



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Siuslaw Watershed Council (SWC) is excited to report that we secured more than \$1,700,000 in grant funds in 2023 to support habitat restoration projects, community engagement activities, our annual Watershed Camp program, Native Plant Distribution, habitat and water quality monitoring, and partnership building initiatives. Furthermore, throughout 2023 we spent more than \$715,000 on contracted services, meaning we paid contractors, with a preference for local contractors, well over half a million dollars to implement restoration projects or assist in project design and engineering, support our camp programs, and many stewardship tasks.

For every million dollars we spend on restoration projects, we support 15 to 18 jobs by hiring local contractors and supporting local organizations who partner with us on our projects. Research shows that for every \$1 we spend on restoration work, we spur \$1.60 of economic activity in our local economy. Contractors that we hire often purchase local goods and services, stay at local hotels, eat at local restaurants, and repair equipment and purchase parts and goods in our local stores.

With the support from our watershed council members and grantors, we are able to continue investing in our local economy, in our environment, and in educating local community members about our natural resources and the delicate natural processes that support habitat for salmon and a resilient landscape in the face of a changing climate.

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## 2023 Accomplishments

- Distributed over 10,000 plants through our Native Plant Distribution program
- Planted over 3,000 native plants on public and private land
- Cleared over 52 acres of invasive species
- Hosted eight community activities with a cumulative 123 participants
- Held 20 field trips engaging 926 local students and 72 educators, providing watershed stewardship education
- Held a week-long Watershed Camp with 50 youth participants and an overnight Wilderness Weekend with eight high school students
- Contributed to the seasonal installation and monitoring of a fish monitoring trap on Knowles Creek
- Large wood placements were installed to provide spawning ground habitat for salmon across three creeks covering over six stream miles with over 700 trees placed
- Installed two culverts designed for aquatic organism passage in Indian Creek to expand available spawning habitat for salmon
- Surveyed 65 acres of tidal wetland for invasive *Spartina* grass in the Siuslaw Estuary
- Participated in breaking ground on the haich ikt'at'u site to restore 180 acres of estuarine tidal floodplain





2023 was a busy year for SWC's field crew. Operating with five personnel in the field at peak season we hit a number of milestones in our efforts to further watershed restoration in partnership with public and private landowners. We planted more than 2,100 native plants at restoration sites on United States Forest Service land, more than 1,100 on private stewardship landowners' properties, and distributed nearly 10,000 free plants at our Native Plant Distribution (NPD) day. NPD participants and stewardship landowners benefited from our field crew's assistance with both site preparation and freeing previous years' plantings from encroaching invasive species, with over 52 acres prepped or released in the course of the year.



During the spring our crew worked with the United States Forest Service on the Knowles Creek screw trap, identifying, marking, and cataloging salmonid populations. The Knowles Creek trap has been in operation since 1993, providing data on smolting salmon populations as they migrate out to the estuary. While smolt are the focus, a broad range of aquatic life is inventoried from crayfish to lamprey, giving insight into the dynamics of the stream's ecosystem. Each spring the trap must be assembled and installed, and worked daily until its removal.

In summer the crew assisted with the salvage of aquatic organisms from an ongoing stage zero restoration site being implemented by the Forest Service and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. A process-based restoration practice, stage zero involves treating highly incised stream channels to restore floodplain connectivity, and requires the relocation of aquatic life from the project area. Stream sections were systematically drained and organisms were relocated to un-impacted sections of the waterway.

The field crew was also kept busy with monitoring, working throughout the summer and fall on Cox Island in the Siuslaw Estuary to uncover and report on the highly invasive *Spartina patens*. Critical estuary floodplain habitat under the management of The Nature Conservancy, Cox Island has been the site of a long-running battle against *Spartina*. This eradication campaign has been largely successful, but vigilance is required in order to prevent a resurgence of this east-coast salt grass. Once found, patches are flagged and smothered with heavy tarps to ensure their destruction.



As fall turned to winter SWC was engaged in gathering data on salmon spawning grounds through surveys with the Bureau of Land Management, covering five reaches of streambed to count salmon and redds. Wading through streams swollen by winter rains, crew members covered the reaches each week to ensure every salmon and redd was tallied. This critical monitoring work ensures accurate and up to date information on salmon populations throughout their range in our watershed.





