrote a really cool feature story for this project. For the full story of chutes, ladders, and lessons from the past, visit <https://bit.ly/46Ry8Dv>.



Left: Timber Roads, LLC widening jump hole at base of falls. Right: Fish tails at base of new channel dug into Tioga Falls.



Fish jumping up Tioga Falls post-restoration, captured on wildlife camera.



Railcar bridge installation on Tioga Creek tributary by TNT Construction & Excavation.



# Restoration Highlights continued

## Matson Creek Native Plant Nursery Update

2023 was a “growing” year for the nursery. We hosted nine volunteer days that brought in 26 community members (13 adults, 13 youth) who logged 111 hours of work! The volunteer program will expand to twice a month in 2024, with the goal of providing greater access and opportunities for community members to interact with the nursery. We are extremely appreciative to all our volunteers that took time out of their busy schedules to slow down and connect with their watershed through volunteering their skills and time at our beautiful nursery.

Other nursery highlights: we grew 13,000 plants (22 species), including 12 dune species that are growing in our new sand beds! We had huge initial success with several dune species, including the rare *Nuttallanthus texanus* (Texas toadflax). We also utilized our “seeds crew” to collect native plant seeds for both dune and estuary restoration, as native, locally grown seeds are hard to come by in our watershed. And we purchased our very first tractor, which is a game-changer for our earth-moving work!



Top: volunteers plant cuttings in nursery beds. Left: CoosWA staff Kevin and Anders fill new sand beds. Right: crew members unload straw from Matson tractor.

## Noxious Weeds Program

**Species spotlight.** CoosWA teamed up with Oregon Department of Agriculture and South Slough Reserve to survey and treat *Spartina densiflora*, an invasive cordgrass that has the potential to radically change the Coos estuary. This grass displaces native species like pickleweed (*Salicornia pacifica*) and seaside salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*). Due to its stem density, it increases sedimentation on the salt flat, raising the salt marsh's height. In these marshes, an inch in height can create drastic differences in plant communities, so a *Spartina* invasion could wreak havoc on this important ecosystem. The good news is that this species has popped up in our watershed two other times since 1995 and has been eradicated both times, and the recently discovered population appears to be in decline following our work.

**Weeds work is fun!** With this goal driving our outreach program, CoosWA and the Gorse Action Group hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Gorse Pedal & Pull, a mountain biking and gorse-pulling event on the Whiskey Run Bike Trails. Participants hand-pulled 94 pounds of gorse seedlings and celebrated with an after-party featuring snacks, drinks from 7 Devils, and live bluegrass music. We also started a new event called the Holly Hack-a-Thon, incentivizing watershed residents to chop down holly trees and turn them in to wood items through a partnership with Oregon Coast Artisan and Trade Education Cooperative (OCATEC), and a Weyerhaeuser chainsaw raffle to encourage foresters to report noxious weed sightings to us. The best part of this work is teaming up with other local groups, such as the Coquille Watershed Association, South Slough Reserve, Gorse Action Group, and South Coast CWMA—this work takes the whole watershed! Be on the lookout for our recently ramped up Weed of the Month ad, now in three local newspapers, with info on priority invasives to watch out for.



CoosWA, South Slough Reserve, and ODA team up on *Spartina* surveys.



Gorse Pedal & Pull participants show off gorse seedlings pulled (94 lbs total).

**On-the-ground projects.** We made great progress on our long-term treatment programs for knotweed on the South Fork Coos River, Policeman's helmet on the North Slough, purple loosestrife on Catching Slough (via biocontrol beetles), yellowflag iris on Kentuck Creek, and Spanish heath (we found the only known population in Coos County). In the dunes, we controlled Scotch broom and European beachgrass across nearly 70 acres between the North Spit and Bastendorff. After years of these efforts, many of the populations can be maintained through spot spray and manual pulling, with native dune species gradually expanding their spread.

