

# FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2012



*Working Towards Healthy Communities and Creeks  
from Headwaters to Bay*

Address: 57420-2 Old Portland Rd., Warren, OR 97053

Phone: 503-397-7904

E-mail: [sbwc@opusnet.com](mailto:sbwc@opusnet.com)

Website: [www.scappoosebay-wc.org](http://www.scappoosebay-wc.org)

Prepared by the SBWC Strategic Planning Committee

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# Introduction to the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

## Mission

Working towards healthy communities and creeks from headwaters to bay

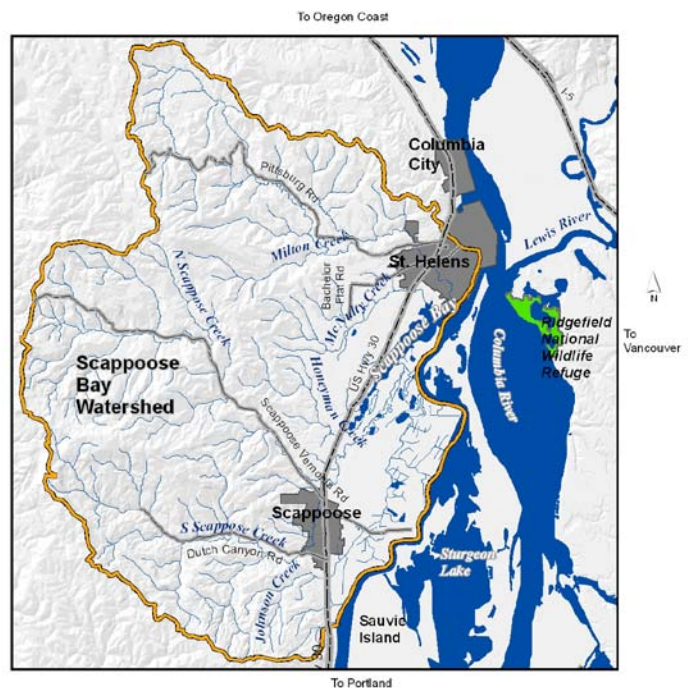
## Vision

We envision:

- A healthy vibrant watershed, teeming with native fish, wildlife and plants
- A watershed where people can enjoy nature
- A community dedicated to the current and future health of the watershed

## Scappoose Bay Watershed

Scappoose Bay Watershed comprises approximately 85,000 acres. It includes the mainstem and tributaries of North and South Scappoose Creeks, Milton Creek, Honeyman Creek, and McNulty Creek as well as several other smaller streams. Four salmonid species, including Endangered Species Act listed steelhead and coho salmon spawn and rear within the Scappoose Bay Watershed. Numerous other fish and wildlife species frequent Scappoose Bay and connected streamside and wetland habitats. Scappoose Bay, a unique freshwater tidal estuary, is the focal point of this complex system which provides fresh clean water to its human residents, and to a diverse population of plants, fish, wildlife, birds and amphibians.



Despite population growth and proximity to a major metropolitan area, the Watershed still includes over 25,000 acres of conifer forests which cool the Watershed's steep headwaters. Remnant oak forests and grassy savannahs at lower elevations offer a reminder of the Watershed's natural and cultural history. Wetlands rich in wildlife still grace the lowlands, filtering the basin's runoff and providing a home for native species. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Columbia Land Trust, The Wetlands Conservancy, and other State and Federal agencies have identified the Scappoose Bay Watershed as a priority area for habitat conservation and restoration efforts.

## **The Council**

The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council (SBWC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operating in Columbia County, Oregon. It was authorized by the Columbia County Board of Commissioners in 1997, and is funded by public and private grants and gifts.

SBWC volunteers are concerned citizens who take an active role in preserving and enhancing the Watershed. The Council oversees a small dedicated staff that manages day to day Council activities and projects. Augmenting the Council and staff is a large diverse group of partners, public agencies, advisors and landowners who provide invaluable guidance and assistance.

## **Our Accomplishments**

During our first 10 years the Watershed Council has done a substantial amount of work. We have completed both a watershed and fish barrier assessment; have worked with partners to remove 40 fish barriers; and have provided community and student volunteers with a lot of chances to get their hands dirty. In the last two years we have started large scale wetland restoration projects. Some highlights include:

- Reopening 55 miles of salmon spawning streams through barrier removal
- Involving 2,500 area students in projects and events
- Planting 15,000 native trees and shrubs

From 1997- 2007, the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council was awarded \$2,500,000 in grants. Most of the funding supports restoration projects. Research shows that for every dollar spent on restoration projects, 80 cents stays in local communities, and leads to additional economic benefit. We estimate that with a multiplier effect, the positive economic impact of watershed restoration investments in the Scappoose Bay Watershed is between \$ 4,200,000 and \$6,250,000. In addition, the SBWC has raised public awareness of watershed issues through information booths at local events, newspaper articles, and community presentations. We have achieved a high level of community involvement with annual Bay cleanups, native plant nursery operations, and other activities.

