



The Quarterly Bark

Volume 33 | Issue 3

July 2026

What a great event!

2026 Family Forest Convention

Wylde Cafferata

The Annual Oregon Family Forest Convention, planned jointly by Oregon Small Woodlands Association and the Oregon Tree Farm System, took place June 25-27 at the Big K Ranch in Douglas County. The 150+ participants enjoyed a great time going on a variety of tours, participating in a series of workshops, witnessing drone demonstrations, learning line dancing, and much more, all in the magnificent setting of the Kesterson family's tree farm on the Umpqua River. Recognition awards were distributed by both OSWA and OTFS. The Conference culminated in the Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year tour, where we saw first-hand the hard work that goes into managing a 445-acre tree farm wrapped in a multi-generational 2500-acre working ranch and hospitality venue. And we even saw a herd of elk crossing a tree-studded hillside in the rain!

Be sure to save the date for the 2027 Family Forest Convention: June 17-19, 2027!



In this Issue

General News & Notes

An array of updates, announcements and reflections from OSWA, partners & friends
OTFS | OFRI | OSU | ODF

Benton County

Lane County

Lincoln County

Linn County



Published quarterly, in January, April, July, and October, *The Quarterly Bark* is a joint venture of the Benton, Lane, Lincoln and Linn County Chapters of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association.

Editor: Kate McMichael

To offer contributions to an upcoming edition, please contact:
quarterly.bark.23@gmail.com



OTFS has a new Administrative Director

Welcome to consulting forester & 2024 Tree Farm Inspector of the Year Shavonne Sargent!

Greetings, dear forestland stewards!

My name is Shavonne Sargent and I'm excited to serve you as Administrative Director for the Oregon Tree Farm System. I am a professional forester with diverse career experiences that follow themes of boots-on-the-ground forestry, project management, forest certification, and education. My vocation has always been the heartfelt empowerment of private forest landowners to manage their forests sustainably, driving improvement of forestland one acre at a time. This approach runs parallel to OTFS' values, mission, and purpose and is why I have a long-standing commitment to the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). I first became a tree farm inspector in 2009 at the genesis of my career in Maine. I've been an inspector in Oregon since 2021, was OTFS Inspector of the Year for 2024, and many of my landowner clients have joined the tree farm family.

In this new role, I will serve as a connector between OTFS members, inspectors, the Board, national ATFS, and other partner organizations. It is my goal to provide excellent service to you all, as we work together to steward the many values of forests – wood, water, wildlife, recreation, and beyond. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

For the forests we love,

Shavonne

admindirector@otfs.org

503-383-9135



Get to know Shavonne:

I am a forester. It is a title that conjures a sense of pride, love, and belonging. I see my role on the forested landscape as stewardship—entrusted care of forest land. It is a role I take seriously and pursue with dedicated passion.

My career spans wide geography from east to west coasts and a broad experience set including Cooperative Extension, research, consulting, and industrial corporate and field. I'm New England born and raised, transplanted west by my husband's naval career. I graduated from Cornell University's Natural Resources program, a learning experience enriched by four years as a Cooperative Extension intern and a semester-long study abroad in Mountain Forestry in Austria. I gained a Master of Forestry from the University of Maine, where my MF project focused on creating a land literacy program through cooperative partnerships. I spent my early career as a consultant in Maine and Massachusetts before moving to Washington. I worked in Weyerhaeuser's corporate office in sustainability with a focus on certification before moving to Oregon to become the forester for a 70,000-acre tree farm. After five years in that role, I returned to my consultant roots, creating SilvaSaunterra, LLC, a forestry consulting firm, in 2018.

- My first love was the sugar maple. Participating in my NH high school's maple sugaring operation in the spring of freshman year awakened me to my lifelong passion and career.
- I enjoy spending time in the outdoors alone or with family and friends (canoeing, camping, hiking), especially when freshwater is involved.
- I own exactly 0.19 acres, where I practice the principles of permaculture, managing for structure and diversity and growing native and edible plants.
- As the daughter of dedicated travelers, I've been to all 50 states and love seeing new places and learning about their ecology, history, and culture.
- Once-upon-a-time timber framer, hand-hewer, and maple sugarin' girl.
- Married to Brian, a retired Naval officer and Library Director at Mount Angel Abbey.
- Fierce mama bear to spirited and delightful daughters Iona Maple (10) and Ide Marie (5).
- Forever in pursuit of a life that more closely reflects the spirit of sauntering and invites others to do the same.

"It Depends"

A Forester's Favorite Answer

Margaret Miller | OFRI

Since starting at OFRI, I've had the opportunity to answer questions from people across Oregon through our "Ask a Forester" email and while tabling at various events. One thing I've noticed is that I often sound like a broken record because so many of my answers begin with the same two words: "It depends." I know many colleagues (a special shout-out to all those Extension agents!) would agree that "it depends" could be our profession's unofficial catchphrase.

People often ask questions like, "Should I prune the bottom limbs of my trees?" "Should I plant a different tree species?" or "What's the best way to improve wildlife habitat?" While those sound like straightforward questions, the answers usually depend on the landowner's goals, the site and the condition of the forest.



Forestry is full of trade-offs and co-benefits. A practice that helps achieve one objective may influence another. Managing for wildlife habitat may benefit certain species while creating less favorable conditions for others. A denser forest may provide one set of values, while a more open forest may provide another. Even something as simple as choosing which tree species to plant is becoming more complicated as we consider climate change, microclimates and potential shifts in species ranges.

That doesn't mean there are no good answers. It simply means that forests are complex, and the best decision often depends on what you're trying to achieve. Forestry has long been described as both an art and a science. While science helps us understand how forests function, the art lies in applying that knowledge to our unique lands, landowner goals and real-world trade-offs.

As foresters, much of our job is helping piece all of those factors together. So if you've ever asked a forester a question and received the answer, "It depends," we're not trying to avoid the question. We're usually trying to understand your goals before helping you find the answer that's right for you and your forest. At the same time, we're looking for ways to connect you with helpful resources, from technical and financial assistance to educational opportunities and professional services. Our [Resources for Family Forest Landowners](#) guide is a great place to start exploring those options.

To learn more about Oregon's forests and forest management options, visit [KnowYourForest.org](#).

And if you have a forestry question, don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at miller@ofri.org. Chances are my answer will start with "It depends," but I'll do my best to help you work through it. Here's to growing our knowledge as we grow our forests!

Margaret Miller, CF
Forest Landowner Education Manager | Oregon Forest Resources Institute



The Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) supports the forest sector and the stewardship of natural resources by advancing Oregonians' understanding of the social, environmental and economic benefits of our forests. Learn more about OFRI and order or download its free educational publications at the Institute's website, [OregonForests.org](#).

Wildlife & Forestry Fact Sheets

By Fran Cafferata and Julie Woodward

On the heels of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute's most recent publication, [Forests Working for Wildlife](#), we are excited to share the newest addition to our *Wildlife in Managed Forests Reference Series*: the [Amphibians and Forestry](#) fact sheet.

Understanding how to incorporate management strategies for stream-associated amphibians into riparian areas and surrounding forests contributes to wildlife conservation and is an important part of forest sustainability. The *Amphibians and Forestry* fact sheet focuses on forest management strategies that research shows support five native Oregon species: Columbia torrent salamander, southern torrent salamander, coastal giant salamander, Cope's giant salamander and coastal tailed frog. Detailed species accounts are available in the [Wildlife in Managed Forests: Forest Amphibians](#) publication.

The two-page fact sheet outlines best management practices for amphibians. These include limiting equipment near streams, maintaining connectivity to forested uplands and minimizing damage to down wood. Also included is an amphibian management checklist with considerations for pre-harvest planning and during- and post-harvest management.

The Wildlife in Managed Forests program has always worked to translate

research into on-the-ground actions for landowners and land managers. Our recent updates to the reference series support this objective by including an updated literature review and refined habitat management recommendations, which, when implemented, help support diverse wildlife communities.

A strength of the reference series is that it portrays managed forests as dynamic systems with shifting habitat conditions. Each fact sheet describes requirements (if applicable) and voluntary management actions that benefit wildlife. Common to many species are suggestions around retaining and maintaining legacy forest structures and down wood, protecting riparian areas, and providing a mosaic of forest ages across the landscape.

Whether you already have our reference series fact sheets or you're hearing about them for the first time, it's time to download the updated versions. Here's a list of species and topics included in our reference series that are new or recently updated:

- Amphibians
- Little brown bat
- Wolf
- Sierra Nevada red fox
- Red tree vole
- Northwestern pond turtle
- Pollinators
- Seed mix
- Northern spotted owl

Each of these fact sheets, along with the entire reference series and other longer publications that are part of the *Wildlife in Managed Forests* series, are available to download for free through the [publication library](#) on the Oregon Forest Resources Institute's website, [OregonForests.org](#).

