

The Upper Deschutes Watershed Council seeks to protect and restore the two-million-acre Upper Deschutes River watershed through collaborative projects in habitat restoration, watershed education, and long-term monitoring.



UPPER DESCHUTES
WATERSHED COUNCIL

An aerial photograph of a river valley. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by a large area of debris, including fallen logs and branches, scattered across a muddy and mossy riverbed. To the left and in the background, there are dense stands of trees with vibrant yellow and orange autumn foliage. The surrounding hills are covered in evergreen forests. The overall scene suggests a natural area undergoing restoration or recovery from a disturbance.

2023
ANNUAL REPORT

GREETINGS WATERSHED SUPPORTERS!

This past year, the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council led restoration efforts at two significant projects that really couldn't be more different. In the pages of our annual report,

you will read about the restoration efforts we led at Riverbend Park and Whychus Canyon over this last year. There are some obvious differences in that one is a project in an urban setting and the other is located at a very remote location. One project is on public land that will be seen by thousands of local residents and tourists every year and the other is located on private land that only a couple hundred people might see annually. One project involved the placement of ten trees to create habitat along 1/3 of a mile of the Deschutes River while the other project involved the placement of more than 4,000 trees along 1.5 miles of Whychus Creek and its floodplain. One project has easy access and allowed for more than 600 students and community volunteers to participate in it while the other will have less than 100 volunteers participating because of the remote location and challenges with access.

All that said, both projects are great examples of the different types of work we take on at the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council. We try to be thoughtful about the projects we are willing to tackle because, as a small organization, we can't do them all. We try to think about where we can not only get the "most bang for the buck" but also the most ecological uplift. Sometimes factors like the visibility of the site and opportunity for education play a role in deciding what projects to take on. At all of our projects we incorporate an education component. That can involve using the project as a classroom for students or as a stop for educational tours. It can also involve the monitoring work we do at various project sites that educates us about the value and benefits we are seeing from our restoration work or how we might consider modifying our approach for future work. Maintaining a philosophy that embraces learning, innovation, and adaptation is critically important in this field of restoring the health of our rivers and streams in Central Oregon.

If you support this work and the way we go about doing it, please consider making a tax-deductible donation. Before the end of the year, we are attempting to raise \$200,000 in support of our organization and, through generous donations and pledges, we are already halfway to our goal! If you are one of the many who have already contributed this past year, we offer our sincere appreciation for supporting us as we look ahead to a new year of restoring our rivers and streams!

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to learn more
and donate!

Kris Knight
Executive Director



left to right: Mathias, Kris, Kolleen, Casey, Lauren, Michael, Colette



Sarah Ross



Staff

Kris Knight
Executive Director

Kolleen Miller
Education Director

Mathias Perle
Restoration Program Manager

Lauren Mork
Monitoring Program Manager

Colette Boylan
Education and Outreach Coordinator

Casey Schuder
Stream Restoration Project Manager

Michael Tauriainen
Monitoring Technician

Sarah Ross
PGE Project Zero Intern

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THANK YOU TO OUR PGE PROJECT ZERO INTERN SARAH!

During the past six months, we have been delighted to have Sarah Ross support our efforts through the Portland General Electric (PGE) Project Zero Internship program! This program helps connect young adults to the green sector through summertime work placements in the Portland area and in Central Oregon. In reflecting on her experiences, Sarah shared that her time with UDWC has been nothing short of eye-opening. "My experience has given me a newfound love for water management and offered a deeper understanding of the delicate balance required to maintain the health of our watersheds," she explains. "Thanks to these experiences, I was able to engage and collaborate with a variety of environmental organizations, make connections with natural resource professionals, and gain insights into different nonprofit organizations and their ongoing projects and missions." Sarah is excited to continue working in Central Oregon alongside this powerful community dedicated to ensuring the health of our watersheds for generations to come. We thank her for her incredible support throughout her time with our organization!



MONITORING

One of the core pieces of UDWC's mission involves long-term monitoring to assess the effectiveness of our restoration actions. This past year involved another year of stream temperature monitoring for the Deschutes River, Tumalo Creek, and Whychus Creek. UDWC has a 20+ year stream temperature dataset which is important for understanding stream conditions for native fish. It is also used for understanding temperature changes over time related to the diversion of water for irrigation and other uses, restoration of streamflow, and trends related to a changing climate.



