

Spring & Summer 2024

SIUSLAW

WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWS

What's Happening in Your Watershed?



Waite Ranch – Haich Ikt'at'tuu Project Update

Year two of the three-year construction schedule for estuary restoration on Waite Ranch - Haich Ikt'at'tuu, near Cushman, is underway. This summer's work will set the stage for the return of tidal waters to the nearly 200-acre site in the 2025 work season. Return of these waters will mark the first time in more than 100 years that the ebb and flow of the tides will bring sediment and nutrients back to build the land up and support the numerous species that rely on the rich productivity of this special land-sea environment.

This year's work includes building up a long levee that will stand between Highway 126 and the rest of the site, protecting the highway from newly introduced tidal ebbs and flows. It will also include excavation of an initial tidal channel system. Once the levee that stands between the river and the interior of the site is removed in 2025, this channel system will be shaped and changed by the tides, resulting in the slow development of a complex network of small channels that we see at nearby sites, such as Cox, Duncan, and Wilbur Islands. We will also place large wood in the new channels and on the surfaces of the floodplain, simulating the copious amounts of driftwood that the river and tides bring to these estuary properties.

The work that we are doing this year is a key piece of the restoration process; however, the bare earth of the construction site and the big trucks and other equipment hard at work could be mistaken for a housing or infrastructure development project. And in a way, it is just that. The housing will be for the fish, the birds, and the vegetation that healthy estuary processes support. The additional area that will be accessible will allow floodwaters to spread out, slow down, and drop sediment on the site, reducing the impact of flooding on nearby infrastructure.

When I need to be reminded of the final product that will come from the heavy, dusty work being done now, I hike over the existing levee between the site and the river, sit on driftwood among the sedges and tule, and watch the eelgrass leaves floating in a retreating tide, the wading birds waiting for their next meal to swim by, and the water roiled by life under the surface that I cannot see.





This project is being implemented by the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI), McKenzie River Trust, and the Siuslaw Watershed Council. More information on the project, including a basic map of the site, can be found at mckenzieriver.org/property/waite-ranch/.

Contributed by Miu Burruss, Project Manager

STAFF

Mizu Burruss
Project Manager
restoration@siuslaw.org

Opal Burruss
Seasonal Restoration
Technician

Brian Cultrera
Seasonal Restoration
Technician

Britnee Church
Project Manager
britnee@siuslaw.org

Adam Cook
Restoration Technician
adam@siuslaw.org

Caleb Mentzer
Project Manager
projects@siuslaw.org

Tim Moffett
Executive Director
tim@siuslaw.org

Linda Poppenheimer
Financial Manager
financial@siuslaw.org

Elijah Yager
Project Manager
elijah@siuslaw.org

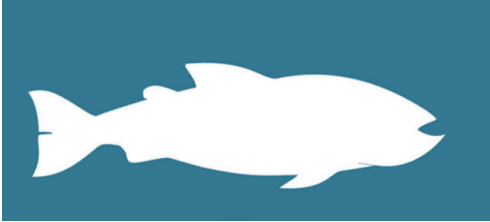
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Governor Kotek, First Lady Aimee, and CTCLUSI's Tribal Council observe restoration progress at Haich Ikt'at'tuu



Stand-up Paddleboarding (SUP) Adventures in the Siuslaw Watershed



Watershed Camp participants SUP-ing on Hult Pond

The beautiful, sunny weather we have been experiencing in the Siuslaw Watershed while I am writing this article during the middle of May has me mentally putting away my winter steelhead fishing gear (steelhead season closes on the Siuslaw on March 31st but other rivers such as the Nestucca and Siletz remain open all-year long) and switching gears to thinking about the awesome summer recreation opportunities such as mountain biking, backpacking, whitewater rafting and my new favorite hobby of stand-up paddleboarding. Stand-up paddleboarding, commonly known as SUP'ing, has taken off as an outdoor activity in the recent years because

- It is great exercise and can improve balance. After an hour on the water I feel much more stable on my feet and improved mental clarity.
- Relatively low-cost of getting started. All you need is a paddle-board, paddle and a life-jacket and you are set to get started! All this can be purchased for a few hundred dollars, and guess what? The Siuslaw Watershed Council has paddle-boards that we will rent to you for free with a membership in the Siuslaw Watershed Council. By the way, membership with the SWC is on a donation basis and we don't want to let cost discourage anyone from participating in our rental program. We want folks to get out and enjoy the watershed! I'll finish up this article with more information on how to access the SWC rental program.
- Ease of transport. With options such as inflatable SUP's you can take your paddle craft with you wherever you go and be ready whenever. It's a great way to start or finish up your day with a quick paddle before or after work.
- Low-impact on the environment. SUP'ing produces no carbon emissions or noise pollution. This has allowed me to see some really cool wildlife because they are not being scared away by loud outboard motors. I really have come to appreciate the solitude and meditative qualities of stand-up paddleboarding.

