



COOS
Watershed
Association

COOS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Our Mission

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.

A Note from our Director

We had a great year in 2025, thanks to our supportive and engaged community! In addition to many meaningful events and projects that you'll read about in this report, we also released a new Strategic Plan to guide our work from 2025-2029. Overall, our goal for those five years is to help people feel more connected to the watershed, boost our local economy by investing in local suppliers and contractors, and improve the ecological health of the habitats we all depend on. The Strategic Plan gives us a way to track these social, economic, and environmental impacts. Specifically, we have four goals:

1. A community of people is empowered to care about the watershed and actively work to improve watershed health.
2. Freshwater and estuarine habitat in the Coos watershed are improved to support robust salmon populations and thriving communities.
3. CoosWA's design protocols and monitoring methods are improved to more effectively implement projects that support long term ecological function, stability, and resilience for all species in the watershed with an emphasis on salmonids.
4. Coos Watershed Association is resilient and has sustainable human, physical, operational, and financial resources needed to achieve its mission.

We rolled out the plan mid-year, so we will share some preliminary results from our 2025 work with you below—but we look forward to having much more to share with you in the upcoming years. Thank you for all you do support the health of our watershed!

With gratitude,

Haley Lutz, Executive Director

51%
of annual revenue
invested in Coos
County

78%
of annual revenue
invested in
Oregon

1,127
participants at
CoosWA events

100%
of surveyed
participants feel more
informed about
watershed health and
how to contribute

7.2 miles of instream complexity
improved with large woody debris

15.5 acres of riparian areas enhanced

12,000 native plant species planted

2.2 miles of livestock exclusion fencing
installed on streams

3.8 acres of floodplain connectivity
improved

14.8 acres of tidal wetland
connectivity improved or created

11.3 miles of stream more accessible
for fish passage

2025 Staff Members

1. Haley Lutz, Executive Director
2. Sheena Wheeler, Finance Manager
3. Diana Wright, Administrative Assistant
4. Kara Klietz, Community Engagement Specialist
5. Elena Bernier, Community Engagement Specialist
6. Alexa Carleton, Outreach Program Manager
7. Meagan Abele, Monitoring Program Manager
8. Freelin Reasor, Hydrological Specialist
9. Jesse Jones, Monitoring Specialist
10. Anders Hansen, Monitoring Specialist
11. Kevin Whittaker, Fisheries Research Assistant
12. Allison Tarbox, Restoration Project Manager
13. Dan Draper, Restoration Project Manager
14. Jeff Kerber, Restoration Project & Crew Manager
15. Ed Cope, Plants Program Manager
16. Taylor Jarding, Restoration Crew Lead
17. Eric Perry, Noxious Weeds Specialist
18. AJ Kliewer, Restoration Technician

Thank you to our 2025 seasonal crew members:

Alexa (Lex) Orr, Danni Danielson, Maura Speck, Sophie Wilkerson, Aspen Werelus, Lincoln Harris, Caven O'Shea, McKinley Warncke, Diego Garcia, Abigail Templehoff

Thank you to our 2025 interns:

Ari Anders, Caleb Lafrombois, Fiona Berg-Robison, Maleah Thomas

2025 Board Members

1. Bradford McKeown, President (Member-at-large)
2. Joe Metzler, Vice President (Cape Arago Audubon Society)
3. Don Yost, Treasurer (Member-at-large)
4. Amy Burgess, Secretary (Southwestern Oregon Community College)
5. Mike Dunning (Oregon International Port of Coos Bay)
6. Marty Giles (Recreation & Tourism)
7. Lucas Green (Weyerhaeuser Company)
8. Rishia Latta (City of Coos Bay)
9. Joan Mahaffy (Agriculture)
10. Jeff Messerle, (Agriculture)
11. Kristopher Murphy, (Coquille Indian Tribe)
12. Rebecca Muse (South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve)
13. Larry Reiber (Member-at-large)
14. Randy Smith (Oregon Department of Forestry)
15. John Sweet (Coos County Commissioner)
16. Jamie Doyle (SeaGrant)
17. Lanelle Comstock (Oregon International Port of Coos Bay)

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

Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2025

THE NUMBERS EXPLAINED

Money we brought in – top chart

The majority (87% in 2025) of our funding comes from a mix of state and federal grants. **Quick note about federal grants:** the 37% includes both funding directly from federal agencies and federal funding that passes through state agencies.

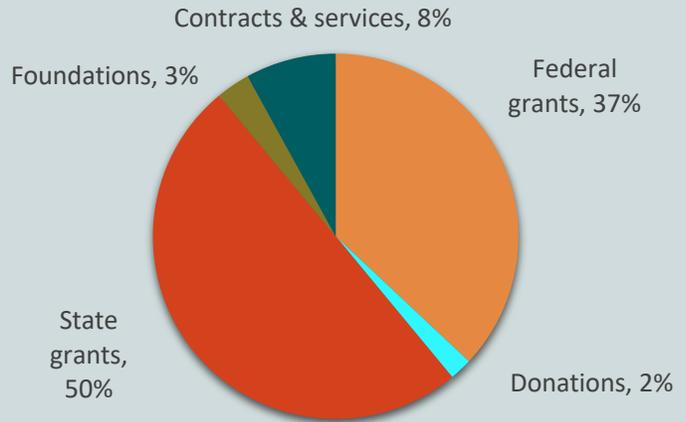
The remaining 13% of our income from 2025 came from donations/fundraisers (2%), Foundation grants (3%), and fee-for-service contracts (8%; other groups hiring us for projects).

How we spent it – bottom chart

Of all the funds we brought into Coos County in 2025, over a quarter (30%) went towards contracted services—this includes hiring contractors for restoration, monitoring, and outreach projects. Salaries and benefits made up nearly half of our budget in 2025 (42%). These funds came in the form of paychecks to 28 employees: 18 permanent and 10 seasonals, including youth crew members who helped implement this work.

