



HOOD RIVER WATERSHED GROUP

2021 Annual Report

For 25 years, the Hood River Watershed Group has been sustaining and improving the Hood River Watershed through education, cooperation, and stewardship

2021 marked 25 years of restoration, conservation, and outreach for the Watershed Group, and with the completion of the Hood River Basin Partnership Strategic Action Plan (Watershed 2040) this year, we have a new 20 year scope of work that aims to restore aquatic habitat and recover the watershed's threatened fish species. Restoration of fish habitat, stream flow, and water quality is the foundation of the plan, though much of this work will also strengthen the resiliency of our community and economy as climate change continues to impact stream flow, water temperature, and aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Watershed 2040 was developed by the Hood River Basin Partnership, which consists of nine core members, including the Hood River Watershed Group, the Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, East Fork Irrigation District, Middle Fork Irrigation District, Farmers Irrigation District, the U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. This partnership will be working together over the next 20 years to achieve the ambitious goals laid out in the plan.

We're excited to begin work on Watershed 2040, and know that we need to engage the diverse and unique watershed community to be successful in this plan. We'll be reaching out to you in the coming year to explore ways we can work together to be stewards of this incredible watershed. In the meantime, you can read the plan on our website.

Thank you for your support,
Cindy Thieman, Watershed Coordinator
& Alix Danielsen, Restoration & Outreach Project Manager



**OUR MISSION IS TO SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE THE HOOD RIVER WATERSHED
THROUGH EDUCATION, COOPERATION, AND STEWARDSHIP.**



2021 WATERSHED GROUP PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Habitat Restoration Projects

Neal Creek Fish Habitat Restoration

Neal Creek is one of the few clear water (non-glacial) tributaries of the lower Hood River and provides habitat for winter steelhead, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and resident rainbow trout. The Watershed Group is working with private landowners to mitigate the effects of past land management by reconnecting the creek with its floodplain and improving fish habitat instream. The goal of these projects is to aid in the recovery of threatened steelhead and salmon in the watershed.

🌿 **PHASE 1** - The Watershed Group implemented the first phase of Neal Creek restoration in 2021 with funding from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS) (\$310,000) and the Pacific Power Blue Sky Habitat Fund/The Freshwater Trust (\$38,000). The project restored approximately 1/2 mile and two acres of habitat by constructing six log jams, creating 14 pools, and adding over 100 logs back into Neal Creek.

🌿 **PHASE 2** - In 2020, we began working with eight new landowners to develop instream restoration designs in a 3/4-mile reach of Neal Creek. With funding from CTWS (\$57,343) and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) (\$40,773), the design process will be complete in early 2022. The Watershed Group will implement the project in 2022.



West Fork Hood River at Red Hill Fish Habitat Restoration

This project restored vital habitat for threatened spring Chinook salmon and ESA-listed summer steelhead with funding from CTWS (\$156,000) and OWEB (\$87,401). The project was completed in August and reconnected ~1,400 ft. of side channels by constructing six log jams in the main channel. Approximately 220 logs were placed in the stream and floodplain to create pools, trap spawning gravels, and reconnect floodplain habitat. Large wood was provided by the U.S. Forest Service and Ecotrust Forest Management.

Improving Pollinator Habitat Along Irrigation Pipelines

With Farmers Irrigation District, Farmer's Conservation Alliance, OSU Extension, and the HRSWCD, the Watershed Group is managing an innovative pilot project with funds from NRCS that will replace invasive weeds along irrigation pipeline with native flowering plants to increase pollinator habitat. After two years of site preparations, 2,004 native plants and 90 lbs of native grass seed were planted along 6.5 acres of pipeline. Monitoring of pollinator populations along the pipeline before and after planting are underway.



