

April Watershed Council Meeting:

Muddy Creek Watershed Landowner Meeting Wednesday, April 4th, 7 to 9 pm Alpine Community Center 25114 Alpine Rd. (the old Alpine School)

On April 4th, the Watershed Council will host a community meeting at Alpine Community Center to ask local landowners to help guide conservation activities in the Muddy Creek watershed. The meeting will include a discussion of current local resource concerns and recent efforts and new opportunities to conserve the unique ecological values of the Muddy Creek watershed. Guest speaker, Steve Smith, Biologist for the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, will present "*Conservation Strategies in Muddy Creek Watershed*". Landowners will be asked to share their concerns and interests in voluntary conservation efforts.

For more information, contact

Marys River Watershed Council at 541-758-7597

email outreach@mrwc.net

or visit the Watershed Council website at www.mrwc.net

Minutes of March 7, 2007 meeting:

The March meeting of the MRWC at Philomath City Hall began at 6:30 and included 3 presentations.

1) Todd Jarvis, from OSU's Institute of Water & Watersheds, spoke about Ballot Measure 37 and groundwater resources. The State of Oregon maintains test-wells which are periodically monitored; they show that water levels are declining (some by as much as 60 feet in 40 years). Other states have been pro-active in dealing with similar changes in groundwater: Florida was the first to undertake comprehensive water planning in the U.S.; Vermont, Maryland, Texas and Utah have adopted smart-growth policies towards water; Wyoming, tired of having to rescue "sagebrush subdivisions" and provide them water, required developers to show that they have sufficient groundwater ("wet water") before subdivisions are approved.

In the Willamette Valley, where Columbia River basalt is the underlying rock, there are 15 groundwater-limited areas (none in Benton Co). Properties granted the right to build a house can drill an "exempt well", with the legal right to pump water (15,000 gal/day). The USGS and Oregon Water Resources Division estimate that there are 100,000 existing wells, with 3000-4000 being installed each year. Pre-measure 37, properties in groundwater limited areas could be subject to regulations, as well as to Goal 5. With Ballot Measure 37, these regulations are inoperable. Measure 37 may potentially double or triple the state's current domestic water use. Most of the Measure 37 claims are near groundwater-limited areas (Washington Co. and Marion Co.). Concerns are several: 1) each new house will not only have a new well, but may also have a septic system; 2) when you intensively pump an aquifer, you can pull in saline water. Todd pointed out that there is a disconnect between water and sprawl.

He pointed out the need for hydro-geologic analyses, at least every 25 years and encouraged us to consider an updated analysis for the Marys River Watershed. He recommends that developers are required to prove they have sufficient "wet water" before building. A groundwater usage fee or extraction tax (similar to a gravel tax) could be imposed. Public education and information systems are necessary. Community-based groundwater management has been successful in Umatilla, and other states are considering similar approaches.

2) Greg Verret, of the Benton County Development Dept., gave us a run-down of the present status of the 135 Measure 37 claims in our county. They affect 10,000 acres, and the applicants claim a total of about \$268 million in lost values. Only 44 have been processed to date.

Applicants can request compensation of lost value or waiver or modification of regulations. The County, like many other jurisdictions, is hesitant to challenge the claimed values—they can't afford to compensate anyway.

Seventy-six claims are on EFU (exclusive farm use) and 18 are on FC (forest conservation) lands. Even if these claims are approved, the applicants still have to meet many county requirements, including water. Current status of EFU and FC claims:

Exclusive Farm Use lands:

18 claims processed; 774 acres	58 claims pending; 6755 acres
8 single family (481 acres)	9 single family (358 acres)
6 partition/divide (150 acres)	9 partition/divide (481 acres)
4 subdivision (144 acres)	40 subdivision (5,917 acres)

Forest Conservation lands:

9 claims processed; 652 acres	9 claims pending; 705 acres, \$24,302,000
2 single family (118 acres)	1 single family (17 acres)
3 partition/divide (127 acres)	4 partition/divide (151 acres)
4 subdivision (407 acres)	4 subdivision (538 acres)

Greg discussed the grounds on which these claims could be denied, including public health and safety issues, federal rules or nuisance. Greg also pointed out that the claimant needs to own the property all the way through the development stage.

3) Carolyn Menke, from the Institute of Applied Ecology, provided a progress update on the Benton County Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan. The goal of the HCP is to balance conservation of rare species and their habitats with economic growth and development in Benton County. The plan will specify: (1) Likely harm to endangered/threatened species resulting from County Activities (and others) (2) Steps to avoid, minimize, and mitigate such harm – Conservation Measures (3) Funding available to implement the conservation measures.

Progress to date includes one season of surveys, formation of stakeholder and technical advisory teams, a public meeting, and Board of Commissioner updates. Minutes of these meetings are available on the County's HCP website:

<http://www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp/index.php>

This spring, surveys will continue, primarily on public lands. Private landowners can request a survey through the HCP website – surveys will focus on Kincaid's Lupine and Fender's Blue on private lands, with select surveys for Taylor's Checkerspot.

Cheryl Schultz and Dina Roberts of Washington State University have been funded to do research on Fenders Blue butterfly dispersal behavior in hilly, partially wooded habitats. They will investigate how far the butterflies will move, what barriers they will cross, and what habitats they will use. We will learn how Cardwell Hill populations fit in to the big picture for Fender's blue. They will work with Karen, MRWC Outreach Coordinator, to invite landowners' participation. It will involve regular site visits during sunny days of Fender's flight season. They will hold an informative meeting at Wren Community Hall before their work starts in the week of April 16th as well as a butterfly ID workshop later in the spring.