

# LWC Meanderings

## Watershed News & Reflections



### About the LWC:

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.

### LWC Mission:

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

### LWC Board:

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### LWC Staff:

Jordan Perez, Executive Director

Aubrey Cloud, Restoration Project Director

Jack Fetters, Monitoring Coordinator

Suzanne Teller, Outreach Coordinator

*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.*

## Closing the Gaps Along the Lower Luckiamute



*Credit: Greenbelt Land Trust*



*Credit: Aubrey Siddiqui-Cloud*

*Left: Greenbelt Land Trust's Luckiamute Confluence property adds 110 acres of new floodplain forest habitat linking the north and south tracts of LSNA. Right: Red flowering currant is a beautiful, ecologically valuable native shrub planted throughout all of the LSNA project areas – and currently in full bloom!*

Along the lower Luckiamute River in southern Polk County, a remarkable stretch of floodplain forest is taking shape across a connected landscape spanning both public and private land. At the heart of it all is the Luckiamute-Santiam-Willamette confluence at Luckiamute State Natural Area (LSNA), one of the most ecologically significant spots in the entire Willamette Valley.

LSNA is a 942-acre property where the LWC has been working with Oregon State Parks and other partners to expand and enhance native floodplain forest for over a decade. Recently, that effort got a major boost when Greenbelt Land Trust acquired the 110-acre Luckiamute Confluence property, filling a critical gap between the separate north and south sections of the natural area. That missing piece of the puzzle is now not only protected, but actively being restored. Greenbelt recently completed their first planting on the property, putting over 100,000 native trees and shrubs in the ground and beginning the long-term work of bringing the floodplain forest back. The potential for truly connected floodplain habitat across this landscape is closer to reality than ever before..

Why does connectivity matter so much? When floodplain forests are fragmented into small, isolated patches, they are more vulnerable to weed invasion, erosion, and loss over time. But when these patches are

## Closing the Gaps (continued from page 1)

linked across a landscape, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Connected floodplains provide more habitat value for wildlife since they can move and establish more freely, and the system becomes far more resilient to disturbances.

For salmon and steelhead, which rely on flooded floodplain forest each winter for food and shelter, a connected corridor of native forest along the Luckiamute and Willamette Rivers makes an enormous difference. And the benefits don't stop with fish and wildlife. Healthy floodplain forests slow and store floodwaters, filter runoff before it reaches the river, and recharge groundwater that feeds streams during dry summer months. For the communities that live and farm along the Willamette and its tributaries, that's a real and lasting benefit that will continue to expand as the forest grows and matures.

One of the key pieces of that corridor is taking shape on Dr. Kenneth Fletcher's property, which sits directly on the northern boundary of LSNA. Thanks to two OWEB small grants awarded to the LWC in 2022 and 2024, nearly 10 acres of native floodplain forest are being restored across his 42-acre parcel. Dr. Fletcher enrolled his land in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program over a decade ago and proactively reached out to the LWC when he recognized that the site needed more support. Licensed contractors have been interplanting thousands of native bareroot trees and shrubs and conducting targeted weed control, while Dr. Fletcher contributes his own time and resources to ongoing maintenance between contractor visits.

The result is a restoration effort that extends the footprint of Luckiamute State Natural Area onto private land, connecting directly with the larger mosaic of protected and restored habitat taking shape at the confluence. It's a powerful reminder that some of the most important conservation work happens not just on public land, but with neighbors who care deeply about the landscape they call home.

## New Resource: Reducing Fire Risk Through Invasive Tree Removal



Did you know that invasive trees on your property could be increasing your wildfire risk? Using an excellent OSU Extension resource – *Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes* – Aubrey has prepared a simplified and easy-to-follow guide to help landowners identify and manage invasive woody plants in the mid-Willamette Valley.

The guide explains how invasive trees like English hawthorn, bird cherry, tree of heaven, and black locust create dangerous ladder fuels and denser canopies – increasing fire risk while providing little ecological value. Removing them is a win-win because it reduces fire hazard *and* improves habitat for native wildlife.

The resource covers practical control methods for both manual and chemical removal, identification tips for 12 invasive shrubs and trees commonly found in our area, and timing strategies to help you spot these species throughout the seasons.

Whether you're a homeowner, land manager, or conservation volunteer, this guide is an valuable tool for building a more fire-resilient landscape and reducing the spread of invasives. Visit our website to view and download this booklet at <https://www.luckiamute.org/reducing-fire-risk-through-invasive-tree-removal.html>

## Join Us for Earth Day at Ash Creek – April 18th!



*From left to right: Our first ivy pull at this site was in 2022, and volunteers worked hard to successfully free these beautiful old oaks from a shroud of choking ivy. By 2024, almost all the ivy growing on the trees was gone and progress was made pulling back the ground ivy from the base of the trees. Last year, volunteers knocked back more ivy and also removed invasive bird cherry and English holly. We are excited to make even more progress during this year's event!*

Celebrate Earth Day this year by helping protect a beautiful grove of century-old oaks along South Fork Ash Creek in Independence. This event marks the fourth year of our invasive removal efforts at this site, and the progress has been remarkable. Oaks that were once smothered in English ivy have been freed to flourish, and many invasive bird cherry and holly trees have been removed – all of which has dramatically improved the habitat value of this riparian forest corridor located behind the Brandy Meadows housing development in Independence.

What makes this little piece of habitat so important? Although it is not a huge area, this grove of oaks and other native trees shades the waters of Ash Creek, which is important for the many native fish and aquatic wildlife species that need cool water to survive and thrive. It also serves as a terrestrial wildlife corridor, providing essential habitat for birds and other wildlife that use these natural areas to find food, shelter, and to safely navigate through the surrounding developed landscape.

Each year's volunteer effort builds on the last, and there's still more to do. Come roll up your sleeves, connect with nature, and make a lasting impact to celebrate Earth Day! You can get more details and sign up at [luckiamute.org/earth-day-ash-creek](http://luckiamute.org/earth-day-ash-creek).

### 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.Luckiamute.org/Friends](http://www.Luckiamute.org/Friends)

***Thank you to our supporters!***

We welcome donations\* of any amount at [www.Luckiamute.org/Donate](http://www.Luckiamute.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 news and issues, watershed council restoration activities and upcoming events. You can get the agenda, along with driving directions and/or Zoom links at [www.Luckiamute.org](http://www.Luckiamute.org)

**April 9 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (Kings Valley Community Hall)**

**June 11 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (TBD)**

**August 13 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (Happy Workers Club)**

# Thank you to Our Most Recent Donors and Volunteers!

We are so grateful to the following donors and volunteers who have contributed their hard-earned dollars and their time and energy to our conservation goals from January 1 to March 31, 2026. Your support of the Luckiamute Watershed Council makes a BIG difference, and helps us achieve our goal of a healthy watershed for all. THANK YOU!

## Thank you, Bedrock Society Donors!

A special note of thanks goes to our 28 donors who are opting to make automatic monthly contributions to the Luckiamute Watershed Council! Find out how you can become a part of our Bedrock Society at <https://www.luckiamute.org/donate.html>

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