

# Behind the Scenes

January 2018



Dear Friend,

Welcome to our first Behind the Scenes Bulletin -- a monthly briefing that gives you an inside look at the current activities of the Luckiamute Watershed Council, and other news in your watershed. As a Friend of the LWC, your annual contributions -- either as a donor or volunteer -- are a BIG reason for our continued success and we are grateful for your support. You will be receiving Behind the Scenes once a month as one way to keep the lines of communication open, and to keep you up to date on how your support helps us make progress towards cleaner rivers and a healthier watershed!

As we embark on this journey together, please feel free to reach out to me by phone at 503-837-0237, or by email at [Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org](mailto:Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org) with your comments, suggestions and ideas. We value your input and hope this Bulletin will spark a bigger conversation about what your goals are for our great rivers, lands and communities.

Happy reading!

## LOVE YOUR WATERSHED

Our Love Your Watershed (LYW) event series kicked off with a trio of Fall Bird Walks from September to November that introduced participants to the spectacular varieties of songbirds, raptors waterfowl, and other avian residents of our watershed.

As the winter rains settled in, we turned our attention to more indoor oriented pursuits, including our popular Suds 'n' Science pub talks. With its large selection of local brews, wines, and delicious food options from Naughty Noodle, Brew Coffee & Taphouse offered the perfect venue for the educational and interactive presentations offered by our guest speakers. On November 15, Fish biologist Brian Bangs, from the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) brought us the inspirational story of how government agencies, conservation organizations and local landowners teamed up to save the Oregon Chub, the first fish to ever be de-listed from the Endangered Species Act. Our second Suds 'n' Science pub talk on January 24, featured geomorphologist Rose Wallick from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), who led us on a journey through the geomorphic history of the Willamette River floodplain. Rose's engaging talk attracted a total of 52 attendees, which maxed out the capacity of Brew! The popularity of these pub talks, as well as the helpful suggestions and feedback we have received, will result in some changes to further improve our future Suds 'n' Science events. If you have any ideas or suggestions, feel free to let us know by emailing [Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org](mailto:Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org) or calling 503-837-0237.



Our next Love Your Watershed event will be a Watershed Recreation Fair on March 17, at The Grove Coffee House in downtown Independence. From 12pm to 4pm, representatives from federal and state agencies, local recreation groups, and other outdoor activities will be on hand to tell you about the many opportunities for fun and adventure in our beautiful watershed. You can find all the details at [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/loveyourwatershed.html](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/loveyourwatershed.html).

Your Land. Your Rivers. Your Community. Your Watershed.

# Watershed Notes



Some believe that the origin of the month name “January” is Janus, the two-headed Roman god of beginnings, gates and transitions. This is an apt symbol since Janus perfectly embodies our tendency around the New Year to both reflect upon the year passed, and look forward to the year ahead. Just as we tend to do so in our personal lives, this is also true for a watershed council. January often finds us busy with grant applications and planning for future projects, as well as reporting to our funders about the past year’s accomplishments.

One of the most exciting projects we have been working on over the past year is our NetMap project, which is helping the LWC prioritize where we should focus our future restoration efforts. Using a new habitat analysis and modeling software called NetMap, we have been able to hone in on specific stream reaches in the watershed that have the potential to be excellent fish habitat. Each of the areas that were flagged by NetMap as having great habitat potential were then field-verified by fish biologist Steve Trask. Participating landowners, along with agencies and funders, were then invited to attend a presentation by our Project Manager, Jean-Paul Zagarola on December 7, which explained the results of NetMap analysis, Steve’s findings, and outlined the next steps towards restoration project implementation. If you are interested in viewing Jean-Paul’s NetMap presentation feel free to head to our website at [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/netmap](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/netmap).

Because our NetMap project seeks to address some challenges to stream restoration that are unique to the Luckiamute watershed, I thought it might be worth taking the time in this Bulletin to reflect on one aspect of our watershed’s history: Splash damming. The Luckiamute was one of the most heavily splash dammed river systems in the Willamette Valley, and a look at this legacy helps provide some context behind the particular challenges and opportunities we face with restoration work here in our watershed.

## ***The Legacy of Splash Dams on the Luckiamute***

From 1884 to 1956, splash dams were used to easily transport timber to downstream mills. Spanning the width of the stream, a splash dam would create a holding basin for the timber until the spillway was opened up to release those logs and allow them to float downstream. Dynamite was used to clear boulders, log jams and other obstacles downstream, and sometimes to open up the splash dam itself to release the timber. Both the dynamite and the high velocity of the released water and logs resulted in streams being scoured down to bare bedrock. This historical practice played a significant role in the reduction of suitable salmonid spawning habitat along the Luckiamute River and its tributaries. Today, the impacts can still be seen within splash dammed streams, which have more exposed bedrock, fewer deep pools, and less large woody debris than streams that were not splash dammed (Miller, 2010). In some stream reaches, stepped bedrock ledges were created, which then became barriers to juvenile salmon and trout migration.

So how are we addressing these challenges within our watershed? Using NetMap to identify those areas where we can have the greatest impact with our restoration activities is a first step to addressing the legacy of splash damming in our streams. Once we have identified a potential restoration site, we can help restore salmon habitat by placing large wood in the stream channel, which helps slow down water velocity and allow gravel to settle on the streambed. Planting the large wood of the future is also one of our strategies. By revegetating stream banks with additional native conifers, we are ensuring that there will be naturally occurring large wood jams in the future. Thanks to our partners, landowners, and you - our supporters - we look forward to continuing our progress in restoring healthy stream habitat throughout our watershed in the New Year!



Splash dam on the Luckiamute River.  
*Polk County Historical Society*



Luckiamute River splash dam reservoir.  
*Polk County Historical Society*



This bedrock step forms a juvenile salmonid passage barrier. *Trask, 2017*