

Summer  
2024

# LWC Meanderings

Watershed News & Reflections



## LWC MISSION:

To engage and assist landowners and communities in the voluntary protection, restoration and enhancement of the Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds.

## WHAT WE ARE:

The Luckiamute Watershed Council is a 501(c)3 non-profit comprised of stakeholders who live, work or recreate within the Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds.

## WHO WE ARE:

Karin Stutzman, *President*  
Monmouth

Britton Castor, *Treasurer*  
Pedee

Scott Youngblood, *Secretary*  
American Bottom/Buena Vista

Dave Ehlers  
Kings Valley/Hoskins

Nick Hazelton  
Kings Valley/Hoskins

Jackson Stalley  
Dallas

*The Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds are part of the ancestral lands of the Kalapuya Indians, who are represented today by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.*

## COUNCIL MEETINGS:

Typically held the second Thursday of even-numbered months from 6 to 8 pm. *Details and links posted at:* [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org)

## With a Little Help From Friends



*Friends of Gentle Woods meet monthly for restoration work along Middle Fork Ash Creek at Gentle Woods Park in Monmouth. Photos by Maya Cook and Molly Barbano.*

*By Maya Cook, LWC Volunteer and Friend of Gentle Woods Park*

Driving south on 99W into Monmouth, it's easy to miss Gentle Woods Park, nestled as it is down an embankment on the east side of the road, right at the north edge of town. For locals, however, it's a vital part of the community. All day, it peacefully bustles with walkers & runners, dogs, families, and picnics. The abundant oak shade and iconic steep-roofed shelter make it a popular spot for all manner of celebrations come rain or shine. The middle fork of Ash Creek winds through the park - though in the summer, it becomes so overgrown with invasive plants that it can be hard to spot in places. Himalayan blackberry canes climb over one another in a rising competition for sunlight; reed canary grass clogs the channel; English ivy chokes out everything - all interspersed with a veritable who's-who of western Oregon's noxious weeds.

And yet, springtime reveals a variety of native plants (planted by past Western Oregon University volunteers). For a few weeks, the banks are shrouded in bold purple spikes of camas and delicate stalks of fringe cup. In the shady easternmost

part of the park, Oregon grape, osoberry, ninebark, spirea, snowberry, and other native shrubs carve out a space. For naturalists, it's a hopeful sight, all too quickly obscured by the aggressively abundant springtime weed bonanza. When we moved here just over three years ago, it seemed like a great opportunity for neighbors to come together for environmental restoration and "someone should organize that" (but not me, the new kid in town).

Enter Molly Barbano.

In April, Molly sent LWC an email enquiring about the possibility of coordinating volunteers to come to Gentle Woods Park to pull weeds and plant natives. She also put feelers out to the City of Monmouth, Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and Ash Creek Water Control District (ACWCD). To her surprise, Molly had enthusiastic offers of support from all directions within the week. As her neighbor, I had the privilege of sitting down with her to talk through her vision and help navigate the complexities of partnering with public and private entities. By the end of the hour,

## *With a Little Help, continued*

Friends of Gentle Woods Park was born. By the end of the month, we had our first invasive removal event, attended by a dozen neighbors and community members committed to making a visible difference over time. A month later, some familiar faces returned and we met some new friends we look forward to seeing again. Considering how long restoration projects usually take to plan and implement, this rapid organization is a genuine wonder. Molly reminds me what's possible when you don't know it can't be done.

LWC coordinates the event by recruiting and reminding volunteers, providing liability waivers and pruners, and guiding a planting strategy. Monmouth Parks picks up the waste, drops off arborist mulch to cover the bare ground until fall planting season, and provides the tools & equipment for spreading it. Polk SWCD will help acquire wholesale native plants, and ACWCD has approved a grant for signage, tools, and community outreach - including a celebration picnic at the end of July to share what we've done so far and what is yet to come!

There remains enough to do to keep us busy for years, and we try to make sure there are accessible tasks for anyone who wants to pitch in. It's one of the most fulfilling things I do all month, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity to build community and share what I know about watershed health in my own backyard. I hope we'll see you soon!

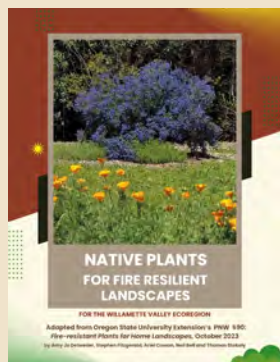
Stay in the loop about Friends of Gentle Woods Park events and volunteer opportunities by signing up to receive Friends of Gentle Woods emails at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/fogw-email-sign-up.html>

### **TWO New Resources for Planning Fire Resilient Landscapes - now available!**

Local landowners and land managers in the mid-Willamette region identified wildfire as one of their top concerns, according to a mail-out survey conducted in 2022 by the Mid-Willamette Beaver Partnership. With long range forecasts indicating above-normal temperatures and below-normal rainfall over the next three months, wildfire will likely remain at the top of the list of local worries as summer ramps up.

