Chasing the Beauty of Spring in the Southern Willamette Valley

Well, spring is finally here, summer is just around the corner, and wildflowers are carpeting our parks, gardens, and riverbanks. Just when you think you cannot get enough of that tall fescue shooting into your sinuses causing massive allergies, or the sweet glistening oils of poison oak shining their leaves along your favorite urban trail, you witness the following:

~ A rufous hummingbird pollinating a brilliant red flowering currant in Alton Baker Park
~ Hundreds of flowering camas flowers blooming along roadsides and in meadows throughout Eugene
~ The arrival and migration of intent butterflies searching for colorful herbaceous plants in the West Eugene Wetlands
~ Oak trees filling out with new young leaves and shoots in Buford Park
~ The brilliant colors of larkspurs, the fragrant scent of Solomon’s seal, and the curiously striking flowers of meadow rues along the Willamette River.

This is why we love the Willamette Valley. Walama Restoration Project has made it a point this spring and summer to document flowering prairie plants as they arrive and bloom throughout the Greater Eugene/Springfield region. We are especially interested in how the landscape changes in the Whilamut Natural Area Butterfly Meadow. To date, we have transplanted and direct sowed over 52 species of prairie plants at the meadow. The meadow is moving towards a full bloom of wildflowers in late June. Currently, we are observing camas, shooting stars, plectritis, cinquefoil, and riverside lupines blossoming profusely throughout the area and enticing nearby pollinators.

Prairies have historically covered a large area throughout our region, and as land practices and community cultures have changed over time, our landscape’s historic ecosystems have transcended into new ecological era. While WRP seeks to work with the changing of time, we also seek to enhance the remaining pockets of biodiversity that define a place in history in which people were strongly interwoven with the existence of oak woodlands, prairies, and savannas. For this generation and beyond, we believe it is crucial to re-invent the wheel of finding our place in nature.
Our Mission

The Walama Restoration Project (WRP) is a community organized non-profit, founded in 2001, and dedicated to the enhancement, rehabilitation, and restoration of the waterways, forest, and grassland ecosystems within and adjacent to the Willamette Valley. WRP provides a crucial community service by actively maintaining the unique and fragile ecosystems in this valley. In addition to ecosystem restoration, our organization develops and implements educational outreach programs for school groups and the public to encourage local ecosystem awareness.

~NEWS FROM THE FIELD~

WRP is continuing its partnerships with local agencies and watershed councils in areas within and adjacent to the Willamette Valley. Friends of Hendricks Park graciously raised $5,000 for funding WRP to clear additional acres of English ivy in Hendricks Park. We were also able to re-treat previously cleared areas on almost twelve acres of parkland, including Hendricks Park, Skinners Butte Park, and along the Willamette River in North Eugene.

Our successful method of sheet mulching with cardboard and mulch began as an experiment in our community-funded restoration sites (Maurie Jacobs Park and Gudu-kut natural Area) and has now expanded to our contracted projects. In March, we planted and sheet mulched a number of trees and shrubs along a tributary in Marcola for the McKenzie Watershed Council. This upcoming year, we will return to Dragonfly Bend in the West Eugene Wetlands to sheet mulch planted trees and shrubs.

Our sheet mulching efforts continued into Creswell in February and March. We helped implement the first stages of restoration under contract with the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council at Garden Lake City Park. Project goals for the park include the enhancement of existing wildlife habitat and the improvement of water quality in Hill Creek and the ponds at Garden Lake. Over 200 trees were planted and sheet mulched in areas adjacent to the pond and creek. This project is funded through the Watershed Council by a grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. To find out about volunteer opportunities at Garden Lake Park, visit the Coast Fork Council’s website at www.coastfork.org.

WRP is collaborating with The Willamette National Forest for its second year under a Challenge Cost Share Agreement for the Central Cascades region. Our goal is to find innovative techniques to suppress invasive weeds, particularly false brome grass (Brachypodium sylvaticum) without the use of herbicides. We will be working with US Forest Service botanists in areas throughout the Mckenzie and Sweet Home Ranger Districts to implement plans for encouraging growth of native vegetation in areas home to threatened plant and fish species. We are excited about this long-term conservation project with the US Forest Service.
WRP is in its second year of its sustained partnership with the Network Charter School. We work on a bi-monthly basis with NCS’s Permaculture Class and teach students local ecology and holistic restoration practices. This past winter, students worked diligently in the pouring rain to plant hundreds of natives at our meadow restoration site in the Whilamut Natural Area. They returned in April to weed emerging vetches and clovers in our newest project areas at the meadow. Students have visited upland prairie and riparian ecosystems to study field botany. Students just recently aided the WRP field crew and the City of Eugene to expand wet prairie habitat in West Eugene.

Seed Saving Continues Near the Pacific Crest Trail

Our Obsidian Preservation Project in the Three Sisters Wilderness is still underway in 2007. Many of the annuals and perennials that did not germinate in 2006 were extremely successful this year due to a change in soil medium and the addition of a natural seed stratification regime. Species such as high elevation lupines, Gray’s lovage, small-flowered penstemon, and partridge foot plants are growing in our cold frame at a rapid rate! We aim to deliver hundreds of seedlings to two degraded campsites near the Pacific Crest Trail in late September. Project collaborators include the McKenzie Ranger District and the Network Charter School.