This is all part of our effort to bring money into Coos County and keep it here—thus supporting both the ecological and economic health of our watershed. In 2025, we prioritized hiring local contractors for the earthmoving, log placement, and stream restoration work central to our projects (**Coos County contractors are noted in bold and blue throughout the report**), and we purchased many necessary supplies from local businesses. **As a result, the grant funding we bring into the community largely remains here, directly supporting and creating dozens of local jobs—** particularly through contracted services, which accounted for **30%** of our annual budget in 2025. **Overall, 51% of our total expenses were spent in Coos County,** and of that amount, **48%** went to locally owned and operated businesses, while **3%** was spent at local brick-and-mortar stores with broader ownership. An additional 27% of expenses were spent elsewhere in Oregon, meaning more than three-quarters of our budget stayed within the state. Only 1% of expenses went to international vendors, with the remainder supporting companies based in the United States.

2025 Revenue by Source
\$2,896,279



2025 Expenditures by Category
\$2,942,953



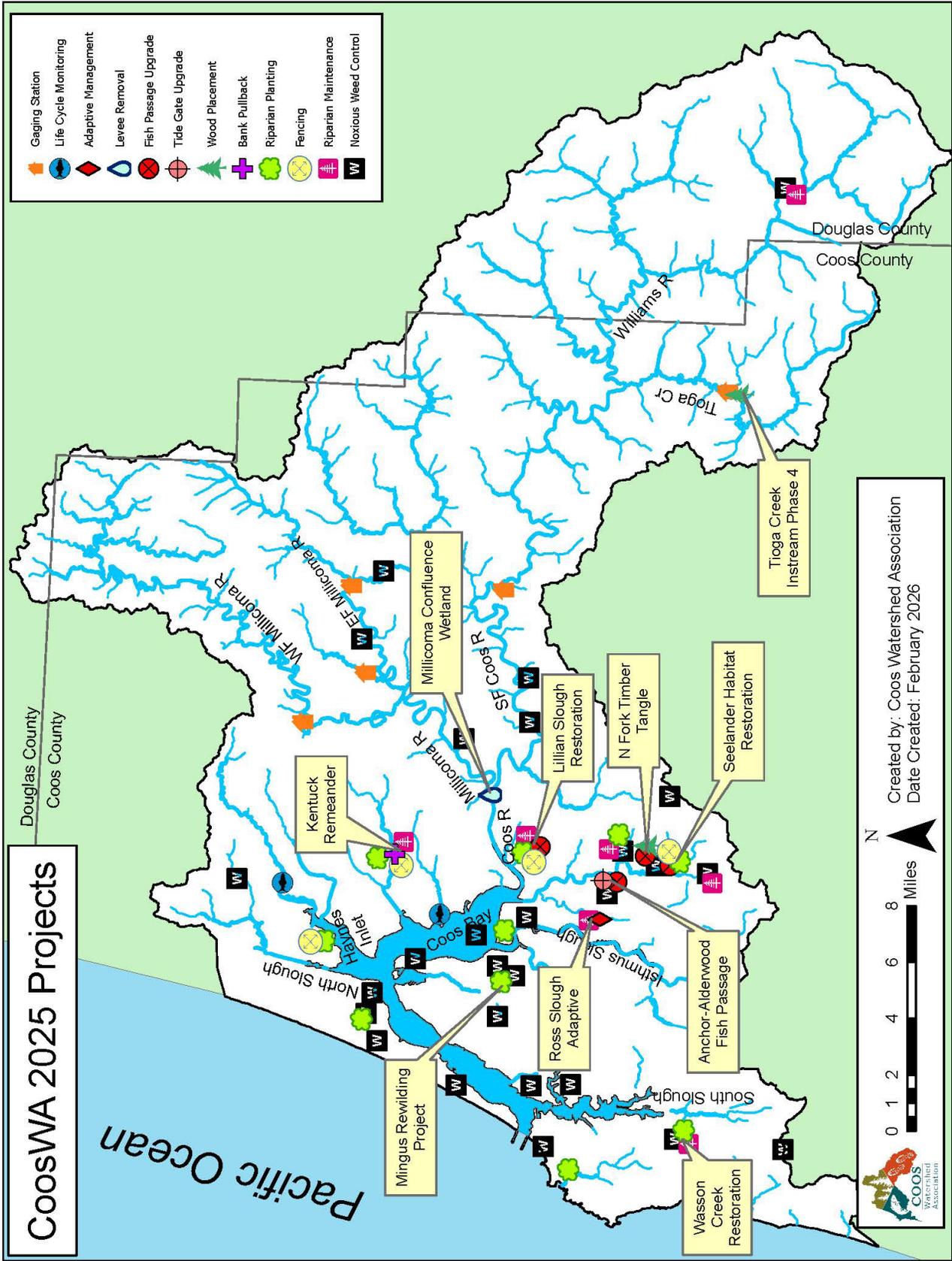
Statement of Activities for the year ending Dec 2025

Revenues

Grants	\$2,576,174
Contributions	\$48,011
Other income	\$272,094
Total revenue	\$2,896,279

Expenses

Program services	\$2,367,381
Support services	\$575,572
Total expenses	\$2,942,953



Restoration project sites for CoosWA in 2025, including projects that are part of the Coos Basin Coho Partnership

Restoration Highlights

Instream & riparian restoration offer solutions for environment and economy

We take two main approaches to habitat restoration to holistically restore streams and their surrounding habitat while also boosting our local economy. **In-stream restoration** takes place directly in the stream, such as building log jams, re-meandering creeks that have been straightened, removing barriers to migrating fish, and reducing the amount of sediment that enters the water from surrounding areas. We have been implementing these projects since the mid-1990s to improve the quality and quantity of habitat for a wide range of aquatic species.