So with that information in hand, here are four locations to start your stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) adventures in the Siuslaw Watershed. All of these locations offer good vehicle access and warm water during the summer months so no wetsuit or drysuit is needed but make sure to wear a life jacket at all times:

1. Triangle Lake is one of my favorite SUP locations for a number of reasons, primarily because it is short distance from my house and also because circumnavigating the lake takes approximately 1 hour which is just about the perfect amount of time for me to feel like I got a good exercise in. A few things to keep in mind about Triangle Lake is that it is a highly popular wakeboarding and waterskiing lake so getting on the water early will help avoid the noise and waves that are associated with those activities. Also, the wind tends to pick up in late-morning to mid-afternoon so again, getting on the water early is the way to go! To access Triangle Lake for paddleboarding, unless you are one of the lucky ones who owns a lakefront property, your best bet is the Lane County public boat launch located on the west end of the

lake at GPS 44.173859, -123.581194. This is a Lane County park and requires a daily use fee, which can be paid at the launch, or an Annual Lane County Parks Pass which may be purchased at the Lane County Parks office or online through their web portal.

2. Hult Pond in the upper Lake Creek basin is a smaller, man-made reservoir, compared to Triangle Lake but what it lacks in size it makes up for with its gorgeous surroundings and incredible biodiversity. When you are paddleboarding on Hult Pond keep an eye out for Western-pond turtles which will sunbath on the many submerged logs. This is also a great lake for fishing for invasive largemouth bass which I really want to attempt from my paddleboard! Another pro about Hult Pond is that it does not allow gas motors and it is also relatively protected from the wind so it is a good mid-day SUP option. Keep in mind that the Hult Pond dam is slated to be removed by the BLM in the semi-near future (precise date unknown at this time) for reasons of public safety so I would recommend SUP'ing around Hult Pond sooner rather than later. Access to Hult Pond is via the free BLM-owned public boat launch, which does have pit toilets, on BLM Rd 15-7-35 at GPS 44.241249, -123.495355.

3. Mercer Lake on the north end of Florence is a great option for coastal residents and with 9.03 miles of shoreline on the 350.15 acre lake (oregonlakesatlas.org/lake/17100205000491) you could spend all day exploring. The many branching arms in Mercer Lake offer some respite from the wind and other motor-boaters but this is a coastal lake, so similarly to Triangle Lake, the wind will pick up in the late-morning and afternoons. The Lane County owned boat launch on Mercer Lake is located on the east end of the lake at GPS 44.049492, -124.058290 and will require the same parking access permit as Triangle Lake.

4. You can also take your SUP out directly on the **Siuslaw River** itself! Stand-up paddleboarding on a river does offer some unique challenges that are not present on the lake, such as a downstream current and potential riffles/rapids. With that being said, there are some relatively calm areas on the Siuslaw River that are amenable to SUP'ing such as downstream of Davis Rapids at the Rainrock pull-off (GPS 44.076095, -123.867617) or Schindler Landing County Park at the mouth of Indian Creek (GPS 44.079946, -123.791158). The Rainrock pull-off is a free, public access unmaintained launch owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation, while Schindler Landing is a Lane County park that will require an access pass. Keep in mind that if you travel downstream from one launch to another that you should have arranged a shuttle ride back to your original put-in. Don't count on being able to navigate upstream via your paddleboard to your launch location!

A few more things to consider before embarking on your paddleboard adventure:

Any watercraft 10 feet and longer requires a Waterway Access and Aquatic Invasive Species permit available online at <https://myodfw.com/articles/waterway-access-and-aquatic-invasive-species-permits> or also anywhere that sells ODFW fishing licenses, such as Bi-Mart or most sporting goods stores.

Paddleboards come in both hard-shell foam (like a surfboard) and inflatable versions. If you have a small car and are limited by your ability to carry a larger hard-shell board then the inflatable versions are great options. Make sure you get a high quality pump capable of inflating to the recommended PSI, which will likely be around 15 PSI (see manufactures recommendation which will be printed on the board). An underinflated board is much more challenging to balance on than a properly inflated board. Make sure that once you are off the water to partially deflate the SUP immediately because leaving it in the sun can cause it to overinflate and explode. I have seen this happen multiple times, especially when the SUP is left in the direct sun on a hot asphalt or concrete surface.

One last thought I would like to add is to not be intimidated about SUP'ing because it seems too challenging and in particular don't be scared to try and stand-up on the board and fall a couple of times. It really is painless to fall into the water from this height and this is what will help you in learning how to successfully maintain your balance in the future.

Life jackets don't work if you don't wear them!

If you would like to learn more about the Siuslaw Watershed Council rental program, which includes stand-up paddleboards and lifejackets, as well as a lot of other great outdoor equipment such as kayaks and bicycles, please contact the SWC Education and Outreach Project Manager, Eli Yager, at elijah@siuslaw.org or via the office telephone at 541-268-3044.