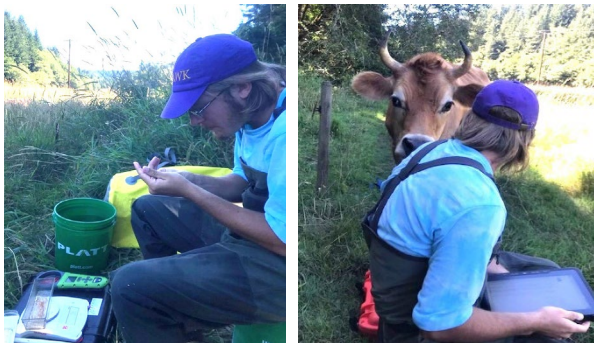


# Science & Monitoring Highlights

## Life Cycle Monitoring (LCM) Program

This was the 19th year of the CoosWA Coho Life Cycle Monitoring (LCM) program, which continues to contribute to the greater understanding of juvenile coho salmon use of estuaries and their migratory path as they rear in freshwater and tidal environments. This program runs year-round and relies on different tracking and trapping techniques to monitor population and cohort demographics and assess the growth and survival of salmon on two tidally influenced streams, Palouse and Willanch Creeks.

Our team conducted spawning surveys from October to February and observed similar numbers of adult coho to last year at Willanch (39 compared to last year's 38). At Palouse, we observed far more adults in the 2023 season (702 compared to 241 from the previous year). Overall, estimates from both streams fall within the average range for the 19-year study period.



LCM team member AJ tags juvenile coho (left) with extra oversight (right).



Female coho spotted during surveys.

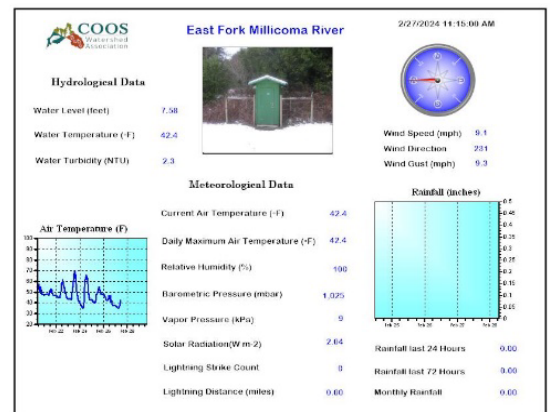
Using methods such as seining (summer) and rotary screw traps (winter and spring), the LCM team identified, counted, weighed, measured, and marked coho salmon with individual PIT tags to help track their movements within these sub basins. To help with these tasks, we hosted four interns, three from Southwestern Oregon Community College and one from the Hutton Junior Fisheries Biology Program led by Bureau of Land Management and American Fisheries Society. We are grateful for the 60+ interns who have supported the LCM program since 2012!

## Hydrology and Stream Gauges

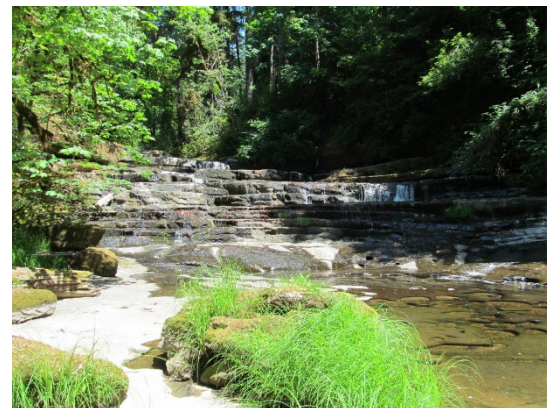
CoosWA continues to operate and maintain seven stream gauges in and around the Coos Basin's rivers and creeks (East and West Fork Millicoma, Marlow, South Fork Coos, Tioga, Tenmile, and Eel). These gauges track stream flow, water quality (temperature, sediment levels, and turbidity), and weather data (air temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure, vapor pressure, solar radiation, wind speed/direction, wind gust, precipitation, and lightning strike count and distance). This information is utilized by a variety of end users via our website, where real-time stream data are uploaded every 15 minutes for public use (<http://streamdata.cooswatershed.org/>). The website is especially helpful to check during winter weather when the rivers fill up!

## Road Surveys

In 2023, the Coos Watershed Association completed a two-year project to assess the roads in and around the Devil's Staircase Wilderness, a newly established (March 2019) wilderness area in the Siuslaw National Forest that is nestled between the Umpqua and Smith River watersheds. We don't normally have opportunities to work this far outside of our home watershed, but the Coos Bay Bureau of Land Management invited us to lead the project because of our experience leading road surveys in the Coos watershed. Our goal was to identify potential road failure locations that could negatively affect the wilderness through things like runoff, sediment input, and undersized culverts. We have compiled the results into a technical report titled "Devil's Staircase GRAIP Assessment and Sediment Reduction Plan." This plan can be used to develop road improvement and maintenance activities that reduce roads' impact on streams.