But restoring streams is only half of the puzzle: a healthy stream also needs plants! Through **riparian restoration**, our in-house planting crews create diverse native plant zones along the stream bank that offer shade, lower stream temperatures, reduce erosion, filter runoff, provide critical habitat for wildlife, and support the aquatic food web (for example, the plants feed the insects, the insects feed salmon, and the salmon feed the plants).



Riparian area planted with native plants along Lillian Slough

Here are some examples of restoration in action, beginning at the “top” of the watershed and moving downstream!

Uplands



Timber Roads LLC (**local**) placing logs in Tioga Creek

The upper reaches of our watershed hold some of the best habitats: the cold, fast-moving water is a beacon to migratory fish, their offspring that are born there, 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. But this area was heavily impacted by land management practices throughout the 1900s, so we have been restoring habitat here for decades. Each year, we expand further downstream, creating spawning and rearing habitat for salmon along the way. One way we do this is by placing wood and boulders, which create habitat and trap gravel. When the gravel builds up, it covers the exposed bedrock and lowers stream temperatures, which is especially important when the water levels get low in the summer. In 2025, we placed instream wood along 0.75 miles of the creek. Special thanks to our contractor, [Blue Ridge Timber Cutting \(**local**\)](#).

Lowlands

As we move further down in the watershed, we encounter totally different habitats with more complex needs than the upland areas. These lower areas are critical to juvenile salmon, offering resting, hiding, and rearing habitat during their migration to the ocean. But salmon share these areas with invasive species, many types of wildlife, landowners, businesses, farms, roads, and city and county infrastructure, which often have competing needs. This presents both challenges and opportunities for creative solutions that offer economic and environmental benefits. Our goal in these areas is generally to restore lost wetland habitat (especially wood, gravel, and native plants), reshape streams that have been ditched and straightened, create areas of calmer water for migrating salmon to take a break from mainstem rivers, and remove barriers that hinder fish access to upland spawning grounds – while balancing the needs of landowners (livestock, water management, etc.).

Restoration Highlights continued

Here's what our lowland work looked like in 2025:

Upgraded culverts to improve fish access to upstream habitat in **Seelander Creek** and installed the final Agricultural bridge at **Lillian Slough** to allow livestock and agricultural equipment to cross from one side of the creek to the other without going through the water. We also planted streamside buffers of native plants that exclude livestock. These actions offer win-win solutions in multi-use areas that can be used for agriculture while keeping the creeks and surrounding ecosystems protected and healthy. Thank you to our contractors at Seelander (Papaya Excavation, LLC) and Lillian ([Scott Knox, local](#)).

Teamed up with Coos County Road Department and nearby agricultural landowners to replace four culverts along **Alderwood Creek** to facilitate fish passage upstream and prevent flooding in high winter flows (contractor: Papaya Excavation, LLC). Over the last century, the creek had been channelized and simplified, and its streamside vegetation removed—not to mention the rusted, damaged, and undersized culverts that restricted water flow, led to flooding, and limited fish passage for migratory species like Coho. After our upgrades, the creek now flows more freely with some very large culverts, which reduce bottlenecks and allow for wider, unrestricted flows and improved fish access to over two miles of spawning and rearing habitat!

Removed an undersized, perched culvert and placed wood along **Upper North Fork Timber Tangle Creek**. This eliminates sediment input and risk of culvert failure, opens up 0.07 miles of previously unusable habitat, and improves the complexity of tributary habitat ([contractor: Blue Ridge Timber Cutting, local](#)). This builds on the original Timber Tangle project, immediately downstream, which improved instream habitat on 0.4 miles of Timber Tangle Creek.

Planted over 7,000 plants at the **South Slough Wasson Creek Ridgetop-to-estuary restoration** (read more about this in the Native Plants Program section).



Culvert upgrades at Alderwood Creek



Wood placement & culvert removal in Timber Tangle Creek



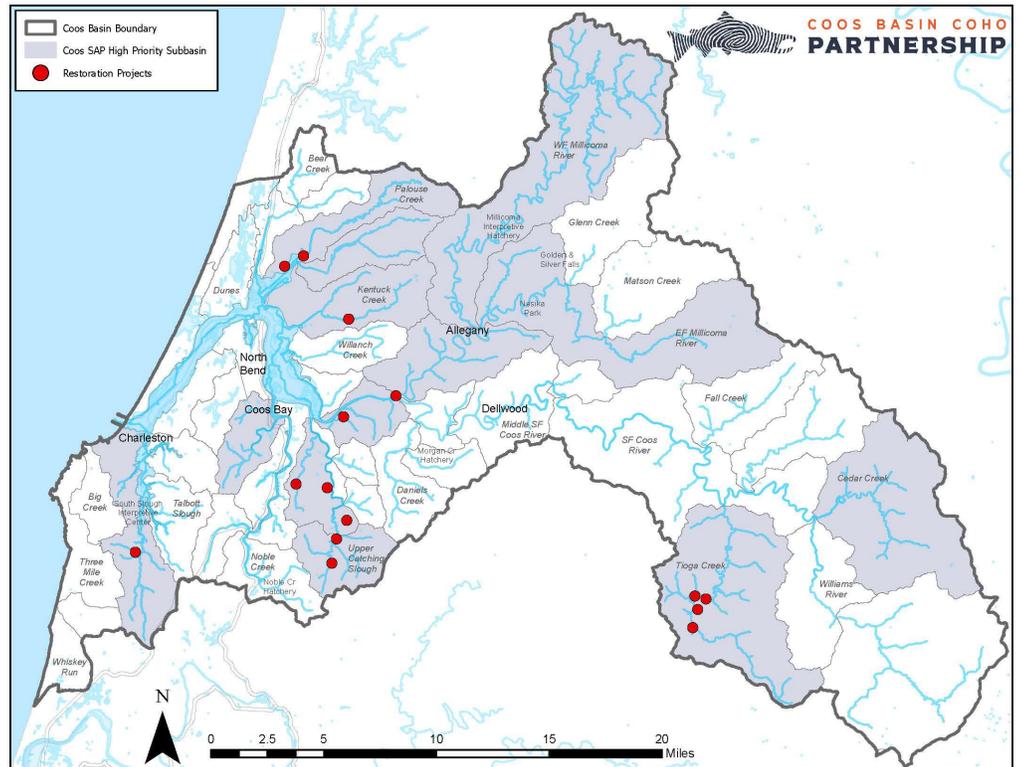
Juvenile salmon (photo credit: Wild Salmon Center), *left*, and raccoon prints, *right*

