

Behind the Scenes

October 2019



Dear Friend,

It is almost time to turn back the clocks, which -- together with the freezing nighttime temperatures -- really makes it look and feel like winter is just over the horizon. At this often busy time of year, we ask you to take a moment to consider renewing your support as a Friend of the LWC. We value the dollars and valuable time you have contributed to the LWC, and hope that we will continue to be able to count on your involvement through 2020 and beyond! As you gear up for upcoming holiday preparations, family visits and community activities, I would like to bring to your attention a wonderful (and easy) way to support the Luckiamute Watershed Council - a recurring monthly donation! With a minimum of just \$3 a month, setting up this feature means that your donation to the LWC will automatically be deducted from your bank account or credit card once per month, and your commitment to being a part of our Friends network will not need to be renewed on an annual basis. So whether you prefer a one-time annual contribution or a recurring monthly donation, I hope that you will continue your partnership with the LWC and consider renewing as a Friend of the LWC for 2020 at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/donate1.html>.

Thank you, and happy reading!

--Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator (contact me at Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org or 503-837-0237)

Orca Recovery Day a Whale of a Success!

On October 19, a group of 6 students from an Oregon State University GEO 300 class, along with five additional community volunteers, came out to Riverview Park in Independence for an Ash Creek Tree Planting event in honor of Orca Recovery Day (ORD). So what exactly is the connection between planting trees along Ash Creek and helping the critically endangered orca populations living in our oceans?

Ash Creek provides winter habitat for salmon and steelhead, which are an important food source for orca. By planting native vegetation along the creek, we are helping improve the habitat that fish and other aquatic life need to survive and, eventually, reach the ocean.



In addition to being a part of ORD, this volunteer planting project was organized to help put native trees and shrubs back along part of our Ash Creek Restoration Project area. The City of Independence has been working on a pump replacement project in this area, which has disturbed the banks and removed native plantings from part of our restoration area. After learning how to transplant live cuttings — including native willows and dogwood, Pacific ninebark and Douglas spirea — Ash Creek Tree Planting volunteers put 240 cuttings in the ground! One student remarked, "It is really cool that so many people are doing events like this today, and together we are having this big collective impact on the health of our rivers!"

Over the rainy season, the live cuttings will be able to develop strong root systems and start growing new branches and leaves in the spring. These trees and shrubs will help re-establish the native plant community, improve aquatic habitat, and help restore our salmon populations for orca and for the rest of our watershed community!

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

Watershed Notes

Stormwater Pollution Prevention Starts at Home

by Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator

For many Willamette Valley residents, the seasonal change to fall is noted not by the first hint of changing leaf color, but by the return of the rains. Between October and April, we will receive about 88% of our annual precipitation of about 40 inches. We welcome this seasonal influx of water, which restores our reservoirs, fills our rivers, and replenishes soil moisture. But before it can enter our waterways or get absorbed into the ground, much of this rainfall and snowmelt - or **stormwater** - must first pass through the built infrastructure of our communities.



As stormwater flows from our rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, through our lawns and into the storm drains, it collects and transports soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil, grease, litter, toxic metals such as mercury and other pollutants. This stormwater does not get diverted to our wastewater treatment plants; it drains directly into our nearby creeks, streams and rivers. Polluted stormwater contaminates local waterways and can harm plants, fish and wildlife, while degrading the quality of the water we drink, and within which we swim, boat and fish.

Within urban areas, stormwater runoff is one of the major sources of pollution impacting the water quality of our local rivers. Flowing through the cities of Monmouth, Independence and southern Dallas, Ash Creek is the most densely populated waterway in our service area. For these reasons, one of the goals the Luckiamute Watershed Council highlighted in our 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan is our commitment to learning about the potential for adopting various low-impact development (LID) strategies as a stormwater management tool in the Ash Creek watershed. By collaborating with local stormwater managers, we will seek to understand their interests and concerns, and identify opportunities to work together and with community members to reduce the negative impacts of stormwater.

Inspiring and empowering individuals to do their part to protect our creeks and rivers from stormwater pollution is increasingly being highlighted as a big part of the solution to improving water quality throughout our region. Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the 2019 Healthy Waters Outreach Forum, coordinated by the Clean Rivers Coalition (CRC). Together with representatives of state and federal agencies, soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils and other non-profit groups, the CRC has been developing a state-wide campaign to inspire Oregonians to take action for clean water. Part of this strategy is to educate Oregonians about what happens to all that water as it hits the ground and flows across the pavement, through our lawns and gardens, into the storm drains, and ultimately, our waterways. But a bigger goal is to empower individuals with concrete steps they can take to limit the number of pollutants that get carried into our local waterways by stormwater. In the same way that a polluted waterway can result from the accumulation of many small sources of pollution; a lot of individual actions towards protecting our waterways can add up to a big improvement to water quality!

What are some of those action steps you can take? Below is a list of things you can do to help protect our waterways from stormwater pollution, adapted from "Be the Solution to Water Pollution," a City of Independence brochure available at <https://www.ci.independence.or.us/publicworks/page/storm-water-management>.

- Sweep sidewalks and driveways into the garbage and do not hose off into the street or storm drains.
- Use weed-free mulch when reseeding bare spots on your lawn or on your garden to help keep soil from washing away.
- Repair auto leaks as soon as possible, and clean oil spills or leaks with absorbent kitty litter and dispose of it properly.
- Notify local government officials when you see sediment entering streets or streams near a construction site.
- Avoid mowing within 25 feet from the edge of a stream or creek, and replace turf grass and non-native vegetation with native trees, shrubs and grasses.
- Wash your car at a commercial car wash or on an absorbent surface, such as grass or gravel.
- Choose least toxic fertilizers and pesticides, follow label instructions, and dispose of all products properly.
- Help pick up trash and debris from the streets and sidewalks before it gets washed into storm drains.
- Pick up pet waste to help reduce the potential for disease causing bacteria.
- Participate or volunteer in a local trash clean-up or tree planting event.

If you would like to read more about our strategic plan priorities for stormwater management, as well as our other focus areas, you can view our 2019 - 2022 Strategic plan at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/strategicplan2019.html>.