You can also find more information about forest and wildlife management on the Partnership for Forestry Education's website, [KnowYourForest.org](#).



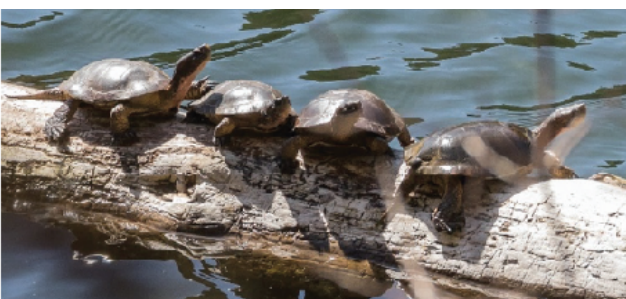
Coastal giant salamander. Photo by Hilary Rose Dawson. CC-BY.



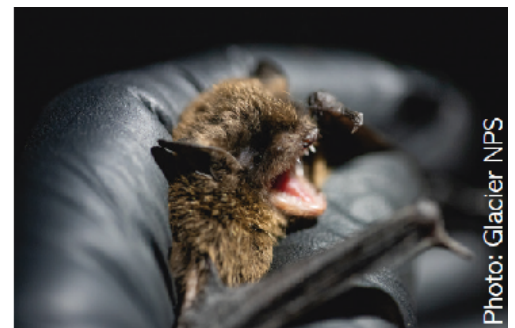
Coastal tailed frog. Photo by Ken-ichi Ueda. CC-BY.



Red tree vole. Photo by Stephen Destafano, USGS.



Northwestern pond turtles basking



Identifying features of little brown bat

Photo: Glacier NPS

Weaving Research with Reflection

The Willamette NF's rich landscape has provided opportunities for hundreds of researchers over the past century. Ecosystems are complex, and the depth of our ignorance is profound. But intrepid souls, armed with calipers and cameras and a variety of other recording devices have scrambled through the Forest seeking answers to often simple questions that, in aggregate, can lead to profound insights. This column, written first for the Cascade Volunteers newsletter, will be a regular feature to highlight the often surprising findings from these endeavors.

For more information on the rich Science-Management partnership on the Willamette, check out the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest webpage: <https://andrewsforest.oregonstate.edu/>

A Handful of History

Cheryl Friesen | USFS Science Liaison/
Ecologist, Retired

Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Plink. The rock in his hand split open, revealing the perfect imprint of a leaf from long ago: a temperate-hardwood forest-dweller, to be exact. But here we are. Deep in the coniferous forests of the western cascade mountains. As he held the rock in his palm, could he hear echoes from 13 million years ago -- snorts of ancient rhinos and camels, foraging among the sweet gum and sycamore?

"You just have to know where to look," he said, "and have a bit of luck."

Alexander Lowe from the Smithsonian Institute came to Hidden Lake to re-locate a site documented in the 1960's. The quest was sandstone and siltstone laid down millions of years ago, when the high cascades were earthy-burps far in the future. His study is important: could this site provide an actual example of how regional plant communities in western Oregon responded to past global warming events, and maybe, just maybe, help us predict our future as we face unprecedented climate change? Anyone can pick up a rock and hold the past in their hands. But scientists like Alex know which ones might hold treasures that provide deeper understanding of long-ago worlds.

Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Clink. Today, Hidden Lake's beautiful old-growth forest, with its massive conifer trunks four-feet across – is reflected in calm waters. The forest looks like it's been there forever. Nope. Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Snap. The rocks tell a different tale of a by-gone, hardwood-dominated ecosystem pounded by climate changes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Many transitory systems are lost in time, but some are reflected in small clues hidden in the rocks. If you know where to look Tap Tap. Tap Tap Tap. Cool.



2026 STATE OF THE STATE: FOREST HEALTH IN OREGON

Conference Summary | Part 2

Wylde Cafferata

Back in March of this year, forest landowners and scientists gathered in Corvallis for an intense day of presentations on a wide variety of forest health topics. A summary of the morning presentations appeared in the April edition of our Quarterly Bark. What follows is a summary of afternoon sessions.

Session Three: Pathogens

1. Dynamics of Swiss Needle Cast Foliage Disease in the Coastal Forests of Oregon and Southwest Oregon.

OSU College of Forestry Faculty Research Assistant Adam Carson of the Swiss Needle Cast Cooperative described Swiss Needle Cast as an endemic foliar disease reaching from



California to the border with British Columbia that causes chlorotic foliage, premature needle loss, and slowed growth and even mortality in Douglas fir. The spores land on new needles, penetrate the stomata and induce carbon starvation that kills needles. Wet springs cause more spores and worse infestations. The SNC Cooperative has over thirty years of research including aerial data. The disease worsens in closer proximity to the coast. A new SNCC project is screening seedlings for resistance/tolerance. See the SNCC website for more information.

2. Evaluating Airborne Lidar as a Tool for Disease Detection and Management Planning.

USFS pathologist Brent Oblinger explained how sensors mounted on planes send out pulses that reflect back to the sensors along with GPS locations, enabling measures of canopy height, an estimation of individual tree DBH



and crown diameter, stand density, basal area, timber volume, and stand delineation. Additionally measures of canopy closure and even wildlife censuses can be taken. Dr. Oblinger provided several examples of these uses, including a project on the Warm Springs lands prioritizing which stands to prune for white pine blister rust, and another detecting top kill in conifers.

3. Managing for Healthy 5-Needle Pines and Port Orford Cedar Ecosystems and the Influence of Non-Native Pathogens in Oregon

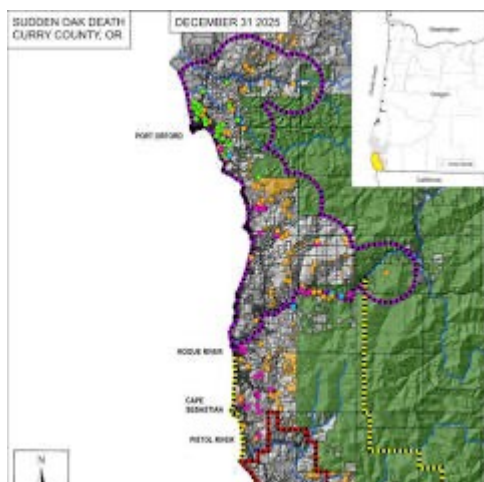
Josh Bronson, a forest pathologist with the U.S Forest Service, explained that White Pine Blister Rust is fungus that kills small trees rapidly, and larger trees from the top down. The Forest Research Station at Dorena has been working for years developing 5-needle pine that are resistant to the fungus and has made a great deal of progress.

Bronson added that John Muir called white pine and sugar pine the most gorgeous of trees. Port Orford cedar is susceptible to *Phytophthora lateralis*, a non-native root rot originally from Taiwan. It kills all sizes of Port Orford cedar and spreads from the soil. Bronson warned that anyone walking through Port Orford stands should clean their boots thoroughly so as not to spread the pathogen.



4. Sudden Oak Death Management in Oregon: New Detections Past the Quarantine

Sarah Navarro, Regional Sudden Oak Death Pathologist with the US Forest Service, reminded us that SOD is spread by a fungus-like organism that travels by both wind and water. It attacks both tan

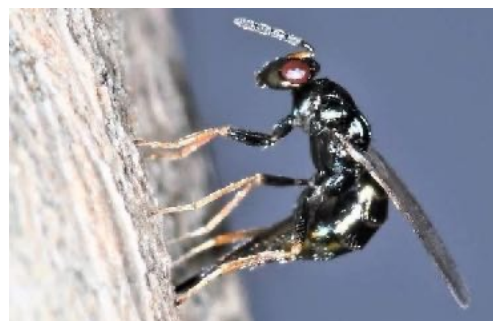


oak and coast live oak and can attack Douglas fir and grand fir when in proximity to oaks. Look for bleeding cankers on the bark, and black lines on the cambium. It spreads locally through leaf litter and soil, starting in the canopy and moving down the trunk. Management strategies include buffers around infected areas, removal of tan oaks with hack & squirt to avoid resprouting, quarantines, and continued monitoring and research. These treatments can cost between \$3,500 to \$10,000/acre, and come at no cost to the landowner, but also no compensation to the landowner for affected trees. Lessons learned from several years of SOD management include the need to increase buffers, seek consistent funding, and request permission from landowners promptly once SOD presence is detected.

research, technical bulletins, conference presentations, and better on-the-ground management. Surveys are taken at between 1500 and 2000 feet from fixed wing planes, and cover 36 million Oregon acres every year, using staggered grid lines each year. Surveys are completed between June 1 and September 30. Recent surveys are showing large increases in insect damage.