The big picture: restoration in our lowlands addresses the primary limiting factor for Coho salmon—lack of summer and winter off-channel rearing habitat—within the Lower Coos River, Lillian, and Catching Slough sub-basins. We aim to increase juvenile survival and abundance while creating a more robust, healthier, out-migrating smolt population and a healthier aquatic ecosystem as a whole—not just for salmon, but for the people and wildlife who also call these areas home.

Restoration Highlights continued

Habitat restoration offers solutions for the environment and community

All of the stories mentioned thus far are part of the Coos Basin Coho Partnership, a grassroots group that seeks to recover Coho salmon populations in the Coos Basin. This Partnership, which includes 15 entities (and over 30 people) at the tribal, state, federal, industry, and local level, grew out of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for Coho Salmon in the Coos Basin. The SAP outlines the long-term strategies that need to be enacted over the next 25 years to sustain our coastal Coho salmon into the future—and points to 30+ sites across 13 sub-basins in the Coos watershed that are the highest priority for restoration efforts. The highest priority projects are those that remove barriers and address key limiting factors for Coho, such as the quality, quantity, and access to summer and winter off-channel rearing habitat.



Coos Basin Coho Partnership priority subbasins (gray) for restoration (red dots =current/past projects)

While Coho are central to the mission, the benefits of Coho restoration go far beyond one species: habitat restoration for Coho benefits hundreds of other types of fish and wildlife (including the aquatic insects they feed on), not to mention the improved economic and human health outcomes (physical, mental, and social) that accompany healthier water and more robust salmon populations.



Coos Basin Coho Partnership at the Coos Bay Farmers Market

The Coos Basin Coho Partnership is funded by an \$11 million Focused Investment Partnership grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, with nearly \$12 million in matching funds from CBP partners. In 2025, this funding also allowed us to lead a booth at the farmers market, host community science talks, and bring more videos and information to the Coos Basin Coho Partnership website. Check it out at cooscoho.org. You can also follow the group on Facebook (@Coos Basin Coho Partnership)—tell your fish-loving friends and family members to follow the page for updates!



Restoration Highlights continued

Feature Story: Millicoma Confluence Wetland Restoration

In 2025, we wrapped up a project that was many years in the making. As you drive out towards Allegany along the Coos River Highway in Coos Bay, you will pass a small wetland that's situated right where two of our main rivers come together: the South Fork Coos River (known as miluku-me, or "of the miluk people") and the Millicoma River (known as k'uggwiich). As you can see by their indigenous (Hanis) names, the name "Millicoma" was given to the wrong river!

Before agricultural conversion, this was one of many flourishing tidal wetlands that shaped the Coos estuary. These wetlands were living systems that supported salmon, waterfowl, and the people who have called this place home for millennia. This particular area was a vital resting and feeding place for salmon on their journey downstream to the ocean.

That balance changed during Coos County's heavy logging days, when log driving was common practice. The property became a staging area for timber before it was sent downstream to the mills, and the deep channels that once sheltered salmon became hot, shallow, and low in oxygen. When the industry eventually shifted, the site was abandoned: the wetland was cut off from the river, and the land was largely forgotten. Then, when the old tide gate finally broke, and the land began to flood again, it revealed an opportunity. Weyerhaeuser, the landowner at the time, reached out to the Coos Watershed Association to explore a solution that could restore natural tidal flow while also protecting neighboring properties.



Root wads placed in newly dug channels, 2022

In 2022, we re-dug the deep channels and installed root wads for habitat complexity, preparing the wetland to once again hold water. But the problematic levee and tide gate remained. The final step took place this summer: crews worked through the night, timing their work with the tides to remove the levee as the water fell, then pulling out the gate before the tide rose again.

For the first time in seventy-five years, tidal water now flows freely through this wetland, and what you see today is a living landscape returning. More than ten acres of winter rearing habitat for Coho salmon now provide calm refuge from the fast flows of the mainstem rivers, once again providing a place for young fish to grow strong before heading to sea. The project also restores a rare Sitka spruce swamp, a habitat once common across the Coos estuary. These forests will again support birds, mammals, and

countless insects that once thrived here. Aquatic insects are especially important, as they feed salmon, which in turn feed the streamside plants, and the streamside plants feed the aquatic insects.



Millicoma Confluence wetland before (left), during (middle), and after (right) levee and tide gate removal in August 2025. Yellow oval shows location of the old levee and tide gate. Photo credit left to right: John Colby, BLM; CoosWA; and Jennifer Kirkland, South Slough Reserve.

Looking ahead. In the context of the full estuary, ten acres is small. But so many of our tidelands have been lost that any step toward renewal—for salmon, wildlife, and community—is a worthwhile step toward a healthier future. The final piece of this story is one of restoration in every sense. With the help of the Wild Rivers Land Trust, this land will soon return to the care of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, renewing both the ecosystem and the relationship between people and place.

Restoration Highlights continued



Millicoma Confluence wetland before and during channel reconfiguration (top photos) and after levee and tide gate removal (bottom) at low tide. Photo credit: Weyerhaeuser (top), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (bottom).

It takes a village!

