

wasco county area watershed councils

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/2026

wascowatersheds.org



"Working together across five watersheds, Wasco County's Watershed Councils continue to advance collaborative solutions for healthy streams, resilient landscapes, reliable water supplies, and thriving communities."

Planning for the Future - Watershed Assessments and Action Planning

Following the completion of watershed assessment updates, all five Wasco County watershed councils have begun the process of developing updated Watershed Action Plans. Initial planning meetings and follow-up discussions have engaged landowners, agency partners, and community members to identify restoration priorities, emerging challenges, and opportunities for future investment. Input from the NRCS Local Working Group and the SWCD Long-Range Planning Survey has also informed the process. Common themes across the watersheds include water quantity, wildfire resilience, and water quality. Draft Action Plans are currently being developed by the Watershed Professionals Network, LLC and are expected to guide restoration efforts for years to come.



Projects prepped for 2026

Throughout FY 2025-2026, the watershed councils focused on developing and positioning restoration projects for future implementation. Planning efforts included continued advancement of the Fifteenmile Managed Underground Storage pilot project, development of instream leasing opportunities in partnership with Washington Water Trust, wildfire resilience planning, and restoration project design throughout multiple watersheds. Additional work has begun to identify and develop implementation projects involving upland restoration, fish habitat enhancement, groundwater sustainability, and water quality improvements. These projects are expected to provide a strong foundation for grant applications and on-the-ground restoration work beginning in 2026 and beyond.



Watershed Team

DRAKE GILBERT Watershed Coordinator

ALLIE MARKER Watershed Technician

Watershed Council Members

MOSIER

Mary Bushman, Wade Root, Kris McNall, Jim Reed, Peter Dalke

FIFTEENMILE

Bill Hammel, Phil Kaser, Jim Olson, Monte Wasson, David Brewer, Mike Kelly, Bob Durham, Kendall Johnson, Conner Reed

WHITE RIVER

Pat Davis, Herb Snodgrass, Roy Groce, Ken Martin, Dan Van Vactor

BAKEOVEN / BUCK HOLLOW

Bob Krein, Blaine Carver, Vicki Ashley, Jerod Warnock, Randy Warnock

THE DALLES

Ken Bailey, Martha Blair, Steve Byers, John Nelson, Debbie Ferrer

Ongoing Efforts throughout the County

Upland and Rangeland Enhancements

The Bakeoven/Buck Hollow Watershed Council continued implementation of the Bakeoven Uplands Enhancement Project, working directly with landowners to improve watershed health and rangeland condition. Planned restoration activities include cross-fencing, livestock water developments, spring improvements, juniper management, and fence removal to enhance grazing management and watershed function. Additional outreach and education were provided through workshops focused on innovative grazing practices, virtual fencing technologies, and funding opportunities for producers. These efforts support long-term watershed resilience while maintaining productive working lands.



Water Quality & Quantity

Watershed councils continued to support water quality and water quantity monitoring efforts throughout Wasco County. In The Dalles watershed, Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) sampling and E. coli monitoring continued to track watershed conditions and identify priority areas for improvement. Additional monitoring sites have been established to strengthen understanding of water quality trends within the Mill Creek system. In the Fifteenmile watershed, water quality and quantity objectives remain central components of the FAST (Fifteenmile Action to Stabilize Temperatures) program, which works collaboratively with irrigators to protect streamflows and reduce temperature impacts during critical summer periods. Ongoing monitoring and partnership efforts provide valuable information to guide future restoration and management actions.



Steelhead Status & Trend Monitoring

Monitoring efforts continued within the Fifteenmile Watershed to better understand the status and trends of Mid-Columbia steelhead populations. Ongoing monitoring data help inform habitat restoration priorities and evaluate long-term watershed conditions. Building on this work, the Watershed Councils and partners submitted a new Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) funding application in August 2026 to continue steelhead monitoring efforts in Fifteenmile Creek for an additional six years. Funding decisions are anticipated this winter. Continued monitoring remains critical for tracking fish population trends and guiding future restoration investments throughout the watershed.

Groundwater

Groundwater sustainability remains a primary focus within the Mosier Watershed. The Mosier Million #2 project continues to improve long-term groundwater reliability through well repairs/ replacements, infrastructure and irrigation improvements, that support aquifer recovery and water security for local users. Groundwater monitoring continues to track conditions throughout the basin and inform future management decisions. Looking ahead, the Oregon Water Resources Department has initiated the early stages of a water budget study in the Fifteenmile Creek watershed, providing an opportunity to improve understanding of water availability and future water resource needs across the region.