Volunteers and partner agency staff support our annual Stream Sampling Day on Whychus Creek.

In addition to gathering this data, UDWC also conducts effectiveness monitoring to understand the benefits and effects of our habitat restoration efforts. This past year, we wrapped up the first phase of a study aimed at using remote sensing and on-the-ground measurements to understand the effects of floodplain restoration efforts in Whychus Creek. One outcome from that work for those wishing to take a deeper dive into our monitoring efforts is a StoryMap that can be viewed by visiting the QR code below. Monitoring of our

floodplain restoration projects in Whychus allows a better understanding of metrics such as depth to groundwater, length of primary and secondary stream channels, habitat diversity, stream temperature, velocity of stream flow, plant species present, amount and diversity of macroinvertebrates, and species and density of fish. Many valuable partners support these efforts by gathering data, offering time or equipment, or providing expertise and funding.

Finally, we were once again thrilled to have the support from partner agency staff and community volunteers for our annual Stream Sampling Day on Whychus Creek! Around fifty volunteers came out this year to conduct macroinvertebrate sampling throughout sections of Whychus Creek, and our results from this community science event will be available to share in the coming year. Overall, we are excited by what we are learning from these monitoring efforts about how restoration is improving conditions and habitat for native fish in Whychus Creek and we look forward to continuing this learning in the years ahead!



Our monitoring team along Whychus Creek conducting vegetation surveys.

Photography / Karen Allen

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for the Restoration StoryMap.

Cover photography / Joe Kline, The Bulletin

Above photography / Joe Rudolph, Wolf Water Resources One of the Whychus Canyon Preserve sites in which UDWC has employed new monitoring techniques to understand the effects of floodplain restoration.

Riverbend South Restoration Project



UDWC had more than 600 volunteers support the riparian and wetland planting throughout the Riverbend South site.

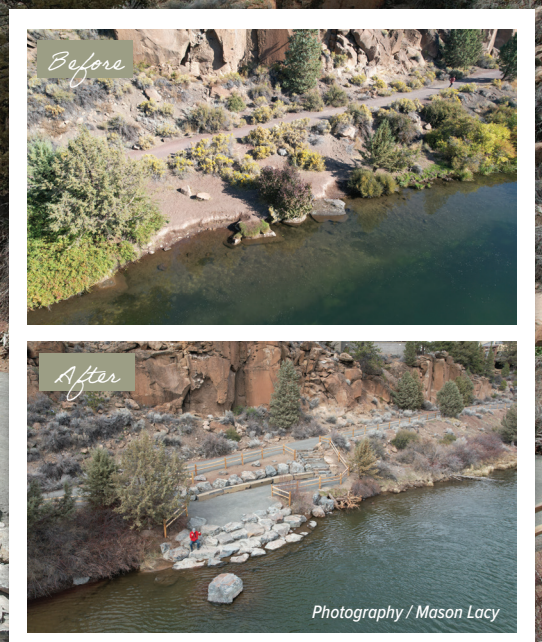
In April 2023, the trail along the Deschutes River at Riverbend South reopened after 7 months of restoration efforts. This reopening marked the completion of restoration work that started in October of 2022, and it also represented the culmination of more than 5 years of effort to plan, design, and construct this project. The Riverbend South Access and Restoration Project was led by UDWC in partnership with the Bend Park and Recreation District with the goal of demonstrating how we can balance the desire for river access while also restoring and protecting habitat. Streambanks at the site had been eroding and streamside vegetation was being reduced from unlimited access by river users. A plan was developed to replant and fence off the river corridor while creating three permanent access points where rock and stone steps would provide entry to the river. A small wetland was created that is connected to the river and an interpretive area adjacent to the wetland talks about the history of this site, why the restoration work was completed, and the importance of users enjoying and respecting these public areas along the Deschutes River. In addition to funding from the Bend Park and Recreation District, UDWC led the effort to secure funding to complete the project with grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Sunderland Foundation, and the Bend Sustainability

Fund, a project of Visit Bend. Project funding was also used to resurface the trail along the river that is enjoyed by thousands of people every year. **Since the completion of this project, UDWC has been named a recipient of an Environmental Leadership Award from the Oregon Recreation and Park Association for UDWC's role in this restoration project!**



Kris Knight accepts the Environmental Leadership Award from the Oregon Recreation and Park Association.