2. Emerald Ash Borer Biocontrol in Oregon: A Long-Term Strategy

Dr. Max Ragozzino from the Oregon Department of Agriculture gave a hopeful talk on controlling the Emerald Ash Borer in Oregon. Although he pointed out that we cannot eradicate the borer, we can slow the mortality it causes, and biocontrol is one tool in the toolbox. Parasitic non-stinging wasps, one of which is *Spagthis agrili*, are native to Asia, where the Ash Borer originated, and are its natural enemies. These cannot be released in advance of ash borers attacks as a preventative because they depend on the ash borer to survive, but if ash borers are present, they can be effective. Landowners can contact the Oregon Department of Agriculture if they have EABs on their land.



Session 4: Mitigation Strategies and Responses

1. Monitoring Forest Health from the Sky: Tree Mortality Detection in Oregon Using Aerial Survey and Remote Sensing.

Sean McKenzie, Aerial Survey Specialist with the Oregon Department of Forestry, explained some of the trade-offs between ground and aerial surveys, adding the both methods are equally useful. Everyone wants data that is accurate, applicable, precise, timely, and inexpensive. Aerial detection can provide visual cues to what trees are present in a given area including host species for disease spread, and is useful for providing information for

3. Managing Forest Genetic Resources for Climate Change.

Dr. Gancho Slavov, Director of the Pacific Northwest Tree Improvement Center based at Oregon State University, firmly informed the audience that while it has been widely held that planting locally grown seedling is best, and seed zone maps were developed using this thesis, this premise is no longer true. Dr. Slavov advocates for focal instead of fixed zones, that allow for range expansion. Focal zones are defined as individual sites to be reforested with unique seed zones developed for that site. Dr. Slavov explained that there are long-term and short-term risks with assisted migration, and research is

on-going to determine optimal strategies. He advises landowners to visit OSU's website, <https://climate.forestry.oregonstate.edu/> to learn more about mitigation strategies for climate change effects on our forests.

Dr. Dave Shaw concluded the Conference by applauding the researchers and reminding all of us how fortunate we are to have such a range of experts in our state. Whenever I attend these State of the State Forest Health Conferences, and I have not missed one in years, I come away wondering how our forests can go on surviving in the face of multiple threats. I am heartened that they do, and grateful for all the work being done to address these threats, and for the effort to communicate these strategies those of us out there caring for our forests daily. I can't help but wonder what we will be learning come the State-of-the-State 2028.

OSU Extension Welcomes New Cohort of Master Woodland Managers

Sarah Cameron
Master Woodland Manager Program
Coordinator, Oregon State University
Extension Service

This spring, we welcomed a new cohort of Master Woodland Managers from our training session in Benton, Linn, and Polk Counties.

Organized by Oregon State University Extension, the Master Woodland Manager program provides woodland owners with advanced, hands-on training in forest stewardship through a blend of online coursework and in-person field days. This year's training was coordinated in collaboration with Extension Forester Lorelle Sherman and Forestry & Small Farms Program Assistant Crystal Kelso.



Master Woodland Manager participants completed eight modules covering essential forestry topics such as forest health, silviculture, wildfire preparedness, and more. Each trainee spent 40 hours in the field in addition to reviewing online lectures and resources. In exchange for receiving the training, Master Woodland Managers contribute to their local communities through volunteer service. For more than 40 years, graduates have helped sustain Oregon's forests and strengthen community connections.

The spring 2026 Master Woodland Manager cohort includes: Bob Bjelland, Jan Carpenter, Paul Chamness, Adam Fenner, Jaime Gleason, Kurt Goodson, Joey Howell, Sarah Johnson, Zach Johnson, Dan Lowrie, David Olson, Kristin Ramstad, Karlynn Wierer, Sydney Wolhaupter and Travis Bussey Wolhaupter.

The training will next move to Northeastern Oregon this fall (September 18–November 20), then return to the Willamette Valley next spring with a focus on Washington, Columbia, and Yamhill counties (dates TBD). To learn more about the Master Woodland Manager program, visit <https://beav.es/mwm>.

Funding for the Master Woodland Manager training is provided by the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. Thank you to the Linn County Small Woodlands Association for providing a donation to support this spring's training.

Your Land in your hands

DIGITAL MAPPING WITH AVENZA AND CALTOPO

Learn how to use free digital tools to
map features on your land



Get the most out of digital mapping apps on your smartphone or tablet. Using two commonly available digital mapping applications, Avenza and CalTopo, the instructors will lead you through detailed tutorials and demonstrate how to integrate these digital tools into daily forest and land management activities.

You will learn how to use your smartphone or tablet to calculate acres and distances of property features, monitor road problems, insect damage, invasive plants, and more! The outdoor practice sessions will be within walking distance of the classroom.

Participants are asked to bring their own smartphone or tablet. Computers will be available for use, but participants are welcome to bring their own laptop.

Contact Lorelle Sherman for questions
lorelle.sherman@oregonstate.edu | (541) 713-5016

**Thursday,
July 23, 2026**

9:00 am - Noon

**Peavy Forest Science
Center, OSU Campus**

Benton County

Registration required by 7/21/26

go to <https://beav.es/f7L>



remaining 2026 Meeting:
September 16
annual presentation to the
Board of Forestry:
September 9

Meetings take place at ODF in Salem, with a virtual option. Sign up to be notified of meetings, receive the agenda, watch past meeting recordings, and learn more about the Committee's work on the [CFF webpage](#).



The Committee for Family Forestlands



**OSWA members
serving on the CFF:**

Dave Bugni - Chair
NW Oregon

Gary Jensen
SW Oregon

Maurizio Valerio
Eastern Oregon

Kate McMichael - Vice Chair
landowner at large

Mike Kroon, who has served the official Department liaison with CFF, retired on June 30 after over 30 years with ODF. His steady, calm presence and gentle humor will definitely be missed!



From the SFO Office

Forest Stewardship
Management Plan Cost-
Share Opportunity and
Emergency Forest
Restoration Program Update



Do you have questions for us or topics you would like to see in future newsletters? Let us know! We would love to hear from you at smallforestlandowneroffice@odf.oregon.gov.

Forest Stewardship Program: Forest Stewardship Management Plan (FSMP) Cost-share Opportunity

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Small Forestland Owner (SFO) Office Incentives and Assistance Team currently has funding available to help support non-industrial private forest landowners with developing a Forest Stewardship Management Plan (FSMP) through cost-share reimbursement. Landowners can learn more about FSMPs here: <https://knowyourforest.org/education/maps-and-management-plans>.

Program Objective:

The goal of the Forest Stewardship Program is to assist landowners in developing management plans and to assist, educate, and inspire forest landowners to actively manage their forest(s) sustainably. ODF utilizes the Forest Stewardship Program to promote implementation of landscape resiliency.

Qualifications/Specifications:

- Up to 90 percent reimbursement for FSMPs written by a natural resources professional
- Reimbursement does NOT cover an inventory timber cruise or appraisal specifically
- FSMPs must be developed according to the Oregon Forest Management Plan Tools and Guidance
- Plans must be reviewed and approved by the local ODF forester prior to reimbursement
- Minimum Plan size is 10 acres
- Plans apply to existing rural forestland suitable for growing trees
- Plans are considered to have a 10-year life span unless updated before 10 years has elapsed; eligible forestland owners may apply for cost-share assistance for one new plan per forested property
- Plan updates are appropriate for landowners with a 5-year old, or older, multi-resource management plan that has not been updated

How to Apply:

Landowners may apply for cost-share assistance year-round by working with their local forester to fill out a cost-share application.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) Update

In April of 2026, the ODF Prineville and Sisters Offices in partnership with the USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) hosted an open sign-up period for non-industrial forest landowners impacted by the 2025 Cram and Flat Fires to participate in the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). Over this month-long sign-up period, ODF and FSA were able to enroll 11 landowners who will receive cost-share assistance to restore their forests.

Program Objective:

EFRP is a USDA FSA cost-share program that reimburses landowners up to 75% of costs for disaster-related forest restoration work. This program is initiated by FSA based on input from local landowners and ODF staff after disasters like wildfires, drought, or ice storms occur. Landowners are reimbursed directly from FSA for certain restoration expenses like debris removal, site prep, planting, and release. ODF provides Technical Assistance (TA) in the form of meeting with



landowners, determining specific landowner needs, and developing a restoration plan with each landowner, while FSA provides Financial Assistance (FA) to landowners based on individual restoration plans.

