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Board of County Commissioners
Clackamas County
2051 Kaen Road
Oregon City, OR 97045

TO: John Ludlow, Chair
Jim Bernard
Paul Savas
Martha Schrader
Tootie Smith

RE: Molalla River Watch Watershed Council 2015 Annual Report

Molalla River Watch, Inc. (MRW), the watershed council for the Molalla River, is eager to provide Clackamas County Commissioners a report of our activities and accomplishments for 2015. We continue to promote respect and understanding of the Molalla River Watershed through education and conservation for present and future generations. MRW activities included restoration and enhancement projects, adult and youth environmental education, stream surveys, amphibian and turtle surveys, and community outreach. Our signature community events include River Cleanups every spring and fall, in addition to trail improvement projects that bring people together to enhance the enjoyment of the Molalla River Watershed.

MRW continued riparian restoration efforts at eight former dispersed campsites on Bureau of Land Management Land (BLM) in the Molalla River Corridor. This effort was possible by the receipt of a DEQ 319 grant of \$15,000 in 2014 plus \$10,000 of in-kind match from BLM and volunteers. Almost 3,000 native trees and shrubs have been planted along the Molalla River by Wilderness International Youth Conservation Corp Crews, scout troops, and volunteers lead by MRW team leaders during our SOLVE River Cleanup events and specific project events.

During 2015, two of MRW's board members were part of the Molalla River Oregon Scenic Waterways advisory committee and on January 27, 2016 Governor Kate Brown signed an executive order declaring a stretch of the upper Molalla River an Oregon Scenic Waterway. The upper part of the Molalla River, from Glen Avon Bridge and upriver for 13 miles, is now an Oregon Scenic Waterway! This means that the designated section is protected for future generations to enjoy its outstanding natural and recreation values. No new scenic waterway has been designated since 1988. The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission recommended the Governor's scenic waterways designation of sections of the Chetco River and Molalla River.

The response to our request for landowner participation in amphibian and turtle surveys was outstanding. Many residents joined the surveyors, led by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife volunteer coordinator, Jim Holley, to look for frog and salamander egg masses in February and March and were amazed at what was found in their own backyard ponds. They again invited the survey teams back to look for native western painted turtles and western pond turtles when the weather warmed in late spring. The landowners learned

what they could do to improve habitat around the ponds for the declining populations of native amphibians and turtles.

In April 2015, MRW contracted with Kingfisher Ecological Services, Ted Labbe, to conduct headwater stream surveys. Again there was a great response to our outreach mailing and 45 landowners participated in the survey work. These small streams provide critical cool water habitats for fish and wildlife during warm summer months and contribute cool water to larger stream which benefits overall water quality. The work included culvert surveys to identify fish passage barriers. Surveyors documented 7 miles of new fish bearing streams, 10 partial barrier culverts, and 11 full barriers to fish passage. The information from these surveys will help guide future stream habitat restoration efforts.

Almost half of the Molalla Watershed is within the Milk Creek sub-basin. Canyon Creek is a tributary to Milk Creek and provides significant spawning and rearing habitat for native winter steelhead. The Canyon Creek side channel project removed a levee that had blocked the side channel to create a log pond. Fish would become trapped in the old abandoned log pond as the water level dropped during summer months. Removing the levee reconnected the side channel with the main channel of Cedar Creek. Juvenile steelhead and salmon are again able to access the healthy rearing habitat of the side channel.

The Cedar Creek and Molalla River Confluence area planning in 2015 resulted in the submission of an OWEB Small Grant. The project proposes to remove an enormous amount of invasive English Ivy and other invasive weeds and replant with native trees and vegetation on 2.5 acres of riparian streambanks and floodplain along Cedar Creek and the Molalla River. The initial strategic planning with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for the upper reaches of Cedar Creek was also accomplished.

Planning for the Molalla River Celebration event is underway in partnership with Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District (Clackamas SWCD). The 2016 Watershed event will be held at Canby Community Park on May 21, 2016. This exciting community outreach event will include a visit from Claudia, the educational 24 foot salmon. Tours of the river, pond and wetlands within the park, presentations about amphibians, turtles and streams found in the watershed, along with a presentation on restoration techniques have also been confirmed.

MRW continues to work with Clackamas County Parks & Forests, Dumpstoppers, Clackamas County Department of Transportation & Development (DOTD), Clackamas County Soil & Water Conservation District (CSWCD), Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), the Bureau of Land Management – Salem District (BLM), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), SOLVE, and many other regional and local agencies, businesses, groups and schools to develop and implement strategic restoration projects.

Molalla River Watch Watershed Council appreciates the support of Clackamas County and the Board of County Commissioners. The most recent Molalla River Watch, Inc. newsletter, “Splashes from the Molalla River” can be accessed from our website at <http://www.molallariverwatch.org/news/2015-MRW-Newsletter-Fall.pdf> and is included with this annual report letter.

Sincerely,

Bill Taylor
Board Chair
Molalla River Watch Watershed Council

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