## **Long-Term Goals**

In 2006, the Council generated a list of goals to accomplish in the next twenty years. We see a brief window of opportunity for planning and implementing large-scale projects – ahead of the major economic development and population influx we believe is both inevitable and imminent. The SBWC plans to work closely with communities and landowners to maximize this opportunity before the window closes. Our four major long-term goals are:

- Develop and implement a strategy to protect important wetlands along the major creeks and in the Scappoose Bottomlands.
- Develop an understanding of the major changes in the main creek corridors connecting the upper watershed to the bay in order to successfully undertake large-scale restoration projects.

- Identify factors limiting the health of the watershed, including impacts to salmon and other keystone species, and implement projects to address significant habitat concerns.
- Identify opportunities to connect to important natural areas such as Sauvie Island Wildlife Refuge and Ridgefield National Wildlife refuge.

### **Strategic Planning**

The SBWC Strategic Plan, completed in December, 2007, details our goals and objectives for the next five years (2008-2012). The plan is divided into two parts: internal and external. The internal portion deals with funding and organizational structure, while the external identifies the projects and activities on which we'll concentrate in the near term. Many of the goals will be ongoing beyond the plan's duration. The external goals fall into four groups:

- Protecting and enhancing Scappoose Bay and connected wetlands
- Restoring salmon habitat and creek corridor connections
- Tracking watershed trends and project effectiveness
- Developing community watershed stewardship

There are several goals and objectives in each of the four areas, addressing specific waterways and wetlands, assessing and monitoring the impact of completed projects, and working with schools, landowners and communities in the areas of education, technical assistance, and land-use planning.

### **Challenges**

The Council's goals are ambitious. There is tremendous potential to move forward with our strategic goals, which could have a significant impact on the health of the watershed. On the regional level, the Council is actively participating in salmon recovery planning and hopes to be part of long-term solutions to bring healthy salmon populations back to the Lower Columbia River. On the local level, the Council is being asked by communities to take the lead in developing plans for significant floodplain restoration projects. New partners have stepped forward to help protect critical wetland resources.

In order to turn our plans into reality, the Council needs strong partnerships, skilled staff and advisors, and the help of the community. Implementing the strategic plan will require substantial increases in staffing, funding, and Board capacity. The strength of our Board depends on the strength of the local citizens who dedicate their time to the organization. We need insights and expertise from a wide variety of people, who are willing to be advisors, committee members, and serve on the Watershed Council Board. The work of the Council also depends on the volunteers who are willing to get their hands dirty out in the field, as well as helping us run events and keep the office organized. Creating a more stable funding base will require support from individual donors as well as grant funding for projects.

# SBWC Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012

## Internal Goals and Objectives

### Council Development

1. Expand Council representation (board, advisors and committee members) to include critical stakeholders, needed skill sets and beneficial community connections.

A. Year 1. Inventory current skills and representation.

B. Year 1. Identify and prioritize needed skills and representation.

C. Year 1-5. Recruit top priority members.

2. Develop orientation, education, training, evaluation and recognition programs to enhance Council capabilities and increase effectiveness.

A. Year 1. Develop Board orientation program and a Board manual.

B. Year 1-5. Determine most needed areas of Council training and education.

C. Year 1-5. Develop annual training and education schedules.

D. Year 2. Develop annual Board evaluation program.

3. Define roles of committees, officers and the Board itself.

A. Year 1. Draft job descriptions.

B. Year 1-2. Form committees for management of Council operations, projects, and special events.

C. Year 2-5. Review and adjust Board/staff roles.

### Fundraising

4. Develop programs for raising “unrestricted” funds for organizational support.

A. Year 1. Develop program for soliciting donations from businesses and individuals.

B. Year 2. Develop large donor and planned giving campaigns.

- C. Year 3-5. Develop signature fundraising event that reinforces community identity and vision.

## **Organization**

5. Establish new policies, procedures and other tools to promote consistent, efficient and sound governance.

- A. Year 1. Develop a staff hiring procedure.
- B. Year 1. Create a Council organization chart.
- C. Year 1-2. Draft and adopt fundraising policies and procedures.
- D. Year 2-5. Review and adjust existing policies and procedures.

## **Staff Development**

6. Expand staff capability to accomplish Council goals and objectives.

- A. Year 1-5. Analyze current staff capabilities, limitations and needs, in accordance with the strategic plan.
- B. Year 1-5. Acquire needed capabilities via hiring, contracting, service programs, internships, and other sources.
- C. Year 1-5. Develop annual education and training programs for current staff.