Example of stream data page at [cooswatershed.org](http://cooswatershed.org).



Devil's Staircase Falls (photo credit: US Forest Service).



# Outreach & Education Highlights

## Youth Engagement

In 2023, we continued our programs with local high schools in partnership with the Oregon Youth Corps and Gray Family Foundation. During the school year, students in our Destinations Academy program helped with the native landscaping at the Coos History Museum, led a booth at the Coos Watershed Mayfly Festival, and planted veggies and native plants in the Milner Crest school garden. A major highlight was working with Lindsey from the Coos Farm-to-Child program to build our own soil in the beds using a technique called “lasagna gardening” (adding layers of compost to make soil). This garden is being given new life: the high school program now shares this building with preschoolers, so the long-term plan is for our teens to spend their watershed program time creating a safe and welcoming garden environment for the younger kids.

Over the summer, we co-lead an environmental leadership program for Upward Bound Summer Academy students at SWOCC. As a final project, our group of 20 high school students led a Scotch broom removal event at the college. This was also our 12<sup>th</sup> year of hosting a summer youth crew with Oregon Youth Corps, and we hired five wonderful youth who spent the summer helping us maintain our native plant nursery and work on habitat restoration projects all over the watershed. In addition to gaining solid natural resources work experience, they also learned about tool safety, professionalism, small engine repair, plant and bird identification, and how to build a resume. They also completed a CPR and First Aid certification class and participated in regular journaling and team-building activities. We look forward to continuing this very successful program in 2024.



Compost flies at the Milner Crest Garden!



Summer youth crew, seeds crew, and crew leaders.

## Community events

This was an exciting year for our community programs! For the first time since 2019, we hosted the annual **Coos Watershed Mayfly Festival** at Mingus Park, which engaged at least 300 visitors in watershed conversations, activities, games, music, and fun. This free, family-friendly event gives our community a safe and fun way to explore and enjoy nature while learning about watershed ecology and interconnectedness. New additions this year included an opening song with Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, a Mayfly Movement class, an ecology-themed Story Time, and a handful of new activity booths. Next festival is May 18, 2024!



Mayfly Festivalgoers see a watershed model in action (left) and look at Mingus Pond insects under a microscope (right).

Our **29<sup>th</sup> birthday bash** was also a huge success! Over 70 people came out to celebrate with us at the Eastside Boat Ramp, and 45 people pulled ivy with us earlier in the day at Millicoma Marsh. This year's bash was especially fun with the addition of the Amigas Tacos n' More taco truck and an amazing performance by the South Fork Four band. Thank you to all our event sponsors and donors who helped us raise over \$16,000 during this year's fundraiser. These fundraised dollars will be a huge support to 2024 programs, specifically the Mayfly Festival, Teddy Villers scholarship, and continued development of the Matson Creek Environmental Learning Center.



Community members mingle at CoosWA's 29<sup>th</sup> birthday bash fundraiser in September.



# Outreach & Education Highlights continued

## New watershed outreach tools

In 2023, we contracted with four professional artists/designers to help us advance our outreach and education messages: local artist Hustle and Flow created custom plant and animal magnets for our magnetic watershed map designed by Ram Papish, Eugene-based Taller McQueen Art designed a new Mayfly Festival graphic to help communicate the life cycle and food web theme of the festival, and Neptune Birch made two short videos featuring Coos County tide gates and people, which you can watch here (<https://youtu.be/oHsh0ipPd70> and <https://youtu.be/n7DrNEkbrRs>) or find on the Coos Watershed Association's YouTube channel.



Video link  
<https://youtu.be/oHsh0ipPd70>  
Filename  
Salmon habitat and working landscapes 4K(1)...

*Left and middle:* Custom magnets made by Hustle and Flow (Lorelei the artist is pictured here) for our watershed map. *Top right:* new Mayfly Festival graphic by Taller McQueen Art. *Bottom right:* new tide gate videos showcasing Coos watershed residents, produced by Neptune Birch.

## Teddy Villers Natural Resource Scholarship



The Teddy Villers scholarship honors the life of Teddy Villers.

