

Marys River Watershed Council - Cardwell Hills Conservation Project Wrenditions article – 9 September 2005

About ten years ago, a group of Wren residents began working together to maintain the quality of the Marys River for both human and wildlife needs. Over the years, they have enlisted the support of many others in this effort, in particular the Marys River Watershed Council. In the recent Wren survey, local residents felt that the conditions of the watershed in the Wren area would be most improved by efforts to reduce erosion and runoff control, increase shade on the river, and maintain habitat diversity.

The Marys River Watershed Council has received funding this year to launch its Cardwell Hills Project. Through this project, the Watershed Council will work with willing landowners in a community approach to improving the conditions of the watershed, supporting a healthy river system and improved habitat for fish and wildlife. The Council's objectives include reducing erosion and runoff into streams (to reduce pollutants and sediments), improving fish passage by improving culverts (so cutthroat trout can get upstream to spawn), increasing shade with vegetation along the river (to reduce summer temperatures and improve bank stability), water conservation (to improve summer flows) and maintaining a diversity of habitat types throughout the watershed (particularly riparian, Oregon White Oak, prairie, and wetland). This project is looking for opportunities to increase the effectiveness of improvement efforts through coordination among neighboring landowners.

Project staff are currently interviewing interested landowners and visiting their properties to begin assessing opportunities and constraints. **Interested landowners will meet together at 7 pm on Wednesday, September 14th at the Wren Community Hall.** Management plans will be developed for the best opportunities to address objectives for improving the health of the watershed within the landowner's objectives for the use of their land. After management plans have been developed, with landowner concurrence, the Council will pursue opportunities for assistance in implementing and maintaining the plans and monitoring their success over time. The successes and challenges of the project will be shared with the community through Wrenditions articles, presentations and tours.

Governor Kulongoski has designated this project as an Oregon Solutions Project. The Governor sees it as having "great potential to serve as a model for public engagement and voluntary land management in other areas in Oregon." Benton County Commissioner, Annabelle Jaramillo strongly supports the Cardwell Hill Project and has been appointed by the Governor as convener of the collaborative effort on the part of public, private and non-profit resources to support the project. A meeting of the Oregon Solutions Project Team will be held on Friday, September 23 at the Wren Hall at 10:00 a.m.

For more information on the Cardwell Hills Project and Oregon Solutions, see www.orsolutions.org/willamette/cardwellhill.htm or contact Sandra Coveny at 758-7597 or mrwc@peak.org or Karen Fleck Harding at 929-6398 or jkharding@exchangenet.net.