Dozens of committed people and organizations made this project happen over many years and countless conversations and shifting timelines. Thank you to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Wild Salmon Center, NOAA Restoration Center, Weyerhaeuser, Coos Basin Coho Partnership, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, Wild Rivers Land Trust, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Timber Roads, Waterways Consulting, Pali Consulting, Logan Simpson, PaleoWest Archaeology, Archaeological Services, LLC, and PAC Creative Agency. You have given a special part of our watershed a chance to thrive again.

Restoration Highlights continued

Native Plants Program

Native plants, those that are local to Oregon (and sometimes just the coast), are a critical part of our habitat restoration program due to their numerous ecological, cultural, and historical benefits. Whether they are growing along a stream in a pasture, in an urban garden, or in your own backyard, native plants provide shade, prevent erosion, filter stormwater, create wildlife habitat, and support ecological food webs that we all depend on. The goal of our native plants program is to get as many native species out in the landscape as possible and to empower community members to take part in this effort through a volunteer program at our native plant nursery.

2025 was another great year for the **Matson Creek Native Plant Nursery**: we produced 12,500 trees and shrubs—16 native species—for our restoration projects. We also secured an \$11,000 grant from the Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation to rebuild our aging irrigation system in 2026.



Volunteers build new raised bed in the nursery

Many hands, many hours. We hosted five volunteer days at the nursery in 2025 that brought in 32 volunteers, who contributed 64 hours of impactful work! We are thankful for our volunteers who spent their time and energy planting with us at the South Slough Wasson Creek restoration project, heeling in plants and building raised beds at the nursery, and creating plant nametags for the beds.

From the nursery to the field. The hard work at the nursery pays off when we get to add thousands of healthy, locally grown, and resilient plants to our restoration sites. CoosWA’s planting crew planted over 12,000 native plants across all our projects during the fall/winter 2025-2026 planting season. Our biggest planting effort was at the **Wasson Creek Ridgetop-to-Estuary restoration**, a project led by the South Slough Reserve. During our second year of planting here, we added 7,241 plants, for a total of 21,278 plants over a



CoosWA winter crew plants over 7,000 native plants at Wasson Creek

two-year period! Since earth work wrapped up in 2024, we are seeing vegetation really start to fill in the bare soils that were exposed by construction, and the water is starting to create its own stream channels—the coolest part of a “stage zero” restoration. Another interesting metric to consider: the cuttings, bamboo, and vexar tubes placed to protect the fragile new plants at Wasson weighed **8,563 pounds**. There is a reason our planting crew has huge arm muscles by the end of the season: it’s not just shovels that they’re carrying into sites! For more info about this unique “stage zero” restoration project, [click here](#), or visit <https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/ss/pages/stewardship.aspx>.

Closer to town, we had an exciting opportunity in 2025 to incorporate plants from our nursery into the **Mingus Park Rewilding Project**. The southeast corner of Mingus Park, which was known in recent years for its tendency to flood every winter, now has rocky swales and a design that embraces the park’s marshy past. We selected 19 species (200 plants total) that thrived here long before park construction, when this area was part of a vibrant wetland surrounding Mill Slough. These native plants will absorb water, reduce flooding, support wildlife (birds, pollinators, amphibians, and more!), and build biodiversity and resilience back into this important part of our watershed. Thank you to the City of Coos Bay, Coquille Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Stillwater Natives Nursery, and the Judith Ann Mogan Foundation for making this project a reality.



CoosWA plants team plants hundreds of native plants at Mingus Park

Restoration Highlights continued

Noxious Weeds Program

Species spotlight: Jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*) is perennial grass ranging from six to ten feet tall. Known for their showy and attractive displays, they're often found in yards and gardens. However, these plants are escaping into our natural landscapes and active forest lands, where they take over and crowd out tree seedlings, especially in areas that have been logged. They produce 100,000 seeds per year, which can travel by wind, and they reproduce by clones, which makes them especially adept at spreading to new areas. In addition to putting our coastal landscapes and sensitive native species at risk, they also form dense populations of dry plant material that create a serious fire hazard. Note: Pampas grass looks, behaves, and invades similarly.

What to do:

1. Whatever you do, **DO NOT BUY OR PLANT JUBATA OR PAMPAS GRASS!** If you need more reasons, they have razor-sharp leaves that will cut bare skin, and the base of the plants is a favorite home for rats.
2. Remove manually by digging up the full root mass.
3. Report to your local watershed council if you see it on public lands or in large numbers anywhere in the watershed.

On-the-ground projects. Dense-flowered cordgrass (*Sporobolus montevidensis*) continues to be a major focus of our noxious weed control program. Left unchecked, this grass could completely take over the estuary, altering it in ways that would be damaging both environmentally and economically. Luckily, CoosWA and our partners at the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the South Slough Reserve have been meticulously surveying the bay and removing every plant we find. We are happy to report that our control efforts have been enormously successful: populations that used to number in the hundreds have been reduced to a handful of individuals. With a bit of sustained effort, we are hopeful that this weed can be fully eradicated from our shorelines.

Weeds bring people together. CoosWA and the Gorse Action Group hosted the **4th annual Gorse Pedal & Pull**, a mountain biking and gorse-pulling event on the Whiskey Run Bike Trails between Coos Bay and Bandon. Our 21 participants removed **150 pounds of gorse seedlings** from the lower trail system—more than the last two years combined! Since 2022, we have removed over 400 pounds of gorse during this event, which is starting to leave a mark. Thank you to Gorse Action Group, Front Street Community Bike Works, Blue Sky Bike Shop, Moe's Bike Shop, Wild Coast Trails Association, 7 Devils Brewery, and Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation. We could not do this event without these partnerships! We are already looking forward to year five—in the meantime, for info about gorse on the South Coast, visit <https://gorseactiongroup.org/>.

