Summer Issue / July 2026

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:
Karin Stutzman, President
Monmouth

Judy Beebe, Treasurer
Polk County

Nick Hazelton, Secretary
Kings Valley/Hoskins

Dave Ehlers
Kings Valley/Hoskins

Juliana Landry
American Bottom/Buena Vista

Jackson Stalley
Dallas

Scott Youngblood
American Bottom/Buena Vista

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.

More info at www.Luckiamute.org

The Fire-Resilient Yard: Conserving Water, Cutting Risk

Left: The foreground is entirely consumed by invasive English hawthorn and sweet cherry, creating a significant fire risk and providing almost no ecological value. Right: This backyard is planted with a diverse array of drought-resistant native plants, reducing fire risk and providing excellent habitat for pollinators.

This year's forecast is concerning. After one of Oregon's warmest winters on record, tied with 1934, snowpack and water supplies are running well below normal statewide. While Polk and Benton are not among the 17 counties currently facing a drought emergency, 83% of the state is now under active drought conditions. Willamette Basin snowpack dropped to just 9% of normal this spring, according to Oregon State Climatologist Larry O'Neill.

Here in the Luckiamute watershed, the Oregon Department of Forestry's West Oregon District — covering Benton, Lincoln, and Polk counties — declared the start of the 2026 wildfire season effective June 15, triggering a notably early backyard burn ban across our area. With drought conditions widespread this year, it's worth taking the outlook seriously and thinking about what we can each do at home.

The good news is that many actions that conserve water also reduce fire risk around your property.

Choose plants wisely. Native plants adapted to our wet-winter, dry-summer climate generally need far less water once established. Many are also naturally fire-resistant, with moist, flexible foliage that doesn't ignite easily from embers. Our booklet, *Native Plants for Fire Resilient Landscapes,* highlights great low-water, fire-resistant options for our region, like sedum, kinnikinnick, red-flowering currant, and Oregon white oak.

Drought, Fire, and Your Yard, cont.

Remove invasive trees and shrubs. Dense stands of invasives like English hawthorn, sweet cherry, and English laurel create exactly the conditions that fuel wildfire (dense canopies, ladder fuels, and crowded understories) while providing little habitat value. Our newest booklet, *Reducing Fire Risk Through Invasive Tree Removal,* explains how removing these species is a win-win: it cuts fuel loads now and sets back the invasion for decades. Many invasives are easiest to spot by their blooms in late spring, or by berries and evergreen foliage in fall and winter.

Both booklets are free to download from our website (links below), or stop by our office for a printed copy. A little planning now goes a long way toward a more resilient yard, watershed, and community this fire season.

A Few Simple Steps For This Summer

- **Water early morning or evening** to reduce water loss through evaporation.
- **Water deeply but less often** to encourage root growth further down into the soil.
- **Mulch garden beds** to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- **Avoid water-hungry ornamental plants.** Opt for drought-tolerant and native vegetation instead.
- **Let your lawn go dormant.** Grass naturally goes brown and dormant in summer heat — that's normal, not dead. It will revive with the fall rains.
- **Create defensible space** by clearing dead vegetation and removing invasive woody plants around your home.
- **Remember:** backyard debris burning is now prohibited in Benton, Lincoln, and Polk counties until fire season is over. Check with ODF's West Oregon District (541-929-6300) or your local fire department before any outdoor burning.

Free LWC Booklets:

Native Plants for Fire Resilient Landscapes: Luckiamute.org/native-plants-for-fire-resiliency

Reducing Fire Risk Through Invasive Tree Removal: Luckiamute.org/reducing-fire-risk-through-invasive-tree-removal

You're Invited to the LWC Summer BBQ Social at Happy Workers Club!

Every year, we like to invite our watershed community to meet and mingle at Happy Workers Club from 4 - 6pm, enjoy delicious dishes provided by our board and staff, and maybe even try a yak burger! You are also invited to stay for our plein air board meeting, which follows immediately afterwards from 6 - 8pm. We hope to see you there! Get all the details and RSVP at Luckiamute.org/lwc-summer-bbq-social

Summer Monitoring Season Kicks Off!

