



# Marys River Watershed Council

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## Cardwell Hills Project

### Minutes of the November 16 Cardwell Hills Landowners Meeting

Held in conjunction with the Marys River Watershed Council meeting.

The November meeting of the MRWC was held at the Wren Community Hall, Kings Valley Hwy. The meeting began at 7pm. There were no committee reports at this meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to hear from landowners in the Cardwell Hills area who are involved with our current Cardwell Hills Project, and to invite others who are interested into the local efforts. This meeting very well-attended by local people in addition to MRWC members (nearly 40 people in all). Karen Fleck Harding, the MRWC Outreach Coordinator, conducted the meeting, and asked us all to introduce ourselves briefly. There were four (4) speakers in all, of which three were local landowners.

The first, Kathleen Dean Moore, read charming excerpts from her publications mentioning the former "dam" on the Marys River and its demise, as well as the virtues of just "poking around". Her delightful style was a joy to listen to.

Bill Percy followed with a scientific assessment of the natural flows of the Marys River, telling us that there are many times in the past the river flows were exceedingly low (below 10cfs, the State of Oregon requirement). He also mentioned the numerous "beneficial uses" which the State has designated for our river, and mentioned the variety of species which are found in the river.

Frank Morton, Co-Owner of Wild Garden Seed, and our third speaker, showed a beautiful and extensive collection of color slides taken by his wife, Karen Morton, of plant species on their native prairie in Wren. He explained that there is so much diversity of species in native prairies, and told us that all these plants are adapted to poor soil and no water in the summer. There is tremendous potential there, but unfortunately, many non-native species (like tall fescue) are invading and grow so rapidly and so tall that they either smother and/or shade the native plants. He mentioned a wonderful book, "Indians, Fire and the Land", edited by Robert Boyd, which discusses the period after the last ice age and after Mt. Mazama exploded, with evidence that natives burned prairies here for the last 6,000 years. Some species, like the Oregon White Oak are resistant to fire, and other species require fires to release their seeds. Other species require the smoke from the fires to reseed.

Our last speaker, Steve Smith, from ODFW, informed us that the Wren area had more remnant prairie/oak savannah habitat per square mile than anywhere within the Willamette Valley. He discussed implications to landowners as a result of the recent federally proposed Critical Habitat designation for Fender's Blue Butterfly, Kincaid's Lupine and Willamette Daisy, which includes much of the Cardwell Hills area. Benton County plans to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan as a way to manage these species and their critical habitat on a landscape scale. We were also told that if we are interested in having plants on our property catalogued by USFWS for this current effort, we have until January to let the department know. This was a truly informative evening and there were publications and maps available. A questionnaire was handed out to landowners participating in the Cardwell Hills Project of the watershed council, and a recap of the project was made for the newcomers in the group. The evening adjourned around 9:15.

*Minutes prepared by Amy Schoener...thank you, Amy.*