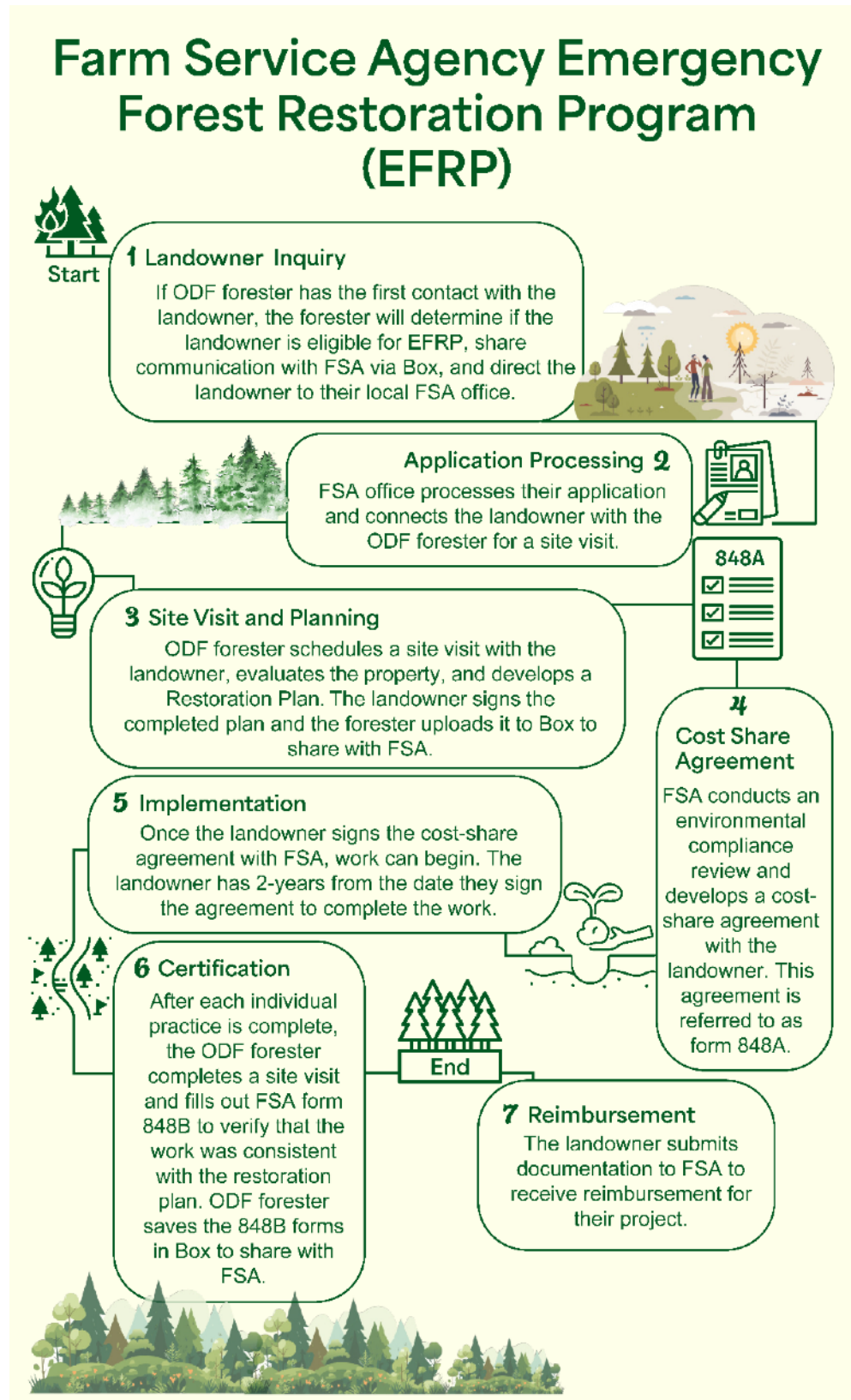
Eligibility:

Non-industrial private forest landowners with previously forested properties affected by natural disasters such as wildfire or ice storms. Properties must be located in EFRP approved counties and landowners must sign up during the designated sign-up period.

Technical Assistance foresters provide:

- Site visits with landowners to assess damage and determine EFRP eligibility
- Restoration Plan writing and communication with landowner to understand/agree upon plan
- Creation of Restoration Plan treatment map that denotes suitability of EFRP practices geospatially
- Develop recommended schedule for conducting debris removal, site prep, planting, and release treatments where applicable, including estimated costs
- Provide informational materials to landowners (i.e., invasives control, native forest tree seedlings nursery guide, EFRP FAQs, etc.)
- Treatment practice certification
- Ensure planting stock is appropriate seed source
- Site inspections and TA if forestry practices fail

To learn more about EFRP, contact your local ODF Forester or FSA County staff.



Benton County Chapter News

President's Reflection

No Progress Without Pain,
No Action Without Reaction

Diana Blakney

The other day my husband and I tasked ourselves with bushwhacking our way through two previously passable forest trails to check on riparian plantings of Western red cedar near our portion of Rock Creek. Experienced bushwhacker that I am, I wore long nylon fishing pants, long sleeves, and gloves. My husband wore jeans.

We were successful in finding the old trails and struggled all the way to the creek on both. Along the way, we cut blackberry vines, many of which snagged my pants and penetrated the thin material. In one particularly verdant understory, we marched through a very healthy patch of nettles. Did they too penetrate the thin material covering my otherwise bare legs? You bet they did!

At the end of our excursion, one of my legs had a giant red patch on the side, and the other leg felt as if it was on fire from knee to ankle. My husband, smug in heavy denim, suffered not at all. My symptoms subsided within 24 hours, and I utilized that time to come up with the following learned lessons:

- thin nylon fishing pants are comfortable and light but are not meant to be worn bushwhacking;
- in thick ground cover, nature wins, human loses;
- every once in a while, while rare, my husband makes better choices than I do.



2026 Benton Small Woodlands Association Board Members

President: **Diana Blakney**
Treasurer: **Jane Brandenburg**
Membership &
Program Director: **Sarah Edwardsson**
Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year
Coordinator: **Mike Magee**
Education **Rita Adams**
OSWA Liaison &
OTFS/OSWA Ambassador: **Dave Ehlers**
Media Coordinator: **Sarah Johnson**
At Large: **Dena Oakes**
Darrell Oakes
Pat Boren
Nancy Hathaway
Lily Hull

Benton Tree Farmers of the Year Tour

Ehlers' J2E, A Trek Through Time

By Ed Easterling

On Saturday, June 6, more than 90 participants joined Dave and Sarah Ehlers on a loop through their J2E Tree Farm for a firsthand look at 26 years of forestry and habitat stewardship. The tour was more than a walk in the woods. It was a journey through one couple's life- and habitat-changing adventure, enriching both their family and a little piece of Oregon. How did the simple dream of a fishing hole by a radiologist and registered nurse become one of the Coast Range foothills' finest examples of landscape diversity?

Benton Small Woodlands Association recently recognized the Ehlers as its 2026 Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year. OTFYs are honored for exemplary contributions to wood, wildlife, water, and recreation through thoughtful land management and active participation in the woodland community.

As Dave describes, "It all started with the search for a fishing hole on 10 to 20 acres of ag land. Then, one day, a patient said cutover timber ground would be a lot less expensive and more fun." Before long, the vision of a quiet hook-and-line retreat in the corner of a farm field grew into a new lifestyle on their initial 338 acres.

Today, J2E totals 440 acres and reflects a rich mosaic of natural forests and woodlands, maturing Douglas-fir plantations, upland prairie, ponds, wetlands, and generous riparian zones. The tour featured examples of how cutover timberland can be creatively transformed into a living resource for native plants, wildlife, water, timber, and family life.

Beyond the beauty of the place itself, Saturday's tour was rich with stories, insights, and practical lessons. The Ehlers invited a strong team of subject-matter experts in forestry, riparian restoration, ponds, pollinators, and habitat work. Field presentations and discussions were provided by Brian Bangs, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; Leo Williamson, Oregon Department of Forestry; Bill Mahr, Oregon Department of Forestry; Adam Phelps, ODFW's NRCS Conservation Liaison; Emily Carlson, NRCS Pollinator Partnership; Cliff Barnhart, Stuntzner



Engineering & Forestry; Lorelle Sherman, OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension; and, from the Luckiamute Watershed Council, Jordan Perez, Executive Director.

Diana Blakney, Benton Small Woodlands Association President, opened the day with a warm welcome. She described the day's plan, thanked Starker Forests for providing a bus to improve access for those who needed it, and introduced many of the day's leaders and guides.



The Ehlers divided the group into three sets, each of which rotated through carefully selected field sessions with expert presenters. At each stop, participants could see, hear, and almost feel the work involved in expanding the richness of riparian areas, managing forests for timber production and habitat, and building annual and seasonal ponds.

Our group's first stop focused on riparian areas. These streamside and wetland-adjacent lands now total over 70 acres. The Ehlers quickly identified these areas as some of the property's best opportunities to improve streamside vegetation, fish passage, water quality, wildlife habitat, and watershed function.



The first major effort was the 2000 Vincent Creek and Sarah's Run Watershed Enhancement project. That project addressed more than 22 acres of non-functioning riparian zones along Vincent Creek and Sarah's Run through site preparation, planting, moisture-control spraying, interplanting, and weed control. More than 7,000 trees were planted, including Douglas-fir, grand fir, western red cedar, valley pine, black cottonwood, red alder, Oregon ash, bigleaf maple, and Oregon white oak.