Contributed by Caleb Mentzer, Project Manager

New Board of Directors Representatives

This year the Siuslaw Watershed Council welcomes new board members Amy Tregoning, Noelle Windesheim, and Rosemary Pazdral!



Amy Tregoning

Amy has been working for the Siuslaw School District since 2015. She is currently the Natural Resource CTE teacher at the high school, sharing her passion of stewardship of our local area with students through field study opportunities and guidance from community partners.



Noelle Windesheim

Noelle moved to the Siuslaw in the summer of 2023 to work for the Trailkeepers of Oregon as a volunteer coordinator. She has a passion and drive for community, trails, and making the outdoors a welcoming space for everyone.



Rosemary Pazdral

Rosemary grew up on the headwaters of the Siuslaw and completed a PhD studying the hydrology of Oregon coastal watersheds. She is dedicated to stewarding land and water in the Oregon Coast Range and worked as the Executive Director of SWC from 2021-2023.

Spirit of the Siuslaw: Mizu Burruss



The SWC Board of Directors has selected Mizu Burruss to receive the Spirit of the Siuslaw Award. She was recognized at our Leadership Body picnic on Saturday August 17th.

Mizu has served the Council in several roles when called, including executive director, financial manager, project manager, and volunteer. Numerous restoration projects and watershed programs have benefited from her thoughtful expertise over the last decade. But Mizu is probably best known throughout the community as being a great neighbor and compassionate friend.

Congratulations, Mizu!

[Authentic beaver chew mounted on maple burl]

What the SWC Crew Has Been Up To



In February and March, the crew was working hard to supply SWC partner the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, with 14,000 willow stakes for the restoration of the lower Fivemile Creek valley. Fourteen thousand is a big number. It's the average depth, in feet, of the ocean. Put into hours, that's 583 days. It's also the elevation of Mt. Rainer, and the number of kilometers between Oregon and Uganda. The ability of willows to quickly root from a live stake make them a valuable first line of defense against invasive species entering areas disrupted by excavation equipment. Furthermore, willows provide food for beavers, nesting habitat for birds, and improved spawning habitat for fish. As more and more bundles amassed at the end of each day, it became easier to imagine ourselves under the shady canopy of a newly established gallery of willows just down the valley.

In April and May the crew worked with the US Forest Service on installing and monitoring a fish trap in Knowles Creek, just off Highway 126 in Mapleton. This marks the trap's 31st year in operation. A rotating barrel funnels incoming and outgoing anadromous fish, such as salmon, trout, and lamprey, into a live well where they are counted, marked, and released daily. Collecting data from the trap allows the Forest Service to evaluate fish population figures. Farther up the watershed on Upper North Fork Indian Creek, the crew got to expand its breadth of skills by building a series of fences. Inside the fences several hundreds of native plants will be free to grow without the browsing pressure of deer and elk.



Revitalization of the Sweet Creek Falls Trail Network



The Siuslaw Watershed Council has been awarded nearly \$90k of Title II funds by the Siuslaw National Forest Resource Advisory Committee to assist the USFS with revitalization of the Sweet Creek Falls trail network!

Our efforts will focus on tread work, surface repairs, and erosion control. We look forward to improving public access to our local natural spaces and promoting recreation and economic opportunities in the watershed! Work will begin in early 2025.

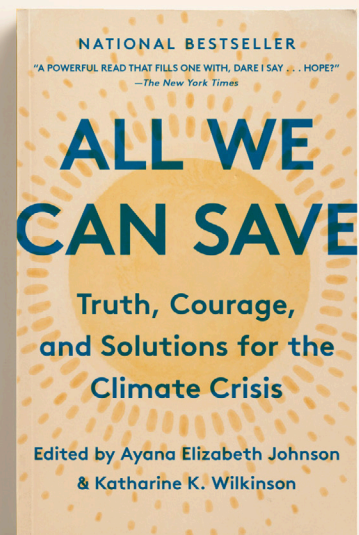
Staff Reading Pick: *All We Can Save*

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage and Solutions for the Climate Crisis is a compilation of work from 60 women at the forefront of the climate movement, sharing their voices, stories and perspectives through writing, poetry and art. This book is compassionate, courageous, and a great read for anyone interested in confronting the climate crisis. Edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson

Siuslaw Watershed Council

Mission Statement

SWC supports sound economic, social and environmental uses of natural and human resources in the Siuslaw River Basin. The Council encourages cooperation among public and private watershed entities to promote awareness and understanding of watershed functions by adopting and implementing a total watershed approach to natural resource management and production.





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MAPLETON, OR 97453
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P.O. Box 422 • Mapleton, Oregon, 97453
541-268-3044 • www.siuslaw.org • outreach@siuslaw.org



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