South Coast Cooperative Weed Management Area Presents:

Weed of the Month: November

Cortaderia jubata - jubata grass

<p>ID Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flower: purple turning cream, up to 10 feet tall blooms Aug- Nov. - Leaves: long, skinny, and razor sharp - Similar to pampas grass but invades faster 		<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Density of populations and build-up of dry plant material is a FIRE HAZARD! - Pests (like rats) occupy the plant's base - Very competitive in forest operations, outcompeting seedling trees
<p>DO NOT PLANT!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jubata grass is often included in landscaping and will quickly escape - Reproduces by itself, seeds viable upon release 		<p>Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report to your local watershed council ONLY if found in agriculture, timber, and natural areas

Contact your local watershed weed expert:

<p>Curry Watersheds Partnership (541) 247-2755</p> 	<p>Coquille Watershed Association (541) 396-2541</p> 	<p>Coos Watershed Association (541) 888-5922</p> 
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Pedal & Pull participants remove gorse from Whiskey Run bike trails

Collaboration is the name of the game for all watershed projects, but particularly noxious weeds. In 2025, we hosted six weed-pull events across the watershed (Airport Heights Park, Millicoma Marsh, John Topits Park, North Bay Elementary, Whiskey Run Bike Trails), during which **187 volunteers** removed Scotch broom, English ivy, cotoneaster, Himalayan blackberry, English holly, and gorse.

What can you do? Please call us if you think you've seen Jubata grass (featured above) on public lands or in large numbers, or if you need tips for removing invasive plants from your property. And stay tuned for invasive species pulls in 2026—we'd love to have you!

Science & Monitoring Highlights

Effectiveness Monitoring

As we continue to implement restoration projects, how will we know our efforts were successful? As part of the “Strategic Action Plan for Coho in the Coos Basin,” we are continuing with our Restoration Effectiveness Monitoring Plan to comprehensively track the long-term ecological uplift of current projects. This plan builds on decades of monitoring and assessments completed in our watershed, and we began implementing it in the summer of 2024 through habitat surveys, Coho spawning surveys, and juvenile seining efforts. In 2025, we conducted habitat surveys across 6.7 miles of stream reaches and surveyed one mile of stream via drone surveys conducted by our local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife partners.

Pond study: Starting in 2025, we conducted monthly winter surveys of off-channel pond features on lowland restoration projects in the Kentuck and Vogel Creek basins. We are especially interested in juvenile fish use of these newly created ponds in working pasture lands. This type of habitat—where fish can eat, grow, and take a break from the fast-flowing water of nearby channels—is often lacking or missing entirely from our coastal streams. Through this two-season survey effort, we have caught over 800 Coho utilizing these habitats between February and April before migrating out to the ocean. Observationally, the Coho in our seining nets appear to have lots to eat and are growing hearty in these habitats, which will make them stronger and more resilient through the next stage of their life cycle in the ocean—and hopefully more likely to make it home to spawn! Given what we are seeing, we are prioritizing adding similar pond habitat features to as many of our upcoming lowland projects as possible and designing them in a way that ensures they are accessible in the winter when fish need them most (last stop before migrating out to the ocean).



Large Coho smolt found in Kentuck pond study

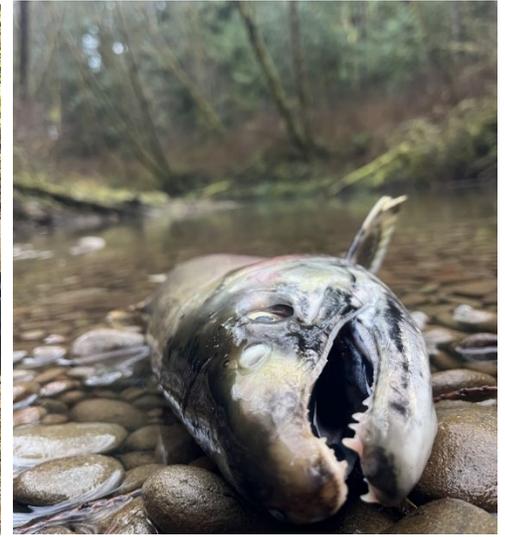
Work smarter, not harder: we spent a lot of time outside counting fish in 2025, but when we didn't need to be in the field, we let sensors do the work! We currently have over 60 year-round water level and salinity sensors at project sites throughout the basin, and seasonally place velocity sensors to track fish passage. Additionally, we placed 25 water temperature loggers throughout the summer to track habitat conditions for Coho and other aquatic life. These numbers continue to grow with each project. We also installed five groundwater wells in the lower Palouse basin, which will help us track groundwater depth before and after a restoration project that will re-naturalize the stream morphology and reconnect it to the valley bottom floodplain. Knowledge gained will inform our planting plans and our understanding of project-scale hydrology, all of which will impact future project designs.

Coho Life Cycle Monitoring

Tracking Coho salmon is a cornerstone of the CoosWA Coho Life Cycle Monitoring (LCM) program. This was the 20th year of the LCM program, which relies on different tracking and trapping techniques to monitor population demographics and assess the growth and survival of salmon on two tidally influenced streams in our watershed, Willanch and Palouse Creeks.

Adult surveys. We conducted spawning surveys from October 2025 through February 2026. So far, it looks like a fair year for Coho, with a sustained pulse of fish across the end of December and into January. We have an estimated total return of 36 and 557 Coho in Willanch and Palouse, respectively. Although this is a slight drop in total returns from last year, this cohort has been steadily increasing each return year since 2016 and has a higher peak count than we've seen in the last 4 years at Palouse Creek.

A very special carcass. On December 31, 2025, our LCM team was counting carcasses and came across one that we had tagged on April 12, 2024! Twenty months after we tagged it, it had grown from 4" to 24" and ended up right back where it started. Survival for outgoing smolt to spawning adult is about 7% for the Oregon coast, so it's highly unlikely that we will find one of our tagged fish at the end of their life cycle. It's possible that this fish may have migrated as far north as Alaska before returning to the stream where it was born, but we can't know for certain. But we do know where it started and ended its life, and we can only assume that it overcame numerous obstacles in between (and hopefully ate some really good food while avoiding being eaten).