Fish passage was also central. In 2002, the Ehlers managed the removal of three undersized culverts along Sarah's Run to improve passage for cutthroat trout and Pacific lamprey. Two were replaced with larger pipe arches, and fish movement was documented during the first winter. A third crossing was later upgraded in 2009 with a 60-inch round culvert to improve access and reduce sediment.

Like most restoration work, the riparian plantings required adaptation. Early plantings suffered high mortality from drought, deer browse, high temperatures, and solid plastic tree tubes. The Ehlers responded by interplanting roughly 20 acres along Sarah's Run and Vincent Creek with additional conifers and hardwoods, producing much improved survival.

Riparian forestry continued through the 2015 commercial thinning project, which included a 12-acre alternate-practice riparian thinning along Vincent Creek. That work was followed by the winter 2016 interplanting of valley pine, western red cedar, and grand fir. Later, the Ehlers expanded the Vincent Creek riparian buffer from the Oregon Forest Practices Act baseline of about 22 acres to approximately 62 acres.

The 2020 River to Ridge Diversity Project advanced this work even further with large wood structures, expanded riparian buffers, and extensive native tree and shrub planting. Together, these projects turned degraded stream corridors into wider, more connected riparian buffers that support fish, wildlife, water quality, and long-term forest resilience.

After a short break, we continued into J2E's forested stands. These areas total 333 acres of Douglas-fir and Willamette Valley ponderosa pine plantations, naturally seeded mixed-species forests, woodlands, and interspersed meadows. The presentation described the process of rehabilitating an understocked, cutover forest, restoring failed plantations, improving upland habitat, and managing the property as a working tree farm with strong conservation goals.

One of the Ehlers' first initiatives was preparing a formal Stewardship Plan with help from forester Steve Kadas and wildlife biologist Barry Schreiber. The plan supported the property's entry into the American Tree Farm System in December 2001 and continues to serve as a living management guide.

Because much of the property had been heavily harvested before their purchase, early forestry work focused on site preparation, planting, interplanting, weed control, and improving survival. In addition to planting, key activities included a 64-acre commercial thinning, several pre-commercial thinning and pruning projects, and releasing Oregon white oak that was being overtopped by Douglas-fir.

These actions moved the property beyond simple timber production toward improved stand structure, species diversity, oak restoration, wildlife habitat, and long-term resilience. The oak work is especially notable. The Ehlers have released nearly 200 scattered Oregon white oak trees from conifer competition, planted more than 400

Oregon white oak seedlings, removed conifers from oak stands to improve mast production and habitat value, and managed oak, prairie, and riparian areas as part of a broader wildlife corridor strategy. These efforts support birds, pollinators, butterflies, and the wider web of landscape diversity.

At high noon, the groups reconvened for lunch and camaraderie before the final field stop. Diana Blakney thanked the Oregon Forest Resources Institute for supporting lunch at the event. As a Neighbor-to-Neighbor Tour, the day included participants from the local community and woodland owners from beyond Benton County to learn about sustainable forestry, fire safety, habitat work, and natural resource strategies in a practical, boots-on-the-ground setting.

After lunch, the groups reassembled, and our group headed toward the ponds. Six ponds, including three year-round ponds and three seasonal or vernal ponds, total approximately 6.4 acres. These ponds were not created merely as attractive water features. They are part of the property's larger wildlife habitat, fire resilience, recreation, and water-resource system.

The first major pond project was the 2.9-acre Bass Pond, constructed in 2002 in the wetland areas south of where Sarah's Run empties into Vincent Creek. The pond was built for wildlife habitat, fire protection, recreation, and aesthetics. Following ODFW guidance, it was stocked with mosquito fish, channel catfish, bluegill, and largemouth bass. The Ehlers also added submerged structure, a dock, a boat landing, a picnic shelter, and a beach, making the pond useful for both habitat and family enjoyment.



The Ehlers later added two approximately one-acre year-round ponds. The Trout Pond, completed in 2009, is located just southeast of the Bass Pond and was stocked with hatchery sterile rainbow trout. The South Pond, completed in 2010, was stocked with multiple native minnows. Together, these ponds expanded aquatic habitat and added useful water storage, recreation, and visual appeal.

The seasonal ponds also play an important ecological role. Three vernal ponds were constructed on the east side of Vincent Creek to support wildlife habitat. These seasonal water features add diversity to the landscape and provide important habitat conditions that differ from those of the larger permanent ponds.



The ponds are also woven into the Tree Farm's public and family experience. Bass Pond and Trout Pond are highlighted as year-round features of the BirdWalk Loop, which also showcases valley pine flats, wetlands, variable-aged conifer stands, and restored riparian buffers along Sarah's Run. The ponds support fishing, swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, beach use, wildlife viewing, and family visits. In a working tree farm, they also help make the land a place where stewardship and joy meet.

Overall, the pond work reflects the Ehlers' multi-objective approach to land management, helping connect wetlands, riparian areas, forest stands, and wildlife corridors into a more resilient and engaging landscape.

For forestry, riparian, and pond enhancements, the Ehlers used federal, state, and watershed-based cost-share programs to rebuild forest cover, improve stand quality, restore riparian buffers, enhance oak and prairie habitats, increase native shrub diversity, protect water quality, and manage for timber, wildlife, recreation, carbon storage, and resilience.

Their resource partners include Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program; Oregon Department of Forestry's Stewardship Incentives Program and Forestry Incentives Program; Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Grants and Small Grants; and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program. Additional support and resources have been provided by Luckiamute Watershed Council, OSU Extension Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Benton Soil & Water Conservation District, Xerces Society, Institute of Applied Ecology, American Tree Farm System, forester Steve Kadas, wildlife biologist Barry Schreiber, and J2E Tree Farm as landowner match, materials, services, administration, and monitoring.

By the end of the tour, it was clear that J2E Tree Farm is not the result of one grand gesture, but of thousands of steady, intentional choices made over 26 years. A fishing-hole dream became a working tree farm, a family gathering place, a wildlife refuge, a classroom, a restoration laboratory, and a beautiful reminder that good stewardship is both patient and active. Dave and Sarah Ehlers have shown what can happen when curiosity, persistence, expert partnerships, and love for the land are allowed to grow together.



Benton County OSHA Annual Picnic and Tour

Saturday, July 18th
Starker Forestry Trail and picnic area,
near Blodgett

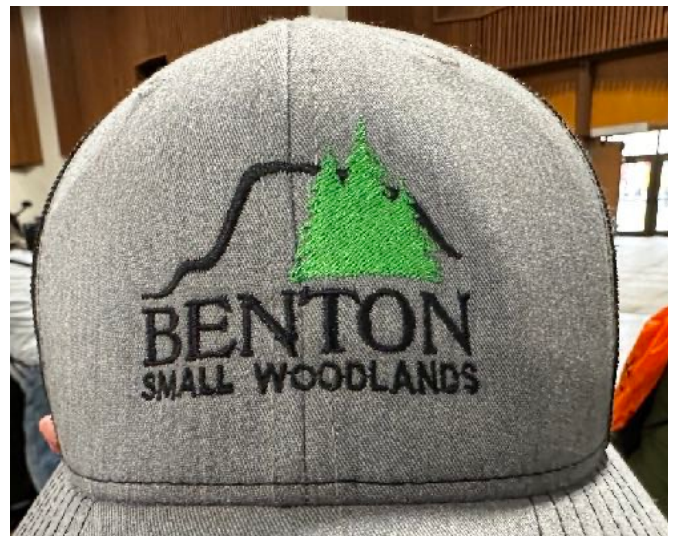
Come early at 9:00 a.m. for a tour of Starker's Coast redwood plantation and discussion with forester Steve Coskey.

We will meet at the Blodgett School at 35177 Tum Tum Rd, Blodgett, OR 97326 for carpooling.

Our annual picnic will be at noon at their covered space – bring your own lunch and camp chair - beverages and dessert will be provided.

There is a short loop around the picnic area that is interesting to explore, so wear appropriate shoes.
Restroom facilities are available.

Come for one, or come for both!



Picnic area: From the intersection of US 20 and SR 180 in Blodgett, go about 0.5 miles west, turn left on Blodgett Rd., then right at the T intersection, then left onto Tum Tum Rd. The tour sign is 1.5 miles down Tum Tum Road. Take a right at the sign and continue a short way to the parking area.

Your Land in your hands

DIGITAL MAPPING WITH AVENZA AND CALTOPO

Learn how to use free digital tools to
map features on your land

Get the most out of digital mapping apps on your smartphone or tablet. Using two commonly available digital mapping applications, Avenza and CalTopo, the instructors will lead you through detailed tutorials and demonstrate how to integrate these digital tools into daily forest and land management activities.