SWC's community outreach, recreation and education (CORE) program continued to make gains in 2023, recovering and readapting to a post-pandemic world. Funding was secured to hire a Youth Education Specialist to work alongside the Education and Outreach Project Manager, expanding capacity for community events and field trip programming.

Monthly events connected us with the public throughout our service area, bringing people together to learn, volunteer, and experience our watershed. Everything from mushroom foraging to trail hiking to litter cleanup was on the table, led by our staff or by generous volunteers who donated their time and expertise.

Twenty-one field trips were held over the course of the year, connecting 926 students with programs ranging from guided ecology hikes to fish dissections to invasive species removal. From kindergarten to college, these field trips interfaced with local public school districts along with homeschools and alternative learning institutions. Partnering with the United States Forest Service, Oregon State Parks, the Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative, and more, the Siuslaw Watershed Council was able to connect students with professionals in the field to engage in experiential learning.



In 2023 we expanded our popular Watershed Camp to include an overnight component for high school students. Dubbed Wilderness Weekend, it debuted successfully with eight attendees who spent three days and two nights exploring the watershed, on foot, by canoe, and even by airplane. Splitting our camp into two different programs has allowed us to provide more age-relevant programming to attendees and to ensure that everyone feels both included and engaged.



Alongside this programming ran our usual Watershed Camp, which filled its attendance roster of 50 campers by the second day of registration. The weeklong camp brought youth from grades four through eight along on a journey through the myriad wonders of the watershed with a suite of activities to help explore and understand the natural processes therein. Campers participated in guided ecology walks through dune and forest, crafted fishing lures, caught fish at Honeyman State Park, paddled kayaks in Hult Reservoir, and removed invasive species along the banks of the Siuslaw River.

Despite a cost to SWC of \$354 per attendee for Watershed Camp and \$613 per attendee for Wilderness Weekend, both programs were offered at no cost to campers thanks to our grantors and our partnership with the Siuslaw School District.





In 2023 the Siuslaw Watershed Council participated in the first of three years of implementation of the haich ikt'at'uu (Waite Ranch) project after a ten-year planning phase. In cooperation with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, and with the landowner, McKenzie River Trust, this ambitious project aims to restore 180 acres of estuarine floodplain in the Siuslaw River, bringing tidal waters back onto the land after more than 100 years.

Work in 2023 centered around the opening stages of excavation and construction on the site. A new tidal channel network was excavated to jump-start the ecological process that will help shape the site post-restoration, while a new levee was started to protect OR-126 from inundation once tidal influence is brought back to the landscape. Both the levee and tidal channel are scheduled to be completed in 2024, while 2025 will see a muted tidal regulator put in place in the slough alongside OR-126 before tidal flow is restored to the site and the process of revegetation is begun.



Besides providing for critical habitat and climate resilience, this project is a major economic stimulus to the area with a budget of over 10 million dollars during its three-year implementation. This money makes its way directly to local contractors, hotels, and businesses, highlighting the benefits of a restoration economy.

## AOP and Large Wood Placement



Salmon habitat connectivity within the watershed was expanded through the completion of two Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) projects in 2023. Located in the North Fork Indian Creek Basin, these projects reconnected critical habitat for salmon that had been lost due to the installation of culverts that did not allow for fish to pass upstream. Connecting a mile of stream previously inaccessible to salmon, the two AOP placements were completed on Forest Service land with River Design Group serving as engineers and funding from the United States Forest Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