This past month, our Monitoring Coordinator Jack Fetters and LWC volunteers successfully completed the deployment of 33 temperature loggers within 19 waterways throughout the watershed. This marked the official start of a full summer of monitoring for the council!

In addition to temperature tracking, we will be collecting eDNA samples to determine the distribution of critical species across the watershed, including freshwater mussels, coho salmon, steelhead, and Pacific lamprey. Our eDNA results from last summer should be arriving any day now, and we will be posting results on our website and sending out an email update soon afterwards.

We are also using this technology to prepare for our upcoming Harris Creek culvert replacement project. By collecting eDNA upstream of the culvert now, we will be able to accurately determine which species are able to gain greater stream access once the project is completed.

We are thrilled to continue working alongside local landowners and our dedicated partners to collect this vital data and track where these species are thriving. Project partners for this effort include the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, and Benton County Public Works.

L to R: A beautiful monitoring site on the Upper Luckiamute River. Stream temperature is measured hourly by these HOBO Tidbit loggers, which remain submerged in the stream channel from May until October. During deployment, Jack records stream temperature manually to verify accuracy of loggers. Volunteer Jeffrey Houston measures stream depth at a monitoring site.

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

Thank you to our supporters!

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

August 13 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (Happy Workers Club)*
October 8 @ 6:00 - 8:00pm (Pedee Women's Club)

Join us for a pre-meeting BBQ Social from 4:00 - 6:00pm!

We welcome donations* of any amount at 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.*

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 April 1 to June 30, 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 27 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

Anonymous Donor
Judy Beebe
Bruce Bull
Maya & Jim Cook
Dale & Verna Curry
Dara Durham
Whitney & Ron Francis
Jeremy Gordon
Charlie & Hollis Holstine
Stephen & Ava Howard
Renee Jaffer
Becky & Jon Jay
Paige Jenkins
Deb Merchant
Leanne & Nick Merrill
Erin Murphy
Terry Murphy
Tamar & David Myhrum
Gail Oberst
Jennifer O'Brien
Caleb Price
Linda Samuels
Benjamin Vierra
Darrell Ward
Amy & Martin Wernz
Scott & Vanessa Youngblood
Tom Wilson

April 1 - June 30 Donors

Anonymous Donor (2)
Sudarshan Cadambi
Eve Chambers
Carolyn Foland
Laura Garcia
Camille Hall
Sarah Hoffman
Donna Horn
Renee Jaffer
Kyle Jansson & Carol Harding
Tess Kreofsky
Juliana Landry
Harry Lehman
Phillip Sollins
Jerry Weisensee
Brian Wolcott & Beth Thiel

April 1 - June 30 Volunteers

Suzanne Abreu
Brian Bangs
Maela Barbano
Mark Barbano
Mateo Barbano
Molly Barbano
Judy Beebe
Marc Bell
Britton Castor
Brian Dorsett
David Ehlers
Sarah Ehlers
Graham Eikenberry
Dan Farnworth
Douglass Fitting
Ray Gaevoy
Joel Geier
Derek Godwin
Nick Hazelton
Jamie Heim
Mark Henkels
Donna Horn
Jeffrey Houston
Tim Johnson
Cary Kerst
Jeremy Kobor
Juliana Landry
Phil Larsen
Kristen Larson
John Lorenz
Todd McLeish
Gordon McLennan
Terry Murphy
Aliah Murray
Morgan Neil
David Olson
Laura Ouellette
Misha Pierce
Kevin Porter
Sharon Safina
Sarah Siddiqui-Cloud
Sarah Siefken
Elizabeth Spitzer
Jackson Stalley
Karin Stutzman
Jay Teller
Mike Unger
Jennifer Vahl
Darrell Ward
Kelly Wiggins
Scott Youngblood
Barbara Zanelli
Lauren Zatkos

THANK YOU, Fred Meyer Community Rewards participants! Your purchase earned us **$18.10 so far!**

You can join by signing into your account at **www.FredMeyer.com**, and link your Community Rewards card using our nonprofit number: **Q1717**

Thank you, Business Circle Donors!

Business Circle
LUCKIAMUTE WATERSHED COUNCIL

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