You will learn how to use your smartphone or tablet to calculate acres and distances of property features, monitor road problems, insect damage, invasive plants, and more! The outdoor practice sessions will be within walking distance of the classroom.

Participants are asked to bring their own smartphone or tablet. Computers will be available for use, but participants are welcome to bring their own laptop.

Contact Lorelle Sherman for questions
lorelle.sherman@oregonstate.edu | (541) 713-5016

Thursday,
July 23, 2026

9:00 am - Noon

Peavy Forest Science
Center, OSU Campus

Benton County

Registration required by 7/21/26

go to <https://beav.es/f7L>



OSU Extension Service prohibits discrimination in all its programs, services, activities, and materials. This publication will be made available in an accessible alternative format upon request. Accommodation requests related to disability should be made by 7/23/26. Please contact crystal.kelso@oregonstate.edu or (541) 730-3539.



CAUGHT ON CAMERA

You see the most interesting people in Corvallis some days. This wonderful couple was spotted at the final Starker Lecture Series panel just last month . . .



Lane County Chapter News

President's Reflection

(Native) Bees, Please | Eye of the Beholder

Kate McMichael

A woodland owner goes out into the woods one day and sees something buzzing around. Curious, he manages to snatch the creature in flight and gently hold it in his hand.

What's in his eye?

Beauty.

Because beauty is in the eye of the bee-holder.

This “dad joke,” shared with us at last weekend’s Family Forest Convention, made T and me chuckle. The timing seemed fitting as well, given that the last week of June is National Pollinator Week. In Oregon, we are blessed with a plethora of pollinators. Our native bees—over 600 species of them!—flourish in a variety of landscapes, including in our woodlands. One of our post-fire turning-point moments came during an Extension class on creating pollinator-friendly habitat post-disturbance. Suddenly, instead of just reacting to our stark, post-fire reality, we were able to envision proactive choices: what areas to seed with wildflowers, what native plants to seek out, what re-emerging brush to celebrate (Oceanspray!) rather than battle (Canada thistle, scotchbroom). Some of those initial plans didn’t come to fruition as we’d hoped (our landscape had other ideas), but others, with lots of do-overs and a bit of patience—have. The defensible space “zone” around our home has been one of the areas where our pollinator dreams have come true.

To the north, we fenced a “growing ground” that we have filled with raised beds, scattering them amidst burned stumps. Although we try to weed enough to allow access to each bed, we have welcomed back resurgent understory plants: from salal and snowberry to native rose, Douglas Iris and selfheal. Our evening primrose have escaped their original bed into another one—and grown tall, entwined with fireweed. Columbia lily provide delightful flashes of orange.

To the east we planted a more intentional pollinator habitat area. After several false starts and do-overs, the now-fenced area is coming into its own, anchored by Seedling Sale red flowering currant, mock orange and snowberry. There is also kinninnick (really beginning to spread this year), goldenrod, red twig dogwood, elderberry, huckleberry, asters and mallows and California poppies.



Lane County Board of Directors

Kate McMichael | President
Rick Olson | Vice President
Kevin Tuers | Treasurer
Wylda Cafferata | Secretary
Gary Jensen | Past President
Gordon Culbertson
Dan Kintigh
Tim Gurton
Becca Fain
Theresa Hausser
Dan Menk | ODF
Lauren Grand | Extension



This spring the air was literally buzzing as we did our post-winter, pre-Annual meeting clean-up.

To the south and west, things are more “wild”—although we have seeded burn piles with wildflower mixes and balance our careful vegetation management to allow for the flowering plants and shrubs—clovers, serviceberry, ceanothus, iris, lupine, a carefully contained patch of blackberries—to take their turn at feeding our buzzing, pollinating friends.

We have followed up that initial workshop with others. I’m working steadily, if sporadically, to complete the OSU Bee Steward program to earn my Woodland Pollinator sign. At our Annual Meeting, I took the opportunity to highlight the Bee Steward program. Although it is geared toward a broader audience than just woodland owners, it still provides wonderful information about our Oregon pollinators and ideas for intentionally creating habitat that can provide food resources for our woodlands pollinator species from spring to fall. For those of us with over-committed calendars, the fact that it is self-paced is a definite plus. (And of course the sign is pretty cool too.) A culminating assignment is to use iNaturalist to collect information about the flowering resources already on your property. What started out as a task quickly became a journey of discovery and delight: my eye has become more attuned to notice blooms—and with that attention, I find I have come to see and appreciate the landscape on a more intimate scale. I also know more plant names and can recognize them in various stages of growth now. And instead of just seeing invasives I need to “deal with” I see so so so much more: at last count my “ERTF Pollinator Habitat” project houses over 60 bee-friendly species!

Bees and beauty. I may not intend to catch a lot of the pollinators I see on our property and hold them in my hand. But the process of creating habitat for them has certainly opened my eyes to a lot of beauty in the recovering woodland I live on and love, beauty I might have missed if I wasn’t looking for it. Although not as clever in terms of word-play, beauty really is in the eye of the the woodland owner who can see their landscape, both created and nurtured, with bees in mind. Or come to see, in the words of a Christine Buhl workshop title: “the forest for the bees.”



Find out more about the Bee Steward program at: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/bee-steward>



Mark Your Calendar!

2026 Board Meetings

Upcoming Events

Save the Date

September 19 — Tree Farmer of the Year Tour: Elmer Shew

in the works, but not yet scheduled:

additional watershed series webinars & field tours

remaining meetings:

August 6

2:00-4:00pm | Veneta

October 1

2:00-4:00pm | Springfield

December 3

2:00-4:00pm | Veneta

notes:

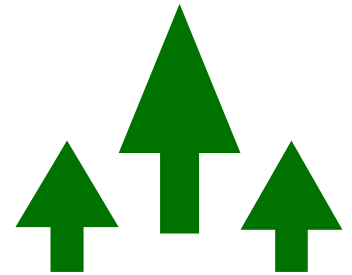
Board meetings take place at ODF offices, rotating between the East Lane/South Cascades and Veneta locations.

Springfield: 3150 Main Street

Veneta: 87950 Territorial Hwy

All members are welcome to attend!

Looking back . . .



April

Candidate Forum

Watershed education series kick-off

Many thanks to the Waltermville Grange for their hospitality for our co-sponsored (with Lane Families for Farms & Forests, Emerald SAF and Oregon Women for Ag) Candidate Forum.

Our kick-off watershed workshop was ably led by Annette Patton, OSU Extension Statewide Watershed Specialist. The webinar was recorded, so it can be watched even by those who didn't attend.



May

Annual Meeting in Vida
Watersheds & Fish passage webinar
Monroe Drop field tour
election day

Thanks to the Yarbroughs for sharing their experiences during and since the Holiday Farm Fire, from fire response to reforestation. Gratitude as well to Mike Cafferata and Dan Newton who traveled to Vida to share the day. It also marked the official announcement of Elmer Shew as our 2026 Lane County Tree Farmer of the Year and honoring of Becca Fain & Rick Olson as our 2026 Volunteers of the Year.

Make sure to check out the new "Planted" signs available from the state office. What a great way to remember what and when and where we've planted!



Missing a camp chair?

If this looks familiar and you've been missing it since May 2, drop us an email at oswa.lane.county@gmail.com and we'll work on scheduling a reunion.





Our watershed series continued with a webinar on fish passage with Melanie Klym of American Rivers followed by a tour of the Monroe Drop structure.

[Watch the webinar recording](#)

Election day was wrapped into the week of the OTFS 3rd party audit. Many thanks to Lane county landowners who welcomed auditors to their properties—and of course to Steve & Wylda Cafferata and Norm Michaels who worked tirelessly to make it all come together.



June

Quartz Creek field tour

Our June tour took us back up the McKenzie to tour floodplain reconnection work spearheaded by the McKenzie Watershed Council. The day was blessed by periodic rain showers.



Post-Election: Relief for Now, But More Work To Do

Theresa Hausser & Kate McMichael

There were two bits of good news for Lane County woodland owners out of our May elections: the Lane County Watersheds Bill of Rights was defeated (no votes 74,907 | yes votes 46,233) and Lane Extension was narrowly approved for another funding cycle (yes votes 61,611 | no votes 60,812).

This is excellent news! In the case of the Watersheds Bill of Rights, thank you to all of you who read the measure and had conversations with friends and acquaintances about its possible/probable negative impacts. And thank you to all who highlighted the good work of Extension—every conversation counted, as the close vote makes abundantly clear.

Exhaustingly, even in the wake of successful campaigns there will be work to do.