## **External Goals and Objectives**

### **Protection and Enhancement of Scappoose Bay & Connected Wetlands**

7. Protect and enhance significant\* wetlands and open space within Scappoose Bay.

- A. Year 1-5: Restore wetlands and riparian forest on the Hogan Ranch and adjacent properties.
- B. Year 2-5: Work with the City of St. Helens, Port of St. Helens, County Parks, and private landowners to protect open space within Scappoose Bay between the Scappoose Bay Marina and St. Helens.

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\* Significant: Natural areas that are important habitat for salmon and other listed native species; drinking water quality and supply; and ecosystem function including flood storage, bank stability, and pollution filtration.

- C. Year 2-5: Work with partners to identify opportunities to connect to other regionally significant natural areas along Multnomah channel and on Sauvie Island.
  - D. Year 2-5: Work with community partners to monitor for and educate the public about current and potential aquatic invasive species of plants and animals.
8. Work with willing property owners to protect and enhance significant wetland complexes within the McNulty Creek and Honeyman Creek drainages.
- A. Year 1-3: Work with willing property owners and community partners to identify, protect, and enhance significant wetland complexes in Warren and St. Helens.
  - B. Year 2-5: Work with the City of St. Helens, Port of St. Helens, and private property owners to protect and enhance the wetland complex at the confluence of McNulty Creek and Scappoose Bay.

### **Salmon Habitat Restoration and Creek Corridor Connections**

9. Complete high priority fish barrier removals
- A. Year 1-3. Design and permit removal of 5-6 remaining barriers on Salmon and Cox Creek. Seek funding and partnerships for implementation.
  - B. Year 3-5. Design and permit removal of 4-5 barriers on Dart Creek. Seek funding and partnerships for implementation.
  - C. Year 3-5. Seek funding for design and permitting of the removal of 4 barriers on Honeyman Creek.
10. Assess habitat and identify enhancement opportunities in salmonid refugia areas, establish restoration goals, and develop implementation plans.
- A. Year 1. Complete habitat survey of salmonid refugia areas.
  - B. Year 2-3. Complete rapid bio assessment of coho usage in the watershed.
  - C. Year 3-5. Develop for targeted habitat enhancement projects based on results of habitat surveys and bio assessments.
11. Work with partners to develop community action plans to maintain open space and enhance habitat conditions along both forks and the mainstem of Scappoose Creek. Fund and implement restoration projects with willing landowners.
- A. Year 1-2: Develop a restoration plan for S. Scappoose Creek (Dutch Canyon through the City).

- B. Year 2-5: Design, permit and implement strategic projects in the City of Scappoose.
- C. Year 2-5: Work with partners to identify restoration opportunities along the N. Scappoose Creek. Design, permit, and implement key projects.
- D. Year 1-5: Restore key properties along Scappoose Creek (confluence to the bay).

12. Work with community partners to protect significant natural areas in and around the City of St Helens. Design projects to protect key salmonid habitat along Milton Creek.

- A. Year 2-5: Work with community partners to identify and protect existing salmon habitat along Milton Creek.
- B. Year 3-5: Identify and develop projects to restore wetlands and side channels in the upper reaches of Milton Creek.

13. Expand invasive species management to address highly invasive weeds threatening creek corridors and significant natural areas.

- A. Year 1-5: Work with community partners to identify and treat populations of highly invasive weeds while they are still manageable. Target weeds include Knotweed species, yellow flag iris, garlic mustard, and purple loosestrife.
- B. Year 2-5: Work with community partners to control common invasive plant species that could impact significant natural areas. Target species include Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, English Ivy, English hawthorn, and holly.

### **Track Watershed Trends and Project Effectiveness**

14. Ensure that council projects are adequately monitored for effectiveness and develop a plan for monitoring changes in watershed conditions.

- A. Year 1-5: Monitor current projects and adapt project management based on monitoring results.
- B. Year 2-3: Develop a watershed-wide monitoring plan to track systemic changes in the health of the watershed. Work with partners to obtain the resources for implementation of the monitoring plan.
- C. Year 4-5: Provide a report on the State of the Watershed to partners, regulatory agencies, and the general public.

15. Ensure that project sites are adequately maintained and that reporting requirements for grantors and regulatory agencies are met.



- A. Year 1-5: Maintain project sites to meet the objectives established for the project.
- B. Year 1-5: Conduct annual reporting and provide results to grant sources and regulatory agencies as required.
- C. Year 1-5: Develop and maintain a database to manage reporting requirements for projects.

### **Develop Community Watershed Stewardship**

16. Ensure that the council has a regular presence in the community through council publications and website, articles in the local media, community presentations, and participation in community events.

- A. Year 1-5: Keep the council website and outreach materials current, accessible, and appealing to the general public. Develop additional web features as resources become available.
- B. Year 1-5: Work with local media to print regular articles about the watershed and council projects and events.
- C. Year 1-5: Work with community partners to provide outreach material and staff booths at regular community events in the cities and the county.
- D. Year 1: Develop volunteer tracking, training, and recognition program.

