Splashes from the Molalla River

Summer 2020

Molalla River Watch is dedicated to the enhancement, restoration, protection, beautification, and preservation of the Molalla River Watershed

Inside this issue:

Check Out Our Remodeled Website!

Do you know how you think something is going to go smoothly and quickly, but it ends up getting complicated and taking way more time to finish? Well, that was our experience with revamping our website, molallariverwatch.org.

Regardless of the hurdles, we are very proud to share our website with you all. We wanted the website to be a place where you all can get more information about Molalla River Watch (who we are, what we do, and how to join us) and also learn more about the Molalla River Watershed.

We also have a section that we hope to be of use to landowners, under Landowner Resources. There, we provide links to: general local resources to assist with conservation goals on your land, gardening resources specific to the Pacific Northwest, & resources on how to attract wildlife to your backyard.

One of our newest additions to the website is a video tour of geologic formations of the Molalla Recreation Corridor by longtime resident, Bob Oblack.

What would be interesting & informative to add to the website? Please feel free to let us know if you have suggestions for additional website content. Contact molallariverwatch@gmail.com.

COVID-19 & Our Watershed Council

The donation response to our board's ask for donations has been heartwarming. We greatly appreciate the support.

A few COVID-19 related changes include canceling our spring & fall river clean-ups☹(this would have been our 28th year) & changing our monthly meeting format.

Our meetings are still open to all & are now virtual. From the comfort of your home, you can learn about our current work. Please see our Events Calendar for dates, times, & how to participate.

Molalla River State Park Project Updates & Next Steps

If you haven't visited Molalla River State Park yet, it's worth the visit. The Park is located in Canby at the confluence of the Molalla, Pudding, & Willamette Rivers & has 450 acres of floodplain habitat.

Molalla River Watch is working with landowner Oregon Parks & Recreation Department to improve water quality, fish & wildlife habitat, & forest ecosystem health. Funders Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Bonneville Power Administration, & Willamette Water Supply Program have made this work possible. Work completed so far includes: wildlife surveys, water temperature & hydrologic monitoring & analyses, and managing invasive weeds.

New things we have learned about Molalla River State Park:

1) The Park is home to young Pacific lamprey & at least two species of freshwater mussels, which are important to Native American tribes of Oregon.
2) There is evidence of 53 great blue heron nests in a group called a heron rookery.
3) The most common fish were largemouth bass, small mouth bass, & banded killifish, which are all non-native species.
4) The Willamette River backwaters into the Molalla. This means that at especially high flows the Willamette River water level gets high enough to push water up the Molalla River & overspill onto the floodplain.
5) Generally, water temperatures are warm & unsuitable for sensitive fish like salmon & trout. However, there are a few spots that are cool year round.
6) The Park has a 25.5 acre knotweed patch. It is a highly invasive plant that degrades habitat suitability for wildlife & floodplain forest health.

We have also started designing a restoration project to increase habitat suitability & complexity for multiple species of fish & wildlife. Recently, we have applied for funding to implement instream restoration. Since we found existing important habitats like those for young lamprey, freshwater mussels, the heron rookery, & cold water sites, all work will seek a "do no harm" approach while incorporating structures of natural materials to help the river recover natural processes.

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."
—John Muir

What we found at Molalla River State Park: young Pacific lamprey (above), western pearlshell mussel (right), great blue heron nests (far right). Photos, BioSurveys

TRIVIA: What is special about beaver teeth?
(A) Contain iron, (B) Grow continuously, (C) Can chew down a 5-inch diameter willow tree in 3 minutes, or (D) All of the Above.
Answer on page 5.

Students Discuss the Importance of Water Conservation

- *Where does the water that comes out of your faucet come from?*
- *Why are flushing toilets so great?*
- *If we need fresh water so badly, why is it difficult to create?*

Two classes at Molalla River Academy got to discuss these thoughtful questions.

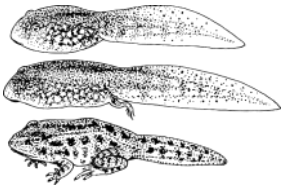
In December 2019, Molalla River Watch asked students about the importance of freshwater & the water cycle, differences between water demand & availability, and how water is moved from a source to a treatment facility to water storage & distribution. We also discussed what makes the Molalla River Watershed special. Lastly, we brainstormed ideas of how to "make every drop count" to conserve water.

National Water Quality Initiative in the Molalla Watershed

Our partners, Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation District, are working on a Molalla River Drinking Water National Water Quality Initiative project, which is funded by Natural Resources Conservation Service. Molalla River Watch is a member of their technical advisory committee.

The project is an effort to better understand issues affecting drinking water quality for the approximately 26,000 of us who have drinking water that comes directly from the Molalla River. A second objective is to predict where issues may arise. The project also assesses where investment of resources will bring the greatest return for drinking water source quality protection & improvement.