While we may not be able to have an impact on these weather trends, we most certainly can take steps to make our homes and communities more resilient to the spread of wildfire. There are now two brand new (free!) resources that can help you design and manage your yard and garden in a way that boosts fire resilience, and take action towards reducing the risk of wildfire damage to your home and the surrounding neighborhood.

#### **Native Plants for Fire-Resilient Landscapes**



When planning and planting your fire-resilient landscape and garden, make sure to favor fire-resistant plants over vegetation that is prone to acting as a wildfire fuel source. Fire-resistant plants are less likely to ignite from embers, a major culprit in house fires during wildfires. These plants typically have moist, flexible leaves that resist burning, along with minimal dead leaves and twigs that could act as fuel. Their sap is also often watery and doesn't burn intensely. While many healthy deciduous trees and shrubs fall into this category, some popular landscaping choices, like juniper and arborvitae, are highly flammable and should be avoided.

To help you choose the best native groundcovers, perennials, shrubs and trees for boosting the fire-resiliency of your yard or garden, this Willamette-specific booklet can be downloaded as a printable PDF file at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/native-plants-for-fire-resiliency.html>

#### **Reducing Fire Risk Through Invasive Tree Removal**



Most invasive plant species that we are familiar with outcompete native plants by growing in dense monocultures that cover the ground, smothering seedlings and preventing other vegetation from establishing new growth. Invasive trees and shrubs do this too, but they also compete with mature trees in the canopy by reducing access to sunlight, water, essential nutrients and space to grow. The proliferation of invasive trees contributes to fire risk by creating more ladder fuels, denser tree stands, and denser canopies (more opportunity to create embers).

This 20-page resource will help you identify the most common Willamette Valley invasive trees and shrubs, and guide you in the best ways to manage them – including recommended manual and chemical treatments, and treatment timing. Download this free PDF on the LWC website at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/reducing-fire-risk-through-invasive-tree-removal.html>

Information in both of these resources was adapted from OSU Extension Service's *Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes* PNW 590 publication, by Amy Jo Detweiler, Stephen Fitzgerald, Ariel Cowan, Neil Bell and Thomas Stokely.

## Michael Cairns Wetland Education Fund



Michael (second from right) was always willing to lend a hand (and shovel!) to restoration projects along Ash Creek.

It is with great sadness that we share the news that watershed champion and community advocate Michael Cairns passed away on June 21, 2024. Michael was a visionary leader and a champion for both environmental and social causes in the Monmouth and Independence communities. Back in 1999, he played a key role in establishing the Luckiamute Watershed Council and after retirement, was the LWC's first manager.

Part of Michael's legacy is a beautifully designed wetland near the Willamette River just west of the Independence Sports Park, which is thriving now with a wide diversity of native plants, birds, and other wildlife. He was also instrumental in restoring the health and improving the streamside habitat of Ash Creek at what is now OSU Extension's Mt. Fir Inspiration Gardens.

To honor Michael, we are managing an Education Fund that Michael's wife Gail Oberst has set up to be used towards creating an educational display about the wetlands he helped create.

If you would like to make a donation to this fund in honor of Michael, please visit <https://donorbox.org/michael-cairns-wetland-education-fund>

## Save the Date: LWC BBQ Potluck Social on August 8



On Thursday, August 8, the LWC invites you to join a summer BBQ potluck and social hour at The Happy Workers Club (39328 Luckiamute Rd, Philomath) from 4:00 - 6:00pm. You are also welcome to join us for our monthly meeting, which will start immediately after the potluck social at 6:00pm.\*

For the BBQ, we will be grilling up some yak burgers (yes, yak!) courtesy of Hazelton Farms, as well as beef burgers from Western Skies Ranch. We'll also have veggie burgers available, burger buns (including gluten-free burger buns), condiments, sparkling water and iced tea. If you are willing and able, you are welcome to bring a side dish or dessert to add to the spread, but this is completely optional!

We will have chairs available, but if you are able to bring a camp chair for yourself that would be helpful, just in case we run out!

For the meeting itself, you will have a chance to hear the latest news and updates about watershed council happenings, as well as a presentation of the annual LWC Education and Outreach Committee report. The full meeting agenda will be posted on our meeting page by Tuesday, August 6.