RESTORATION



Photography / Mason Lacy

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to watch our four-part video series about this project!



Rimrock Ranch Restoration Project

UDWC's restoration staff spent the summer of 2023 implementing a project along Whychus Creek at Rimrock Ranch. The preserve is owned and managed by the Deschutes Land Trust and the footprint of the project was 1.5 miles of Whychus Creek making this the largest project UDWC has ever completed in a single season! The project involved reconnecting Whychus Creek to its historic floodplain at the bottom of the valley where the creek had been straightened and bermed in past decades to make room for agriculture and promote flood control. Given that the property is now a nature preserve and there are no structures on public land downstream of the property, this was a perfect location to try to maximize the habitat benefits for reintroduced steelhead trout, chinook salmon, and other fish and wildlife species. As part of this work, more than 4,000 trees were placed in the creek or in the floodplain. These trees were harvested in and around Sisters, Oregon as part of wildfire prevention projects and, rather than piling and burning these trees, they have a second life by creating habitat in Whychus Creek. UDWC is grateful to BCI Contracting, Wolf Water Resources, and other contractors who worked with us to make this project a reality. We are particularly grateful to our staff members Mathias Perle and Casey Schuder for their tireless efforts this summer and the long days they spent making this project a success! Funding for this project comes from the Deschutes Land Trust, the Pelton Round Butte Fund, the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service.

SCAN HERE



to learn about this restoration project!



Our stream restoration team, Casey and Mathias, at Rimrock Ranch this summer.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Upstream Project: Connecting Youth to the Natural World

Our youth education program, The Upstream Project, is committed to working with k-12 students across Central Oregon to guide them to develop an informed and inspired sense of place and stewardship for our rivers and streams. We have been developing and refining our approach to watershed education for over 20 years and, through much practice and our own lessons learned from the teachers and the students we work with, we have found that what works for one student does not always work for all students. Not all students are inspired by science. Not all children are compelled to create a watercolor painting of the swift-moving water in Whychus Creek. However, as our goal is to inspire ALL students to find some connection to nature that is meaningful, we have learned to be creative and adaptable in order to be effective. By utilizing an interdisciplinary approach

and applying experiential teaching methodologies, we have been successful in reaching students from all backgrounds who have a wide variety of learning styles and an even wider range of life interests.

Spending thousands of hours alongside Central Oregon rivers and streams with thousands of students has taught us one thing: ALL kids will find something that lights them up when they have the chance to explore outside. When given the time and space to watch and listen, walk and explore, dig and find, and write and draw, all kids discover something in nature that sparks their imagination. A spark that lights up something inside them that they care about, something they want to know more about or look more closely at. This spark was evident this past year in the Highland Elementary students that we engaged as a part of their school-wide Riverkeepers Storyline, the several hundred students from Elk Meadow, Caldera, Westside Village, Pilot Butte Middle School, and others who came out to the Riverbend South restoration site to help with revegetation efforts, and the other hundreds of students we brought out to streamside locations all throughout Central Oregon to explore and learn about our incredible watershed.

Thanks to support from individual community members, family foundations, and local businesses, we are able to raise funding for education that enables us to connect youth to the natural world and give them the chance to step out of the classroom and off the bus to develop a sense of stewardship for our rivers and streams.



Highland Elementary School students learn about restoration efforts and the Oregon spotted frog at Ryan Ranch as a part of their Riverkeepers Storyline.

Photography on this page / Martin Sundberg

Community Outreach and Stewardship: One Watershed Community



Volunteers from Antioch Church and Mt. Bachelor Rotary supported the revegetation efforts this spring at Riverbend South.