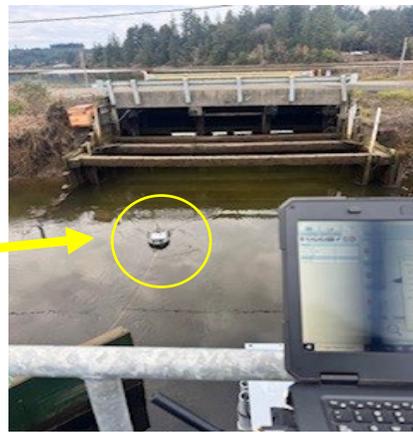


Carcass discovered at Palouse with PIT tag from 2024

Juvenile surveys. Using methods such as seining (summer) and rotary screw traps (winter and spring), the LCM team identified, counted, weighed, measured, and marked juvenile Coho salmon with individual PIT tags to help track their movements within these sub-basins. We could not have done this without the help of four interns from Southwestern Oregon Community College, Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, and Oregon State University, who contributed **600 hours** to the project! **Together, we caught over 12,000 juvenile Coho and tagged more than 1,300 of them, plus many more species!** Shout-out to the 70+ interns who have help with our Coho Life Cycle Monitoring Program since 2012--without these individuals, we wouldn't be able to tag and track so many Coho each year and be able to share their stories with you!

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 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). **Over time, this stream flow and water volume info helps us evaluate and design new projects (and improve existing ones), and is particularly helpful in designing new tide gates, culverts, and bridges.** This info is all publicly available and 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!



Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler takes hydro monitoring to a new level!

Beavers and cables. This year, the West Fork Millicoma Gauge sensor line was mistaken for a stick by a beaver, who chewed through it and caused an outage! It is now providing accurate and reliable stream information, but to be safe, we replaced the sensor and buried the cable out of reach of any teeth.

New tech. We used our new Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (Sontek RS5) mounted on a Hydroboard II to measure the highest streamflow recorded to date at the East Fork Millicoma River: over 3,075 cubic feet per second! The measurements from the Hydroboard help improve our streamflow estimates during high-water events.

Outreach & Education Highlights

Community Events

We hosted a wide range of events, which drew over 1,000 people, and we interacted with 544 more at booths and partner events, for a total of around **1,600 meaningful interactions** over the course of the year! Furthermore, we had **375 volunteers** contribute nearly **1,000 hours** of time to improving watershed health. Here are some highlights from our whirlwind event season.

Earth Day 2025: We hosted a collaborative, hands-on event at John Topits Park with eight local community partners. The event drew 72 participants, who visited booths, filled 9 one-ton bags with invasive species, and planted native plants along the trail.

In May, the annual **Coos Watershed Mayfly Festival** returned once again to Mingus Park, which engaged at least 562 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. Through this festival, we aim to empower community members to improve watershed health in their daily lives, starting by recognizing that we all live in a watershed that we impact every day through our actions. This year, we welcomed eight new organizations to the Mayfly family and grew significantly. Mark your calendars for the **10th annual Mayfly Festival on May 16, 2026!**

This summer, we expanded our **“Drains to Bay” storm drain stencil project** to two new locations: the North Bend Public Library and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians Tribal Hall parking lot. We also teamed up with the City of Coos Bay and other local groups (South Slough, Charleston Marine Life Center, Oregon Kelp Alliance) to host **Movies in a Park(ing Lot)** in the “green” parking lot at 3rd and Central: Finding Dory (70 attendees) and My Octopus Teacher (50 attendees).

In the fall, we hosted our **31st birthday bash**: 25 people participated in our first **annual Salmon Run** at Millicoma Marsh, 30 came out to our ivy removal **stewardship event** to remove 21 yards of ivy from the Millicoma Marsh trail, and 90 attended our **after-party** at the Eastside boat ramp! Thank you to everyone who attended these events, and to the Millicoma Stewardship Group, The Throttles, Elkhorn BBQ Food Truck, 7 Devils Brewery, and our many event sponsors. Between our sponsorships, merch, and raffle ticket sales, and donations at the bash and throughout the remaining days of 2025, **we raised our goal of \$25,000!** We will put these funds towards much-needed programs in 2026. We could not have done this without the support of our community.



Community gathers to celebrate 9th annual Mayfly Festival at Mingus Park



New storm drain stencils at North Bend Library



CoosWA's 31st birthday bash and 1st annual Salmon Run

Outreach & Education Highlights continued

Youth Engagement Programs

In 2025, we continued our environmental leadership and workforce training programs with local youth in partnership with the Oregon Youth Corps and Gray Family Foundation. During the school year, 18 Destinations Academy students in our Watershed Environmental Youth Leadership program toured the U of O's Institute of Marine Biology and Charleston Marine Life Center, planted willows at the South Slough Wasson Creek restoration, heeled in native plants at the Matson Creek native plant nursery, removed invasive species from the Coos History Museum's parking lot rain garden, learned about State Park jobs with a ranger at Shore Acres State Park, helped with trail and bird nesting box maintenance at Millicoma Marsh, and learned how to do a Coho spawning survey with CoosWA staff at Palouse Creek. When they weren't exploring the watershed, students worked in the school garden and practiced stewardship and leadership skills while growing their own produce and building new garden beds.

While our school-year students were taking a break from watershed work over the summer, our summer youth crew program was in full force! We employed five local high school students, who earned **\$24,332 in net/take-home pay** during their summer with us. When the crew wasn't weed-whacking and mowing around planted trees at salmon restoration sites, they were learning how to clear brush, repair fences that separate livestock from streams, set T-posts, maintain native plants, and safely use tools (wrench, T-post puller, bench grinder, and voltage-tester, to name a few). We also led trainings on tractor safety, nature journaling, communication styles in the workplace, small engine maintenance (they took apart and rebuilt a weed-eater), tidepool ecology, and mushroom identification! The 2025 crew gained numerous skills that will help them on their career paths, such as job seeking/readiness, natural resource training (hard skills like tool use), and soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution. We asked crew members to reflect on their experiences at the end of the summer, and a few comments stood out to us: "I learned that I am not a person who is always self-confident, so this job helped me to work on that," "[A personal strength that I discovered was the] ability to push myself farther than I believed," and "I learned a lot of life lessons and skills that I can apply to other jobs."