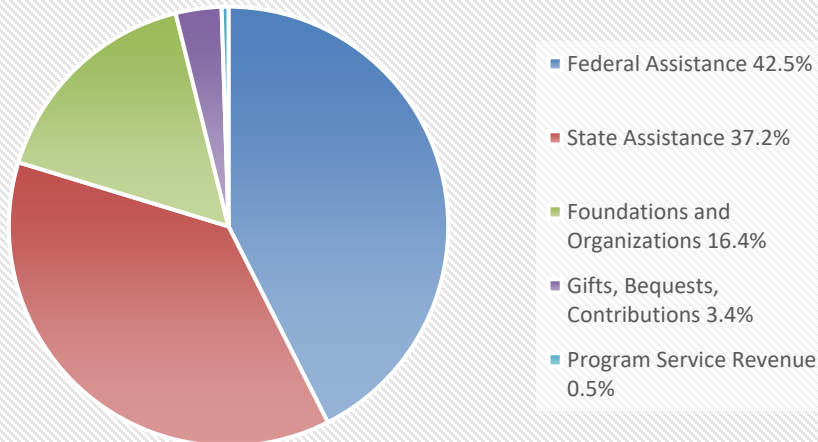
On Deadwood, Greenleaf, and Fawn creeks, over 700 trees were placed by helicopter throughout three stream miles to provide for important fish habitat. Examination of historical stream and river morphology shows that large woody debris were present in river systems and tied into important ecological processes that were lost as this material was removed for navigability, timber harvest, and even early restoration work. Large wood placements are therefore today a fundamental component of stream restoration, as they provide habitat for myriad forms of life, increasing channel complexity and fostering the accumulation of gravels necessary for salmon spawning. This project was completed on Forest Service land with funding from the United States Forest Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Helicopter work was provided by Columbia Helicopters.

In 2023 design work was also completed for future projects on Swartz Creek, including two AOP culverts to open up roughly 1.5 stream miles to salmon, and large wood installations to improve habitat within the same area. An AOP culvert was likewise designed for a tributary of Greenleaf Creek that will open up .75 stream mile; these projects are slated to begin in 2025.

# 2023 Financial Report



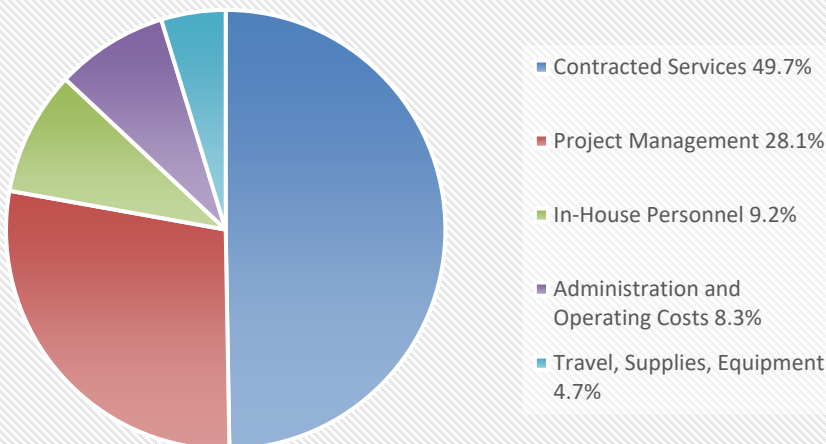
## 2023 Revenue



## REVENUE

Federal Assistance	\$775,094
State Assistance	\$677,424
Foundations and Organizations	\$299,129
Gifts, Bequests, Contributions	\$61,450
Program Service Revenue	\$9,204
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,822,290</b>

## 2023 Expenses



## EXPENSES

Contracted Services	\$715,004
Project Management	\$403,929
In-house Personnel	\$131,796
Admin and Operating Costs	\$118,898
Travel/Equipment/Supplies	\$68,142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,437,679</b>

## The Siuslaw Watershed Council Mission Statement

*The 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 entities to promote awareness and understanding of watershed functions by adopting and implementing a total watershed approach to natural resource management and production.*



**Thank you!** to the funders, sponsors, contractors and partners who work to restore and steward the Siuslaw Watershed for future generations.

Big Bear Camp, LLC  
BOGS Impact Fund  
Bonneville Environmental Foundation  
Brisbane Enterprises Inc.  
Bureau of Land Management  
Cascade Pacific RC&D  
Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians  
Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians  
Don Wilbur, Ltd.  
The Ford Family Foundation  
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McKenzie River Trust  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association  
The Nature Conservancy

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative  
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board  
Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund  
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The River Mile Network  
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