In 2023, the Villers Family of Blue Ridge Timber Company and the Coos Watershed Association awarded the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Teddy Villers Natural Resource scholarship. This award honors the life of Teddy Villers (October 7, 2004 – September 4, 2015). Teddy, son of Mark and Adela Villers, lost his life while working on a salmon habitat restoration project with his dad in September 2015. He had a strong curiosity and deep passion for the natural world and, from a young age, loved being outside working with his dad in the woods on projects that improved the watershed for both wildlife and people. The Villers family established a scholarship in Teddy's name, which is awarded to a local candidate each year who demonstrates passion for and commitment to pursuing post-secondary education in the field of natural resources.

We were pleased to award the 2023 scholarship to Paige Speakman, a North Bend High School student planning to study Rangeland Management and Forestry at Oregon State University and SWOCC. Previous recipients of this award include Aubrey Turner (2022), Abby Richards (2021), Alissa McCord (2020), Melanie Cavanagh (2019), Cole Michael Smith (2018), and Jamie Decker (2017).



Paige Speakman, recipient of the 2023 Teddy Villers Scholarship.



## Board & Staff Milestones & Anniversaries

Over the past 29 years, the Association has had the pleasure of employing over 200 people and welcoming 90 community members to serve on our Board of Directors. Board members go above and beyond to guide and support the Association, through regular board meetings, committees, planning sessions, and volunteer events. Two board members reached important milestones in 2023: **John Sweet** (5 years) and **Marty Giles** (20 years!). Three CoosWA staff members also reached important milestones: **Haley Lutz** (5 years), **Alexa Carleton** (10 years), and **Dan Draper** (20 years!).



Board and staff celebrating milestones in 2023: Marty Giles (20 years on board), John Sweet (5 years on board), Alexa Carleton (10 years as staff), and Haley Lutz (5 years as staff).

Speaking of 20 years, Dan is the only staff member (out of more than 200) who has reached this milestone, which deserves a little extra recognition! Dan joined our team as a bright, young, energetic field technician in 2003. Since then, he has held multiple roles at CoosWA, including field technician, tree planting crew member, nursery manager, monitoring technician, fish habitat specialist, and restoration project manager. To the staff, however, he holds the unofficial titles of resident handyman, devil's advocate, moss-man, field ninja, and the second half of the grumpy old man crew (Freelin makes up the other half). His coworkers throughout the years would undoubtedly all say that when you need something designed, built, tested, or problem-solved, Dan is your guy. His cheerful nature, tenacity, and can-do attitude has come in handy countless times in the last two decades. Dan, thank you for all your hard work and dedication over the years to making our watershed and organization a better place!



Dan Draper, through the ages.



## Big changes, new chapters



Chris Bauman retired after being our Financial and Office Manager for 7 years.

Chris Bauman found her way to us in 2017 after spending 20 years living on a boat in Alaska, where she worked in shelters of domestic violence and sexual assault. Her years of financial record-keeping and grant management experience were a tremendous asset to CoosWA, where she has been our Financial and Office Manager for seven years. During that time, she created financial protocols to help this organization run smoothly into the future, became a pro at federal audits and Indirect Cost Rate applications, kept the unruly staffers in line, formed and took loving care of the office plant jungle, and became the favorite dog auntie to all CoosWA dogs but most importantly Barnacle. She even chipped in a hand when our riparian crew needed some assistance during erosion control season. This special lady has done it all! Thank you, Chris, for all your hard work over the years! You will be greatly missed, but we will see you around.

We were thrilled to welcome Mindy Vetter into the Financial and Office Manager position at the end of 2023, which was the last step in Chris finally getting to settle down and enjoy a relaxing retirement life. These days, you will find her in her garden or enjoying a long walk on the beach.

## Volunteer with us!

We are now offering a weekday and weekend volunteer opportunity at the nursery each month. This is a great chance to get some outdoor time, meet community and CoosWA staff members, and contribute to the watershed in a really meaningful way while spending time in one of its prettiest places. We also welcome you as a volunteer, booth leader, or participant in our 8<sup>th</sup> annual Coos Watershed Mayfly Festival. Visit [www.cooswatershed.org/mayfly-festival](http://www.cooswatershed.org/mayfly-festival) for more info!