New Fall Watershed Education Program in Cottage Grove!

Since fall 2006, WRP’s Program Director has been collaborating with Pam Reber of the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council to develop a Watershed Preservation Program for Cottage Grove schools. Student projects will include water quality monitoring, performing ecological assessments, and restoring a reach of the Coast Fork Willamette River with native plants. With the help of foundation support, WRP and the Coast Fork Council will implement the program at four schools in fall 2007. We are excited about a program that will strengthen collaborative relationships between the Coast Fork Watershed Council, the City of Cottage Grove, South Lane School District, and additional agencies to advance advocacy for watershed restoration in the Upper Willamette Basin.

Hands-on Nature Walks at Hendricks Park

WRP was fortunate to receive funding from Friends of Hendricks Park for the second year in a row to host ecology field trips at the park. This May and June we will host trips for 4th and 5th graders from Edison and Harris Elementary Schools. We would like to expand this hands-on program out to additional schools for next fall and spring. If you are interested in getting your child’s elementary school involved next year, please contact Stephanie Schroeder, Program Director, at 484-3939.
This year we have been working internally to strengthen the capacity of our organization. We are fortunate to have gained two new board members this year: Stuart Perlmeter and Nick Otting. Stuart is coordinator for the Springfield School District’s WELL project, which integrates water chemistry into the high school biology and chemistry programs, and develops several teams of students that monitor watersheds, analyze stormwater runoff, and provide a free well water testing service. In addition to his work with the district, Stuart has provided high school students opportunities to research bat populations in the state of Oregon. Nick is a botanist specializing in riparian vegetation. He loves working in the field, especially east of the Cascade Mountains.

We wish to thank our other long-standing and outstanding board members who have committed many hours of their time towards helping our organization meets its goals:

Howard Bonnett, Evelyn Hess, Kit Kirkpatrick, Heather Lintz, Rachel Foster, Michael Robert, and Sabra Marcroft

WRP Welcomes New Board Members!

Staff Spotlight

Taylor Zeigler has worked with WRP in the field pulling weeds, propagating plants, and collecting seeds since mid-2004. Hailing from the Southeast, he is a proud 13th generation South Carolinian. Taylor moved to the Willamette Valley seven years ago to study and practice organic gardening at Aprovecho Research Center in Cottage Grove. He brings to the field a pro-plant attitude and many skills related to ecology. A few of his horticultural interests and endeavors include the promotion and propagation of Paw paws persimmons and mulberries, conducting general tree care, and developing gardens for native seed grow-out. For the past four years, he has been a fortunate resident of River’s Turn Farm where you will find him munching peaches in August and keeping good company of Emma Goldog, his favorite pup. Some of his choice tools include the Japanese planting hoe and the Hori knife, in which he has developed prowess and precision. If you would like to meet this man with the winning smile, you can find him weekdays somewhere in those 60 acres of wetlands west of Eugene this spring...or maybe at Sam Bonds if you’re lucky. We already know we are.

U of O Student Team Works With WRP Board of Directors

WRP is embarking on an organizational re-vamp with a University of Oregon Business School student team enrolled in the Leadership in Action practicum course. The consulting team, Rachel Garrett, Lukas Jones, Chris Gray, and Micah Frumkin, are currently meeting with WRP staff and board members on a weekly basis throughout the spring term to aid in developing a blue print for a 3-5 year organizational strategic plan. We are grateful for this partnership and believe that the U of O consulting team will help us strategize how to achieve our long-term program goals. We wish to thank the consulting team and the team faculty advisor, Anne Forrestel, for all of their hard work!
Thanks to all of our contributors not noted, and we regret any listed errors.

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To date, we have over 2,500 supporters who have contributed funding, services, and/or goods since 2002. With your continuing support, we have the ability to build a strong foundation of community projects and programs. We are proud to serve communities in the Southern Willamette Valley and its adjacent ecological regions.

We would like to thank the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Spirit Mountain Community Fund for supporting Phase II of our meadow restoration project in the Whilamut Natural Area.

We would like to thank the Juan Young Trust for supporting the preliminary steps in implementing our Watershed Preservation Project in Cottage Grove schools.

We thank Get Fried Rice and Glory Bee Foods, and Emerald Valley Kitchen for sending us contributions to support our program expenses.

We also would like to thank Tulsi Wallace, Lost Valley Education Center, Trader Joe’s, Capella Market, Eugene City Bakery, Watersheds Raingear, Paul Gordon, Billy Hughes, Ginny Alfriend, Peace Rose Graphics, Steve Otoupalik, LCOG, and the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council.
Walama Restoration Project relies on community support to continue facilitating our educational programs. If you would like to become involved by volunteering at a work party or by making a tax-deductible contribution, please fill out this form and send to:

Walama Restoration Project
PO Box 894
Eugene, OR 97440

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Disporum hookeri, fairy bells at Whilamut Natural Area

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