To learn more about the project & provide feedback, visit molallariverdrinkingwater.com



Side Channel Project to Protect Juvenile Fish

Board chair, Bill Taylor, & restoration work by Trask Consulting.

Side channel habitats are offshoots of a river that are generally slower-moving & more shallow than the main river. During the summer when water temperatures are high in the mainstem Molalla River, juvenile fish can find refuge in side channels where water temperatures tend to be cooler & more bearable.

Molalla River Watch partnered with Native Fish Society to work on two side channel restoration projects along the Molalla River between Highway 211 bridge and just upstream of the Feyrer Park bridge. The first project was completed in July 2019, & the second project was completed in July 2020.

Restoration work entailed adding wood to prevent too much water from entering the side channel all at once during high flows & risk blowing out & degrading the important habitat.

Planting Trees for Future Generations at Elks Park

Planting trees with Troop 257. The last event MRW participated in before COVID.

One summer day in 2019, Molalla River Watch got a call from the manager of Elks Park, located west of Mulino along the Molalla River. Lisa, the park manager, was interested in learning more about riparian zones (vegetated area along a river) and local wildlife to teach the boy scouts, campers, and others that use Elks Park. She was also concerned about bank erosion.

We advised that planting native trees along the riverbank would provide natural erosion control because tree roots stabilize riverbanks & can reduce the rate of erosion. The Elks raised enough money to purchase native trees & shrubs that Lisa ordered from a native plant sale.

On March 14, 2020, a few Molalla River Watch members helped Troop 257 plant 180 native trees and shrubs!

The morning started off wet, but ended up being perfect for planting

"Now I see the secret of making the best person: it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth."
—Walt Whitman

Northern Red-Legged Frog 2020 Survey

As most of you know who read through our newsletters, we go out and survey for amphibian egg masses in the ponds at Aquila Vista in the Molalla Recreation Corridor. This year was our 6th year of gathering egg mass data.

On Feb. 21, 2020, we found 654 northern red-legged frog & 16 northwestern salamander egg masses. In comparison, last year, we found 270 northern red-legged frog & 2 northwestern salamander egg masses.

For this 6th year of surveying egg masses at Aquila Vista, the crew found 384 **more** northern red-legged frog egg masses than last year!

GET INVOLVED!

HELP ENHANCE AND PROTECT THE MOLALLA RIVER

You can also become a member and make donations on our website: www.molallariverwatch.org

Please print

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email (for event contact) _____

Area of Interest _____

☐ Volunteer
☐ Donate services, equipment, or materials

☐ $20 Individual
☐ $25 Family
☐ $50 Friend
☐ $100 Steward
☐ $250 River Patron
☐ $_____ Other

☐ New Member
☐ Membership Renewal

☐ I would like information on corporate/ business membership

Make Checks Payable, Detach, and Mail To:

Molalla River Watch, Inc.
P.O. Box 867
Molalla, OR 97038-0867

Phone: 503-559-0885 Email: molallariverwatch@gmail.com Website: www.molallariverwatch.org *All Contributions are Tax Deductible!*

From Page 2 Beaver Teeth Trivia

If you picked (D) All of the Above, you are correct!

Beaver Teeth **(A) Contain iron.** Their four front teeth (incisors) are orange because they have iron in their tooth enamel. The iron makes teeth stronger & better able to cut through wood. The iron enamel is only on the front of their teeth, while the teeth backs have exposed dentin which wears away faster. The uneven wear gives the incisor a chiseled shape, which helps them chomp through wood.

Beaver Teeth **(B) Grow continuously**. Since beaver are rodents their teeth continue to grow for their entire lives. Beaver gnaw on wood, which wears down its teeth. If a beaver didn't wear down its teeth, they would grow up to 4 feet in a year!

Beaver Teeth **(C) Can chew down a 5-inch diameter willow tree in 3 minutes.** Beaver are known for chomping wood and they can do it quickly. By falling a tree, beavers can access the food they couldn't reach like buds, leaves, & bark.

Learn more about beavers, Oregon's State Animal here.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Sept. 22**—Molalla River Watch Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30pm. Please see our Events Calendar on our website, molallariver-watch.org for info on how to join the virtual meeting.

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Follow us on Facebook, too!

Molalla River Watch, Inc.

Purpose

- To promote and encourage the enhancement, restoration, protection, beautification and preservation of the Molalla River for the educational, recreational and monetary benefit of the community and public and for the benefit of future generations.
- To promote and encourage interest in watershed preservation and ecological matters, particularly as such matters pertain to the Molalla River or to the Molalla Recreation Corridor.
- To conduct meetings, seminars, events, outings and educational activities for the purpose of fostering and promoting public interest in and knowledge of the Molalla River Watershed.

Mission Statement

To preserve, protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat and water quality of the Molalla River Watershed through education, conservation and restoration activities for present and future generations.