School year students run the watershed model (left) and discover wildlife along the Palouse Creek trail (right), and plant in the school garden (bottom)



2025 summer youth crew repairs fencing (left), frees native plants from weeds (middle), and takes a break to smile for the camera (right)

Outreach & Education Highlights continued

Creature Feature

For those of you who follow us on social media, you have likely noticed a new type of content: in November, we rolled out a "Coos watershed creature feature" to showcase the amazing (and often incredible, breathtaking, or just downright weird) organisms living in our watershed that you may not know much about. In 2025, we featured **blue elfin cups**, a bright blue mushroom that stains wood a deep blue-green, **tail dropper slugs** that eat decaying leaves and "drop" their tails to escape predators, **birds nest fungi**, a tiny mushroom that resembles a bird's nest with eggs, and the **clouded salamander**, a forest/wood-dwelling amphibian with a prehensile tail and long toes adapted for climbing. Each of these "creatures" is incredibly valuable to the ecological health, diversity, and well-being of the watershed. Have an idea for a creature to feature? Send your ideas to acarleton@cooswatershed.org.



2025 Creature Features: blue elfin cups, tail dropper slugs, birds nest fungi, and clouded salamander

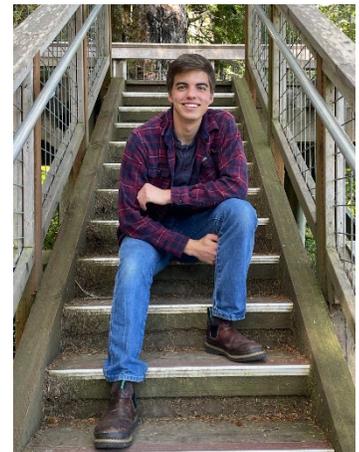
Teddy Villers Natural Resource Scholarship



The Teddy Villers scholarship honors the life of Teddy Villers

In 2025, the Villers Family of Blue Ridge Timber Company and the Coos Watershed Association awarded the 9th 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. 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 watershed projects. 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 2025 scholarship to Isaac Adams, a North Bend High School graduate planning to study natural resources at the University of Oregon with the hopes of pursuing a career in natural resource conservation/education/research or veterinary medicine. Previous recipients of this award include Ava Thomas (2024), Paige Speakman (2023), Aubrey Turner (2022), Abby Richards (2021), Alissa McCord (2020), Melanie Cavanagh (2019), Cole Michael Smith (2018), and Jamie Decker (2017).



Isaac Adams, recipient of the 2025 Teddy Villers Scholarship

Board & Staff Milestones & Anniversaries

Over the past 30 years, the Association has had the pleasure of employing **245 staff members** (including 74 youth crew members!) and welcoming **94 board members**. 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 an important milestone in 2025: **Lucas Green** and **Larry Reiber** both celebrated one year on the board! We also welcomed **Jamie Doyle** and **Lanelle Comstock** as our board's newest members.

On the staff side, **Ed Cope** celebrated five years with CoosWA. Ed joined our team in 2020 after spending ten years recreating highly imperiled habitat in the Midwest. He completed two bachelor's degrees from Montana State University, one in Land Rehabilitation and one in Rangeland Ecology, and moved to Oregon in 2019 to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Science. Ed is a passionate botanist and ecologist, which he applies daily as our Plants Program Manager, whether it's overseeing the day-to-day operations of our native plant nursery, leading our noxious weeds program, or teaching the community about the exciting world of plants, insects, and ecology. When he's not working, you'll find him out exploring Oregon's remote landscapes while on the hunt for fossils or rare plants, especially species of paintbrush.



Ed Cope celebrates 5 years at CoosWA, 2020 - 2025

Another 2025 milestone: **Allison Tarbox** celebrated ten years with CoosWA! Allison moved to Oregon to join CoosWA in 2015 after receiving her M.S. in Geography from Alabama. Allison is one of our restoration project managers who writes and manages multiple large grants each year that fund our work in the streams, such as large-scale wood placement, fish passage, tide gates, and riparian planting projects. Allison is a great team member, always looking for the humor in challenging situations and making sure her coworkers are having fun and not taking work *too* seriously! Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, spending time with friends & family, and staying as active as possible—if she's not in a creek, you'll find her fishing, bowling, or playing softball.



Allison Tarbox celebrates 10 years at CoosWA, 2015-2025

THANK YOU

As we look ahead to our 32nd year, we would like to extend a huge thank you to the many partners, landowners, funders, field technicians, seasonal staff, volunteers, interns, students, and community supporters who made sure that 2025 was a wonderful 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 capacity and inspiration to continue this work. Help us celebrate our 32nd year with the 10th annual Mayfly Festival (May 16 at Mingus Park) – we welcome you to participate or volunteer! Visit www.cooswatershed.org/mayfly-festival for more info. Additionally, we offer community stewardship and engagement events throughout the year. 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 (scroll to the bottom of the page at <https://cooswatershed.org/>), 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

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 and our social media pages for updates!

Interested in sponsoring or volunteering?
Contact acarleton@cooswatershed.org

Coos Watershed Association's 10th annual

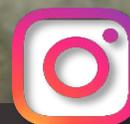


FIND OUT MORE

Visit our website for more info!



May 16, 2026 | 11:00 - 3:00
Mingus Park, Coos Bay, OR



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cooswa@cooswatershed.org • cooswatershed.org

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Photo credit: Eiko Jones Photography