

News from
The Cardwell Hills Project
Understanding the Local Ecology and Hydrology
Neighbors Working Together to Improve the Marys River Watershed

A Bit o' History

Ten years ago, the Wren Community Plan identified local interest in maintaining the quality of the Marys River. The work of local Wren volunteers studying water quality in the Marys spawned a broader effort throughout the watershed and the Marys River Watershed Council formed. When the Council began hearing from multiple landowners interested in doing watershed improvement projects in the Cardwell Hills area, they saw an opportunity for a collective approach and found the funding to support it.

Unique Ecology – Special Opportunity

The Wren area includes rare and unusual lands with a high level of biodiversity. Wren is home to Cutthroat trout, pond turtles, rare butterflies, white oaks, grey squirrels, uncommon snakes and an abundance of caring residents. Through the Cardwell Hills Project, the community is presented with a special opportunity to work together to enhance the local ecology and improve the function of the watershed. By working together, neighboring landowners who share interests and share habitats across property lines can have a greater impact; building community and ecology simultaneously.

How does the Cardwell Hills Project work?

The aim of the Cardwell Hills Project is to listen to the needs of the landscape and the landowners and to facilitate a collective visioning of worthwhile watershed improvements. The Project would then assist landowners in developing management plans and funding strategies that support both individual and cooperative efforts to accomplish those improvements.

Phase one of the Cardwell Hills Project is funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. The Watershed Council has contracted with Josh Cerra, of David Evans & Associates as consultant for the project. He will work with the group of interested landowners to examine and refine ecological information about their lands, to identify the best opportunities for improvements and to develop management plans and funding strategies. Karen Fleck Harding will be working with the Watershed Council to facilitate information about the project. Through Oregon Solutions, the Governor and County Commission will support and model the local effort with public/private collaboration and links to resources.

Word Gets Out

Ten landowners from the Wren area met together on September 14th at the Wren Community Hall with staff of Marys River Watershed Council, David Evans & Associates, and Oregon Solutions to talk about the Cardwell Hills Project. Announcement of the meeting spread among community members by word-of-mouth. Since this gathering, 12 more landowners have expressed interest in participating in the project.

Landowner Interest

At the meeting, landowners were asked to consider their commitment to building a collective understanding of the local ecology and opportunities for watershed improvements, to developing a management plan for their land and to implementing that plan. While some landowners are most interested in gaining a better understanding of the local ecology and what

they can do to contribute to the “bigger picture”, others are ready to implement projects on their land.

Excitement and Concerns

Landowners shared their interests and concerns about the project. Some were excited about building a connection between people, farms, food, ecology and local history; excited to learn more about the nature of the area and to be part of a riparian restoration project; about protecting and maintaining the stream and its riparian area, the wildlife habitat, the prairie, the wetlands and the oaks. Some were interested in a management plan for their land and help with funding to implement it.

Concerns were expressed about the flow and temperature of the river and how we manage seasonal creeks and invasive plants, about how to define a focus and a common vision, about runoff from roadside spraying, about the need to support sustainable farming, and about government control.

Staying in the Know

An email list is being established to keep interested landowners informed throughout the project. A history of the process and reference information will be maintained on a website and participants will be emailed a link to the site as new information is posted.

Amy Schoener and Bill Percy, Wren residents, have been working for several years with the Watershed Council on restoration projects on their farmland and are willing to talk with neighbors about their experiences. Their phone number is 929-4041.

Sandra Coveny, Watershed Council Coordinator, is available to speak with interested landowners with questions or concerns about the project. Her number is 758-7597.

What's Next?

Interested landowners will come together again on:

Wednesday, November 16th, 7pm at the Wren Community Hall.

With a theme of “*Never Underestimate the Value of Local Knowledge*”, this will be an opportunity for neighbors to share their knowledge about the local ecology and hydrology of our watershed.

Kathleen Dean Moore, a Wren landowner and writer, will share readings from her book *Riverwalking* and “Blowing the Dam” from *Pine Island Paradox* (about removing the little dam under their bridge on the Marys).

Bill Percy will talk about water quality and quantity in the Marys River. Bill lives on Cardwell Hills Rd. and is Emeritus Professor of Oceanography from OSU. He has been very involved in the Watershed Council since its inception 10 years ago.

Frank & Karen Morton will show slides and share “*Observations of Our Local Prairie*”. Frank & Karen live in Wren; they own and operate Wild Garden Seed.

Andy Brower will share his observations of “*Local Butterflies and Moths*”. Andy lives in Wren and is an Entomologist at OSU.

Anyone is welcome to attend whether to just share in the information or to further participate in the project. Individuals wishing to be notified of meetings or just to stay informed can contact Karen Fleck Harding at outreach@mrwc.net or 929-6398.

You do not need to have email to participate.