Restoring and protecting our rivers and streams on-the-ground is directly connected to raising widespread awareness and informed engagement in hands-on watershed stewardship. We are committed to connecting community members and business partners to meaningful watershed education and on-the-ground stewardship activities. This year, we engaged 600 local community members in riparian planting activities at our two major restoration projects at Riverbend Park and Rimrock Ranch. Every single one of the 2,400 plants restored to Riverbend was planted either by a student or a local community member. Business partners such as Leadership Bend, Hydro Flask, and Mt. Bachelor Rotary joined us to learn about the enormous importance of the restoration project for our community. By digging in the dirt next to the Deschutes River or Whychus Creek, community members became personally invested in stream restoration just as our students did.

Our largest annual community event is the Deschutes River Cleanup

which we coordinated on July 29th. River use has exploded over the past ten years and, consequently, there have been dramatic impacts to the health of the Deschutes River and its streambanks. This year, we worked with our partners and sponsors to recruit over 250 volunteers to participate in the Deschutes River Cleanup and remove invasive weeds and litter from the Deschutes River and its sensitive riparian areas. Thanks to the generous support from local business sponsors, we coordinated volunteers and scuba divers to remove 2,400 pounds of weeds and litter from five different cleanup sites along the Deschutes River. Our volunteers make a huge difference in our work of stream stewardship and restoration and their investment of time and energy empowers them with a long-term sense of engaged stewardship.



More than 250 volunteers came out to support the Annual Deschutes River Cleanup by picking up trash, pulling weeds, or removing instream debris from the river.



Lastly, we had nearly one hundred participants take part in our two speaker series programs about the Metolius and Upper Deschutes River watersheds. Both series engaged natural resource partners to help us offer a comprehensive overview of each watershed. Participants learned about the history, hydrology, water use and conservation, stream restoration, native fish, and community stewardship activities through classroom sessions and a culminating watershed tour. We are grateful to the Roundhouse Foundation for providing funding for these learning opportunities and to Central Oregon Community College's (COCC) Community Education Department for supporting the coordination of both series. We look forward to once again offering a Whychus Creek speaker series beginning in 2024 in partnership with COCC and many of our natural resource partners!



Participants of our Metolius and Upper Deschutes Watershed Speaker Series visit sites throughout each watershed to learn firsthand about on-the-ground restoration and stream health.

2023 Supporters* *Thank You!*

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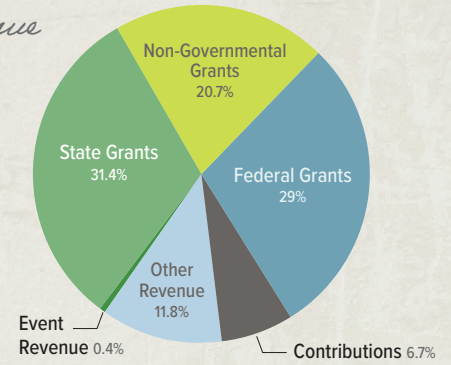
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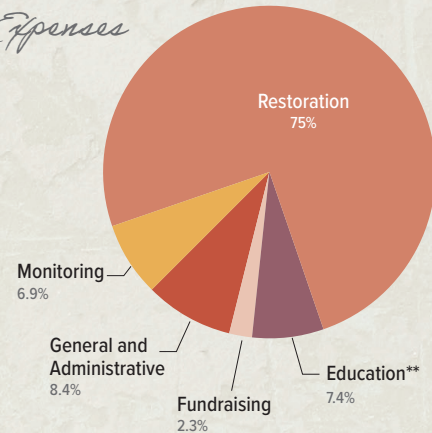
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2023 Financials 7/1/22 – 6/30/23

Revenue



Expenses



Revenue	
State Grants	\$794,550
Non-Government Grants	\$521,728
Federal Grants	\$732,371
Contributions	\$168,906
Other Revenue	\$297,826
Event Revenue	\$10,763

Total Revenue \$2,526,144

Expenses	
Education**	\$176,897
Restoration	\$1,804,157
Monitoring	\$164,841
Fundraising	\$55,196
General/Administrative	\$202,021

Total Expenses \$2,403,112

Net Income \$123,032

**A significant portion of funding for our education programming comes from individual contributions and community support.

*Donors listed are from December 1, 2022 to November 15, 2023.



UPPER DESCHUTES
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