2021 WATERSHED GROUP PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Water Conservation Projects



Eastside Lateral Pipeline & Water Conservation Project

The first construction phase of the Eastside Lateral project was completed in 2021, installing ~4,000 ft. of pipeline. The Watershed Group secured a \$2 million grant from the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) for phase 2 of this project, and it is anticipated that East Fork Irrigation District (EFID) will receive an additional \$2.25 million for this project from federal appropriations (PL566) this year, adding to previous funding from NRCS, CTWS, OWEB, and OWRD. When complete, likely by the fall of 2022, six miles of open canal will be piped, leaving more than 3 cfs of water in the East Fork Hood River, and increasing irrigation reliability for EFID patrons.

Community Engagement

Despite not being able to gather in person, the Watershed Group held nine successful virtual presentations in 2021, with topics ranging from irrigation modernization, the effects of disturbance on salmon habitat and resiliency, and the influence of melting glaciers on groundwater and aquifers. You can re-watch all presentations on our website! We were able to host two work parties in partnership with the Columbia Land Trust along the Powerdale Corridor, planting and mulching over 1,500 native trees and shrubs. Thank you to the 60+ volunteers who joined us! We look forward to engaging more of the watershed community in 2022 as we begin the work laid out in Watershed 2040. BEF Tree Credit funds assisted with planting across all of our sites.



Monitoring



The Watershed Group monitors restoration projects to evaluate if restoration actions are having their intended effect and to improve future projects. In 2021, the Watershed Group partnered with CTWS and the Forest Service to develop a basin-wide monitoring protocol that will solidify a consistent, collaborative data set to more accurately track project progress over time. This protocol was used in 2021 to monitor stream habitat and channel morphology at the Odell Creek Dam Removal, Neal Creek Phase 1, West Fork at Red Hill, West Fork at Jones, and East Fork at Woodworth restoration sites. We also conduct water temperature monitoring in partnership with the Middle Fork Irrigation District to evaluate changes to stream temperature over time and evaluate the impacts of management actions.



\$2,060,773 in grants secured for restoration & conservation projects



Over 3/4 mile of fish habitat restored & 6.5 acres of pollinator habitat created



Over 4,000 feet of irrigation pipeline installed



20 log jams, over 24 pools, & over 1,400 feet of side channel created



In 2022, the Watershed Group will be working on:

- Implementing and supporting several habitat restoration and water conservation projects, including a large wood project on Neal Creek and the Eastside Lateral Pipeline project;
- Working with CTWS, other partners, and landowners to develop designs for habitat restoration projects on the Lower East Fork Hood River and Neal Creek, and;
- Pursuing funding to support priority projects outlined in Watershed 2040.

The Watershed Group is the designated watershed council for the Hood River Basin. We work with private landowners, community members, irrigation districts, tribes, farmers, foresters, and agencies to improve watershed health through projects including stream and riparian habitat restoration, irrigation modernization, water quality monitoring, fish screening at water diversions, fish passage barrier removal, and more.

We would love to work with YOU in 2022! Contact us or join our mailing list to learn about volunteer and stewardship opportunities in the watershed!

WHO WE ARE

Staff

Cindy Thieman, Watershed Coordinator

Alix Danielsen, Restoration & Outreach Project Manager

Operations Committee

HRWG Chair - Chuck Gehling

HRSWCD District Manager - Heather Hendrixson

Irrigation District Manager - Craig Dehart

Agriculture - Jim Wells

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs - Ryan Gerstenberger

Recreation - Greg Short

Forestry - Sam Doak

Natural Resources - Chuti Fiedler

At-large - Kate Conley

Our Core Partners

Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District (HRSWCD), Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS), East Fork Irrigation District (EFID), Middle Fork Irrigation District (MFID), Farmers Irrigation District (FID), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), & Columbia Land Trust (CLT).



Learn more about the Watershed Group:

www.hoodriverwatershed.org

Instagram & Facebook: @hoodriverwatershed

Monthly Watershed Group presentations take place most months on the fourth Tuesday of the month from 6-8pm (no meetings in August and December). Join our mailing list for meeting reminders, volunteer opportunities, and project updates!

Thank you for your continued support for watershed restoration.