The final days of the LCWBoR campaign highlighted that the proponents' primary focus was on the forest sector and active forest management (in particular "industrial clear cuts and aerial spraying"). Expect a better written, more focused anti-forestry initiative in the future. Our challenge is a public perception of forest management that has little basis in contemporary reality—which is why that conversation has become a focus of interest for OSWA at the statewide Forest Policy level. Not surprisingly, given the topic, the first exploratory conversation on Zoom in June had a majority of attendees from Lane County. Everyone is welcome to attend and share their thoughts. If you're interested, send an email to Mike Cafferata (mike@oswa.org) to get invited to the next meeting.

The "comments" section of online reports about the Lane Extension tax levy indicated that many people have no idea either how Extension is funded or what Extension does (even allowing for the quality of "comments" sections, there is a serious absence of understanding). While we forest landowners know what a gift Lauren and Carrie—and the whole statewide FNR Extension team—are to us, we still have a ways to go in explaining to neighbors and friends just how vital their work and the resources they make available are to all of us in the county.

That said, for now we can breathe a little more deeply and refocus our attention where we'd prefer it to be: on our woodlands!

**THANK YOU,
LANE COUNTY
VOTERS!**



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Lane County



osulaneextension 1w

Thank you Lane County voters for passing 20-380! The renewal of this tax levy will provide five more years of funding for OSU Extension programs in Lane County. We are all thrilled for the opportunity to continue serving our communities and to expand our programming to meet the evolving needs of folks all across Lane County.

Thank you for your support!

Welcome to Lane OSWA!

New Member Spotlight x2



A BIG WELCOME TO Darrin Nuff! We are glad to have him as a new LCSWA member. Darrin lives on his forest land near Junction City, where he has just planted Christmas trees. When you chat with Darrin at LSCWA events, you can ask him how his share-cropping plans are working out. Darrin has also joined both Linn and Douglas County Small Woodland Associations and is looking forward to participating in many small woodland events. We all welcome him to the Lane County Small Woodland community.

A BIG WELCOME TO KEVIN TUERS! Kevin began his forestry journey working for his grandfather's logging company, and went on to pull green chain at a sawmill before earning an OSU forestry/wildlife degree. He built a career in GIS and forestry inventory modeling, and wears many other hats as well. When you chat with Kevin at LSCWA events, you will find he has many tales to tell. Kevin has also joined the LSCWA board and volunteered to be our Treasurer! Many thanks to Kevin! We all welcome him to the Lane County Small Woodland community.



Preparing for Fire Season

Dan Kintigh

Fires typically start small and the sooner that somebody can get to it, the better. The fire department does the best they can, but there are times when they may be stretched a little thin. With some preparedness, the landowner may be able to mobilize quickly and put the fire out before it escalates. Here are some tips on how to set up your own mini fire truck or wagon.



Some of us farmers have an old pickup sitting around that doesn't get much use in the summer. If not, you could just as easily utilize a small trailer. Either option can be equipped with a saddle tank for water. These tanks fit between the wheel wells of most pickup trucks and can be purchased from a farm store or tank supplier. If using a truck, a three-quarter ton pickup would work best for this much water. You would need to secure it between the wheel wells with blocks of wood so it doesn't shift side to side and a strap across the back, so it does not slide towards the tailgate when moving uphill. The drain is at the bottom of the tank so it will gravity feed nicely into the hose.



If a saddle tank in pickup isn't an option, you could just as easily use a plastic cube in a metal frame. These are used for all kinds of things. You could ask a fertilizer/chemical company if they might give you one. I've also seen them on Facebook marketplace. These could be placed in a pickup OR on a trailer to be towed with a tractor. They can also be hooked together for more water capacity.



Your water tank will then be attached via hose to a small water pump like this one, which I purchased at Harbor Freight. You don't need a big one. I think this is one of the smallest ones they sell. I think it's affordable and I've found it to be quite reliable. It's lightweight, easy to move, and can pump quite a bit of water through a garden hose.



When setting up your tank system with a pump, it's nice to use cam locks. They're very quick and easy to connect/disconnect hoses. Whatever tank you use for your water source should have a shut off valve on the bottom of the tank with a hose that can go to your pump. With the hose connected at the bottom of the tank, water will gravity feed to the pump, no priming necessary. The hose to the pump should be larger in diameter than the output hose. I use the cam lock to attach the hose to pump. That way you can easily disconnect your tank and hose from the pump.

If anyone needs help setting one of these systems up, feel free to call Dan Kintigh at 541-868-5154.

Lincoln County Chapter News

President's Reflection

Ben Barclay

Recently our Secretary, Judy Pelletier forwarded an interesting article to me by Bob Zybach (PHD. OSU Forestry) about fires and fire danger. It was titled "Great Fires: Indian Burning and Catastrophic Forest Fire Patterns of Oregon Coast, 1491-1951". This caught my attention and reminded me of stories my Granddad told me about the Indians setting huge wildfires to improve the hunting primarily. My Great grandfather came to the Alsea valley in the 1860's and surely saw the results of the Great Yaquina Fire of 1846. It burned about 450,000 acres in Lincoln County. He told my granddad and he passed it on to me. Judy and her late husband, Jerry had 20 acres at MP7 on Highway 34 and they found signs of the fire on their property when they logged it years ago.

These fires resulted in what is truly "old growth" Doug Fir today. They were the survivors of all the early fires. (I rebel against calling big second growth Old Growth—purely political nonsense.) My neighbor cut some standing dead Doug fir about a mile above our house that were 4-5 feet in diameter, and the ring count put them at 160 years old—born a few years after the 1846 fire. Big second growth!

Fortunately, the coast range isn't a hot bed (excuse the pun) for wildfires for many decades. The Otis fire being the exception. In 1962, there was a wildfire at MP12 Hwy 34 (I was about 12) that raced up the brushy hill a mile east of our house from someone burning brush just to the big timber before being brought under control. Maybe 20-40 acres. Strong east winds in of all things April!

As I drive up and down the Alsea River, I spend maybe more time looking at the hillsides than the pavement (got that part memorized) and I am a little shocked at how many dead Fir trees I see. I don't know the cause, but the effect is high fire danger. Today, June 14 and yesterday the temperature was 95 with a strong east wind. I didn't see any firetrucks, so I guess we got lucky again. Another bad sign is a lot of moss on the old firs called "old man's beard" was waving in the east wind and a third or fourth generation logger said that's a sign a wildfire is coming.

So, as mentioned in Bob Zybach's article, maybe its time to bring back an aggressive program of "salvage logging" and don't call it "post disturbance harvest"—more word salad. Supplement the Prevent Forest Fires posters with some real work on the ground and we will have a better chance to avoid another disaster like experienced in Otis, Detroit Lake area and the Mckenzie River valley. We can hope...



Lincoln County Small Woodlands Association Board Members

Ben Barclay, President
Joe Steere, past President
Judy Pelletier, Secretary
Jan Steenkolk, Treasurer

Steve Allen
Connie Battles
Joe Steenkolk
Scott Steenkolk
Rex Capri
Christana Woods
Todd Holts
Jim Holt
Tim Miller

The coming firestorms: reflecting back to 2020

by Bob Zybach

Republished from the Highway 58 Herald | May 18, 2026 | [Commentary](#), [HeadlineFeed](#)

Editor's note: This story is a republish.

Reflecting back to 2020, the most deadly, destructive and widespread catastrophic wildfires in Oregon's history erupted on Labor Day, driven by strong east winds. Unless we change how our national and state forests are managed, these events will be just another chapter in an age of predictable, increasing and ever-greater firestorms.

I spent my career studying forest fires and forest health. For example, my doctoral dissertation from the OSU College of Forestry was titled, The Great Fires: Indian burning and catastrophic forest fire patterns of the Oregon Coast Range, 1491-1951.

In a 2018 interview, just before the California Camp Fire destroyed the town of Paradise, I said, "You take away logging, grazing and maintenance, and you get firebombs." Then someone took my quote, pasted it on a forest fire photo, and the resulting meme quickly went viral on Facebook.

That September, Facebook began flagging this post as "partly false" because my quote, and related interview, did not mention climate change. Seemingly, Facebook's executives feel their new-found forestry judgment is better than my lifetime of scientific research and hands-on forestry experience.

The broad arc of Oregon's fire history explains why (this year's) catastrophic wildfires have converted our public forests into unprecedented firebombs. What were once green trees filled with water, have now become massive stands of pitchy, air-dried firewood.

For thousands of years ancestral Oregon Indian families kept ridgeline and riparian areas open for travel, hunting, fishing, and harvesting purposes. They cleared ground fuels by firewood gathering and seasonal fires. This created systematic firebreaks in a landscape characterized by southern balds, huckleberry fields, camas meadows, oak woodlands, and islands of conifers.

Following the 1910 firestorms, the US Forest Service established a nationwide system of fire lookouts and pack trails backed up by rapid response fire suppression. This system became remarkably effective over time. From 1952 until 1987, only one forest fire in all of western Oregon was greater than 10,000 acres: the 1966 43,000-acre Oxbow Fire in Lane County.

