

Wasco County Watershed Councils



Coordinating Board

The Coordinating Board had another successful year. With the end of the biennium coming to a close in June, the newest capacity grant was submitted in early Spring and the Wasco Councils were once again awarded full funding from OWEB. The board met quarterly to share updates from their individual councils, track progress on the watershed assessments project and brainstorm upcoming funding opportunities and project proposals. The Board also attended meetings with the County Commissioners.



The Dalles

The Dalles Watershed Council met four times, co-hosted one community cleanup event, and hosted one planting event on Chenoweth Creek. They received their regular E.coli, PSP and Fish monitoring updates, and also sought out additional help from DEQ in addressing elevated E.coli concentrations in Mill Creek.

Mosier

The Mosier Watershed Council met four times, with one meeting date also coinciding with their summer get together. Additionally, they also held one special meeting to elect a new chair following the end of Kris and Bryce's tenure as co-chairs. They received updates on the groundwater projects the council has maintained focus on for years, but also looked towards new avenues to promote conservation by receiving updates on ODFW's western pond turtle monitoring program, as well as regular updates from the East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP).

Bakeoven/Buck Hollow

The Bakeoven / Buck Hollow Watershed Council met once, with the majority of that meeting focused on the rangeland restoration and improvement within the watershed. They used the meeting to create a strategy for implementing projects outlined within the Bakeoven Restoration Grant, and received an update from the NRCS on the rangeland CIS that was in development for the southern portion of Wasco County.

Fifteenmile

The Fifteenmile Watershed Council met three times, and received their first update on Fifteenmile Fish Tagging under the new monitoring grant from OWEB. They also received updates on the construction of the MUS as well as the planned OWRD water budget study.

White River

The White River Watershed Council met once, with the majority of that meeting including a diverse range of topics. They received an update from ODF on the fire risk map, as well as an update from USFS on forestry operations in the Barlow District. They also discussed the several water improvement projects happening in the White River watershed, as well as fire restoration efforts for the Miller Road and White River Crossing fires.

Watershed Assessments

Through ODA's Agricultural Water Quality Support Grant the SWCD and Watershed Councils were successful in securing funding to update all 5 watershed assessments, as well as start the process of updating the Action Plan. Watershed Professionals Network LLC, (WPN) was contracted to complete the assessments. A kickoff meeting was held on January 4th and several work sessions were conducted throughout the early spring with SWCD and Watershed Council staff to discuss watershed issues/projects that have emerged since the watershed assessments and action plans were created to explore and identify other available data sets and reports. WPN Watershed Ecologist, John Runyon, helped the Watershed Councils develop the original Action Plan in 2015; his knowledge of the area and watersheds was instrumental in completing the task of updating the assessments in the accelerated timeframe that we had. The updated assessments are a critical tool that we use for grant writing purposes as well as identifying areas of concern that need addressed and data gaps. Along with the updated assessments WPN has built a data base online that will allow us to filter through all past restoration projects and the work that has been completed based on resource type, location, and several other factors. The new online tool will also list potential projects that were identified through this process.

Project Updates

Mosier Groundwater

After receiving an additional round of funding for commingling well repairs in the Mosier Watershed, OWRD, the SWCD, and the Watershed Council have been hard at work completing desktop and field assessments of wells in the next priority zone for repair/replacement. Additionally, the second deep well was completed, removing the second largest water user from the aquifer utilized by residential wells and placing them on a deeper aquifer.

Fifteenmile MUS

Construction and the initial round of pilot testing of the MUS was completed this year, although results determined an additional year of monitoring is needed. The initial design for the pilot facility was not reaching the infiltration rates that had been expected. After an attempt at fixing infiltration rates by aerating the basin, a redesign of 10% of the basin was completed by excavating it and filling it in with washed sand. The washed sand turned out to be problematic due to it having a significant effect on the pH of the water in the basin. The plan moving forward is to seek funding for another round of pilot testing next year.

The Dalles Water Quality Monitoring

The 2022 E. coli monitoring season returned some of the highest concentrations of E. coli in Mill Creek over the program's history. With that in mind, the council began working with DEQ to refine their sampling methods and begin tracing the source of the contamination.

Fish Tagging

The most major change to the fish tagging project this year was the elimination of the fyke traps in Chenoweth and Threemile creeks due to a low abundance of fish being caught within them. That being said, the Mill Creek and Fifteenmile screw traps were operated as normal. An abundance of water early in the season forced the Mill Creek trap to be removed from the stream for a week until flows returned to a more reasonable level.

Rangeland Enhancement

The Bakeoven Rangeland Enhancement grant was awarded funding by OWEB, and project implementation began winter of 2022-2023. Pre-implementation monitoring took place as landowners were gearing up to start their individual projects.

FAST

The 2022 FAST season had a total of 7 alert days spurred by a prolonged period of temperature in excess of 100 degrees. The new rule drafted in 2021 allowing an alert to be called no earlier than 3 days before temperature exceedances are expected was also put to the test again in 2022, and worked as intended. The acres enrolled in the FAST program for 2023 doubled thanks to a new water rights holder enrolling in the program taking our total acres from 700 to over 1,400.

Pesticide Stewardship Partnership

The 2022 PSP season had the lowest number of detections in the partnership's history, with 30 detections total. A majority of these detections were in Threemile Creek, with 16 detections and two benchmark exceedances. There were also 4 detections in Mill Creek, with three of those detections exceeding the aquatic life benchmark.