*\*If you would like to attend this meeting but need rideshare assistance, feel free to contact Suzanne Teller at [Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org](mailto:Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org).*

## Join the FRIENDS OF THE LWC!

What does it mean to be a **FRIEND OF THE LWC?**

- Monthly "Behind the Scenes" Bulletins
- Early access to event registration
- Discounts on workshops and our online store
- *Knowing that you are helping improve the health of your watershed!*

Find out how to join the Friends of the LWC at [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/Friends](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/Friends)

**Thank you to our supporters!**

We welcome donations\* of any amount at [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/Donate](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/Donate)

If you prefer to donate offline, you can mail a check to: **165 D Street, Independence, OR 97351**

*\*Your contribution may be tax-deductible. The LWC will provide a letter of documentation early the following year.*

## Upcoming Council Meetings

Join us for our LWC Monthly Meetings, typically held the second Thursday of every even-numbered month. Our meetings are always open to the public and discussion topics include local watershed issues and actions. Details, driving directions, and/or Zoom links are posted at [www.LuckiamuteLWC.org](http://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org)

**August 8 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (@ Happy Workers Club)\***

**\*You're invited to join us at 4pm for a pre-meeting potluck!**

**October 10 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (Location TBD)**

# THANK YOU TO OUR MOST RECENT DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS!

We are so grateful to the following donors and volunteers who have contributed their dollars, in-kind donations, and their time and energy to our conservation and community education goals from April 1 to June 30, 2024. Your support of the LWC makes a BIG difference, and helps us achieve our goal of *a healthy watershed for all*. **THANK YOU!**

## Special Recognition to the LWC's Bedrock Society

*A special thank you goes to our donors who are making automatic monthly contributions to the Luckiamute Watershed Council! Like the bedrock that underlies every river, recurring donations provide a foundational layer of support for our organization with a steady stream of income that we can count on every month to advance our mission. For the second quarter of 2024, the combined total of Bedrock Society donations was \$1197.30! Find out how you can become a Bedrock Society member at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/donate.html>*

<b>Anonymous Donors (2)</b>	<b>Stephen &amp; Ava Howard</b>	<b>Terry Murphy</b>
Judy Beebe	Renee Jaffer	Eric Noel
Michael Cairns & Gail Oberst	Becky & Jon Jay	Amy & Martin Wernz
Maya & Jim Cook	Paige Jenkins	Caleb Price
Verna & Dale Curry	Deb Merchant	Linda Samuels
Whitney & Ron Francis	Leanne Merrill	Scott Youngblood
Jeremy Gordon	Becca Meskimen	
Charlie & Hollis Holstine	Erin Murphy	



Link your Fred Meyer Community Rewards card to the LWC using the following steps:

Sign in to your Rewards account at [www.FredMeyer.com](http://www.FredMeyer.com), then click "Community Rewards" on the lefthand menu. Follow the steps to link your card to the LWC using our organization number: **Q1717**

### April 1 - June 30 Donors

Victoria Beasley	Rebecca Lerback
Jenny Brausch	Bruce Martin
Jennifer Conley	Kristen McAlpine
Carolyn Foland	Sally Morris
Laura Garcia	Judith Paul
Cliff and Gay Hall	Ashley Sanders
Wendy Hudson	Sarah Siefken
Amanda Iles	Darrell Ward
<i>In honor of Deb Merchant</i>	
Rolf Isermann	
<i>In honor of Deb Merchant</i>	
Renee Jaffer	
Kyle Jansson & Carol Harding	
Alan Lee	
<i>In honor of Deb Merchant</i>	

### April 1 - June 30 Volunteers

Michael Baltzley	Derek Godwin	Ellen Osborn
Brian Bangs	Madeline Hall	Laura Ouellette
Mark Barbano	Karen Hans	Jordan Perez
Molly Barbano	Nick Hazelton	Francisco Pickens
Victoria Beasley	Mark Henkels	Misha Pierce
Judy Beebe	Linda Hillesum	Ashley Sanders
Marc Bell	Donna Horn	Chris Seal
Britton Castor	Renee Jaffer	Sarah Siefken
Heidi Christensen	Tess Kreofsky	Bruce Sigloh
Jim Cook	Phil Larsen	Heather Skinner
Maya Cook	Gordon McLennan	Jackson Stalley
David Ehlers	Cheyenne Morales	Karin Stutzman
Dan Farnworth	Terry Murphy	Michael Ward
Douglass Fitting	Morgan Neil	Scott Youngblood
Brooke Getty	David Olson	Lauren Zatkos



### Donor Spotlight

We'd like to thank the [Ash Creek Water Control District \(ACWCD\)](#) for their generous support of the Ash Creek Restoration and Engagement Project, which is set to launch this fall with outreach events, volunteer activities and restoration projects along Ash Creek in Monmouth and Independence. Project partners like ACWCD help the LWC achieve its goal of a healthier and more connected watershed for all!

### Luckiamute Watershed Council Staff



**Executive Director:** *Apply here if interested!*  
**Outreach Coordinator:** Suzanne Teller  
**Project Manager:** Aubrey Cloud  
**Monitoring Coordinator:** Jonah Nicholas

### THANK YOU, BUSINESS CIRCLE DONORS!



**Spiritopia**  
**Starker Forests, Inc.**  
**Croft Vineyards**  
**The Independence Hotel**  
**Manulife Investment Management**  
**McMenamins Corvallis Pub**  
**Western Skies Cattle Ranch**