17. Provide information, technical assistance, and resources (when feasible) to landowners who live near creeks, wetlands, and significant natural areas in the watershed.

- A. Year 1-5: Hold an annual native tree and shrub distribution for private property owners that want to enhance natural areas along creeks and wetlands in the watershed.
- B. Year 1-5: Conduct site visits and provide technical assistance to property owners that live near creeks, wetlands, and significant natural areas.
- C. Year 2-5: Work with community partners to provide workshops and training for landowners on best management practices including invasive weed management, native habitat enhancement, and salmon habitat enhancement.

18. Create a pool of trained and motivated watershed stewards through working with local volunteers, including community members and students, to grow native plants, monitoring watershed conditions, and help with council projects.

- A. Year 1-5: Partner with local high schools, Columbia County Master Gardeners, and community volunteers to operate native plant nurseries.

- B. Year 1-5: Provide volunteers with hands-on learning and community service experience working on restoration projects.
- C. Year 2-5: Work with high school and college students on special projects and offer internship opportunities.

19. Participate in local-decision making processes that affect the health of the watershed.

A. Year 1: Develop a strategy for tracking local decisions that impacts the watershed. Investigate the most effective ways to engage with City Councils, County Commissioners, Port of St. Helens, County Planning Commission, and Community Planning Action Committees.

B. Year 2-5: Recruit volunteers to implement the strategy to participate in local decision making.

C. Year 1-5: Make annual presentation on Council activities to County Commissioners and the City Council of Scappoose and St. Helens.

D. Year 1-5: Keep decision-making bodies and appropriate organizations apprised of Council goals and activities to encourage them to solicit Council advice regarding issues that affect watershed health.

E. Year 2-5: Solicit volunteer participation in Council activities by individual members of decision-making bodies and organizations.



# History of the Watershed Council

## 1997-2007

**1997:** Interested local citizens come together to develop a Charter for the Watershed Council

The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council was established on August 13, 1997 by Columbia County Commissioners (Order No.187-97) as a citizen advisory group to local decision making bodies and communities of interest. Its stated purpose is to serve as a forum for and about the watershed and to provide information through which coordination and cooperation among watershed users will be nurtured for the common good. It is non-partisan, non-political, and non-regulatory. Its mission is to promote stewardship and understanding of the watershed resources, deal with issues in advance of resource degradation, and ensure sustainable watershed health, functions, and uses.

**1998:** Volunteers obtain grants to start Council projects

- First education grant obtained to provide local students with hands-on experience with the watershed
- A water quality monitoring program is developed

**1999- 2000:** *Scappoose Bay Watershed Assessment* is completed

- Watershed- wide temperature monitoring is conducted at key points
- Log placement at Gourlay Creek
- Bonnie Falls fish trap installed
- Planting project conducted at the 911 Building

**2001:** First Council Support Grant is received from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and a watershed council coordinator is hired

- *A Comprehensive Assessment of Fish Passage Barriers in the Scappoose Bay Watershed* is completed
- First culvert grant received from OWEB

**2002:** Council moves into the Scappoose Bay Marina office and hires an Office Manager

- The Gourlay Creek fish ladder is installed in partnership with the City of Scappoose
- A Watershed Education video and outreach materials are developed
- In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the community native plant distribution is started
- Applied for 501(c)(3) status and received initial ruling

**2003-2005:** Start of major partnership projects with BLM and Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (LCREP)

- Technical assistance grant for designs for 7 fish barrier removals
- OWEB grant for 4 fish barrier removals
- A dam on Milton Creek is removed
- BLM grant for removal of three fish barriers
- LCREP grant for Scappoose Bay Bottomlands projects

- Second log placement at Gourlay Creek
- Plant distribution continues, Council starts collecting local seed
- A new watershed council coordinator is hired in April of 2005

**2006:** Major effort to remove remaining 3 fish barriers on Alder Creek

- Raymond Creek Tributary Fish Barrier removal
- OWEB small grants for the Scappoose Bay Marina natural area project and Scappoose High School native plant nursery and annual plant distribution
- Earth Day event at the Marina
- Final status as a 501 (c)(3)
- Council establishes new operating policies

**2007:** Council moves ahead with new initiatives

- Council partners with the Soil and Water Conservation District and OSU Extension to tackle Japanese Knotweed on 14 miles of creek bank
- Council receives funding for work in the Scappoose Bottomlands at Hogan Ranch and along Scappoose Creek
- Council reaches out to 450 landowners along creeks throughout the watershed
- In partnership with BLM, a new native plant nursery is set up at Columbia River Youth Corps
- Council develops a 5-year strategic plan