**MATSON NATIVE PLANT NURSERY VOLUNTEER DAYS 2024**

FIRST SATURDAY FROM 10 AM TO 2 PM		THIRD THURSDAY FROM 8 AM TO 12 PM	
Feb. 3	Jul. 6	Jan. 18	Jul. 18
Mar. 2	Aug. 3	Feb. 15	Aug. 15
Apr. 6	Sep. 7	Mar. 21	Sep. 19
May 4	Oct. 5	Apr. 18	Oct. 17
Jun. 1	Nov. 2	May 16	Nov. 21
	Dec. 7	Jun. 20	Dec. 19

For questions or to RSVP to receive the location, please email: [kklietz@cooswatershed.org](mailto:kklietz@cooswatershed.org)

**Save the date!**

Hands-on science  
Community art projects  
Costumes  
Face painting  
Raffle  
Music, games, food, and more!

**FREE ADMISSION**

The Coos Watershed Mayfly Festival is an event sponsored by the Coos Watershed Association and other local partners, designed to shed light on connections between community, the environment, and water.

Check [cooswatershed.org](http://cooswatershed.org) and our social media pages for updates!

Interested in sponsoring or volunteering?  
Contact [acarleton@cooswatershed.org](mailto:acarleton@cooswatershed.org)

**COOS** Watershed Association

Coos Watershed Association's 8th annual

**MAYFLY FESTIVAL**

**May 18, 2024 | 11:00 - 3:00**  
Mingus Park, Coos Bay, OR



## **Our Mission**

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***The mission of the Coos Watershed Association is to support environmental integrity and economic stability within the Coos watershed by increasing community capacity to develop, test, promote, and implement management practices in the interest of watershed health.***

## **Statement of Shared Values:**

*It is possible to achieve environmental integrity, economic stability, and human well-being within the Coos watershed.*

*Natural products and processes of the watershed are indicators of watershed health and are important to the economy and vitality of the community.*

*Human activities have a legitimate place in the watershed.*

*Our actions can affect the stability of the watershed and related economy.*

*Deliberate planning and action for watershed health are important and effectively achieved by the people who live and work within the watershed.*

*A watershed scale-perspective improves our ability to sustain the health of the watershed and related economic activities.*

*The coordination of our individual effects can achieve a synergistic, beneficial effect on the watershed.*

*Maintaining harmonious relationships with stakeholders, partners, landowners, clients, suppliers, employees, and each other contributes to the organization's effectiveness in improving the health of the watershed.*

*Fostering and appreciating a diversity of opinion, background, and approach while supporting the mission of CoosWA will ultimately strengthen the Board and further our efforts to advance the mission and sustain our organization.*



## Looking ahead to our 30<sup>th</sup> year

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the many partners, landowners, funders, field techs, volunteers, interns, students, and community supporters who made sure that 2023 was a great year for the watershed. There are too many of you to list here, but we are grateful to each and every one of you for giving us the inspiration and the capacity to continue this work. We look forward to working with you again next year!

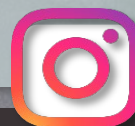
***Help us celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> year with the following events in 2024: the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Mayfly Festival (May 18 at Mingus Park), our 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash Fundraiser (October 12 at Bristol Event Center), and many more fun things in-between.***

To learn more about these events and other opportunities, choose from any of the following: sign up for our email list to receive our newsletters (<https://cooswatershed.org/#subscribe>), visit our website and social media pages, give us a call, shoot us an email, or stop by our office. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

*The CoosWA board and staff*

**Photo credits:** Photos by CoosWA unless otherwise noted, reserving all rights.



381 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St • Coos Bay, OR 97420 • 541-888-5922  
[cooswa@cooswatershed.org](mailto:cooswa@cooswatershed.org) • [www.cooswatershed.org](http://www.cooswatershed.org)

@CoosWA

@CoosWA



Coos Watershed Association invites you to our...

# 30TH BIRTHDAY BASH FUNDRAISER!



**Saturday, October 12, 2024 • 5-8 PM**  
Bristol Event Center, Coos Bay



*Dinner, auction, live music, and more... this is a birthday bash you won't want to miss!*

Check **[cooswatershed.org](http://cooswatershed.org)** for updates

Interested in donating an auction item or sponsoring? Contact **[hlutz@cooswatershed.org](mailto:hlutz@cooswatershed.org)**!



Photo credit: Wild Salmon Center/Brian Kelly