But since 1987, Oregon has had more than 30 such fires, with several larger than 100,000 acres. The 2020 Labor Day Fires alone covered more than one million acres, destroyed over 4,000 homes, caused 40,000 emergency evacuations, killed millions of wild animals, and blanketed the state with a thick, acrid smoke that obscured the sun for days.

What changed to cause this dramatic increase in wildfire frequency and severity?

The problems began in the 1960s, with apparently well-intentioned national efforts to create large untouchable wilderness areas and cleaner air and water on our public lands.

The single biggest turning point in how public forests are managed happened on December 22, 1969; about 50 lawyers in Washington, DC created the Environmental Law Institute, and a short distance away congress passed the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

Next, the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the 1980 Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) provided the growing environmental law industry with a way to be paid by the government for challenging nearly every attempt to log or otherwise actively manage public forests.

By the 1980s, the artificial creation of Habitat Conservation Plans ("HCPs") and the listing of spotted owls as an Endangered Species laid the groundwork for today's fires.

The 1994 Clinton Plan for Northwest Forests might have been the final nail in the coffin. The subsequent never-ending environmental lawsuits, new Wilderness and HCP

creations, access road decommissionings, and fruitless public planning exercises have created tens of millions of acres of massive fuel build-ups and “let it burn” policies that have decimated our forests.

The predicted result has been ever larger western Oregon forest fires. More than 90% of these large- and catastrophic-scale fires have taken place in federal forestlands, which only represent 50% of Oregon’s forested areas.

Even if, like Facebook executives, you believe these fires were somehow sparked by climate change, you should be very concerned with what will happen next.

Lessons from the 1933-1951 “Six-Year Jinx” Tillamook Fires and the 1987-2018 Kalmiopsis Wilderness Fires are clear: unless removed, the dead trees resulting from these fires will fuel even greater and more severe future fires.

Forests filled with dead trees are far more flammable, dangerous and unsightly than those with living trees. Dead trees dry out, and dead forests become firebombs that almost certainly will burn again and again, unless something is done.

The 2020 fire-killed trees should be mapped, sold and harvested ASAP. Prices for Douglas fir logs are at a record high, and there is a great need for good-paying rural jobs. The initial focus should be on the dead trees east of Portland, Salem, Eugene, Ashland and the rural towns directly affected by this year’s fires.

Salvage logging must be done soon to be economical — dead trees deteriorate rapidly.

The 1962 Columbus Day windstorm downed 9 billion board feet on a Friday, and by the following Monday salvage logging on public lands had already started. But the 2002 Biscuit Fire burned a roughly equivalent amount of timber, and it took years to develop salvage logging plans and deal with court challenges.

All the delays meant salvage logging actually lost the US Forest Service money, very little needed logging was ever completed, and the 2017 Chetco Bar Fire resulted, burned hotter, and spread wider.

The 2020 fires killed at least twice as much timber as the 2002 Biscuit Fire, and it greatly damaged and affected urban areas near major cities. So, it will be interesting to see if we can learn from Oregon’s fire history and take the prompt, decisive actions needed to avoid the clearly predictable coming firestorms.

to read more of Bob Zybach’s reflections
in the *Highway 58 Herald*,
check out their
Viewpoint | Commentary section:

[https://highway58herald.org/category/
viewpoint/commentary/](https://highway58herald.org/category/viewpoint/commentary/)

an excerpt from Judy’s email exchange with Ben that inspired inclusion of Zybach’s reflection:

Just want to add that when Jerry and I bought our 20ac parcel in 1974 on the SW corner of Canal Cr Rd and Hwy34 (across from the Park which wasn't a park then), and he started falling and cat logging the big fir and cedar, charcoal pervaded the forest floor, and there were stumps scarred by fire.

After researching, I learned of the Great Yaquina Fire of 1846 when 450,000 acres of Lincoln County had burned. History told that the dead, down and underbrush had been regularly cleared & maintained by the local tribes with controlled burns until the new settlers put a stop to that.

Zybach has many papers written on the subject.

PS, my husband had dug up the obsidian spearhead on our parcel that I had returned to the tribe in 2025 for their historical and cultural display case.

Linn County Chapter News

President's Column

Christy Tye named as Linn volunteer of the year

By Jim Merzenich | LCSWA president

At the Oregon Forestry Family Convention June 26 in Douglas County Christy Tye was announced as the Linn County Volunteer of the year. Christy is a third-generation tree farmer who has sown the love of nature into her two children and others in our forestry 4-H program. Grandparents Bert and Betty Udell were National tree farm winners in 1982. Sherm and Faye Sallee, her parents, organized and ran our seedling sale for many years with Christy by their side.



She is now a 4-H Clever Clover Leader. Christy joined our board in 2023 and immediately became secretary. In 2024 she worked with Shirley Holmberg to transition into the treasurer position which she now holds.

She is also co-chair of the scholarship committee along with Bonnie Marshall.

Critical months ahead for fire safety

While this has been a bountiful spring for growing grass, streams and wetlands in the Cascade foothills are drying out and the El Nino weather pattern projects an extreme summer. Use safe practices when on your farm and remind neighbors to do the same. Follow the restrictions directed by the Oregon Department of Forestry. On June 15 the Oregon Department of Forestry announced that all counties in Oregon are now officially in fire season.

Website updates events, tours

Larry Mauter and webmaster Nancy Hildebrandt continue to improve our website by posting notices on upcoming events and



2026 Board Members

Jim Merzenich — president

Christy Tye director — director, treasurer, scholarship co-chair

Jim Cota —director

Lauren Parks —director, membership chair

Anna Merzenich — director, secretary

Dan Lowrie— director

Greg Harty — director

Timbre White — director

Mike Barsotti — past president

LCSWA Committee Members

Bonnie Marshall — scholarship co-chair

Lee Peterman— activities chair

Fay Sallee —4-H forestry education chair

Larry Mauter —publicity, Bob Mealy committee

Tim Otis — past president

Lorelle Sherman — OSU Extension agent

Colin Pyle — Linn County Sheriff's Office

writing stories on past events. Check our website Linncountyswa.com to see what's happening in Linn County and to register for the next event.

In the past quarter we had a

Noxious weed tour on *March 26 at Oak Basin Tree Farm* where we viewed noxious weeds in flower and shared advice on how to control them.

Native Plant Walk on *April 4 at Finley Wildlife Refuge* where we viewed forbs and shrubs native to the Willamette valley. This was a joint tour with Benton County.

Camas Springs tour on *May 1* where we saw soda springs, associated band-tailed pigeons, mature stands of Ponderosa pine and Incense cedar, and fields of camas and other wildflowers.

Dragonfly Ranch tour on *May 30* we viewed oak stands abutting managed wetlands on One Horse slough. Active beaver dams provide habitat for river otters, and waterfowl. Lunch was provided.

Linn County Tree Farm Of the Year Tour on *Saturday, June 20*, hosted by Larry and Nancy Mauter.

Upcoming Events: Details are posted on our website.

Gordon Meadows tour: *Wednesday July 1:* These pristine meadows are located east of Sweet Home on Forest Service land. We will carpool from the ODF office.

Linn County OSWA Summer picnic and tours: *July 18 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.* The Cota and Melcher families are hosting the annual summertime gathering.

Jim Cota and Mike Melcher will host at the Fun Forest Barn on Upper Berlin Drive. Drinks and lunch will be provided. Recreation for kids and adults available. Cota, along with Scott and Robbie Melcher were the Oregon tree farmers of the year and the top Western States tree farmers in 2010.

LCSWA board of directors meeting: Early in Septemeber. Location and date to be determined. Check the Linn County website for updates.

Reforestation Workshop and Tour: Dates TBD: The target audience consists of all private non-industrial landowners planning a harvest in the next year. Linn County members Mike Barsotti and Greg Harty are working with OSWA Director Mike Cafferrata to organize this activity for all westside OSWA chapters.

Mill Tour: *Sep-Oct:* Location and Date TBD

Sunnyside Park pine maintenance: Late October. Date to be announced. "Breakfast with Bob." The LCSWA will be treating blackberries and Willamette Valley Ponderosa Pines at the Bob Mealey interpretive pine grove at Sunnyside Park near Sweet Home. The Saturday morning event will include coffee and bites. Bring gloves, loppers and work gear.

Other ideas on tours, workshops, and other topics to cover are welcome.

Fun Forest opens gates for July 18 Linn picnic

Antique logging equipment will be on display during a tree farm tour July 18 sponsored by the Linn County Small Woodlands Association (LCSWA).

The award-winning Fun Forest is the site for the annual LCSWA Summer picnic. Jim Cota and Mike Melcher are hosting the event, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Fun Forest Barn on Upper Berlin Drive.

Drinks and lunch will be provided. There is recreation equipment for children. A bow-shoot course is among the trees.

Cota will provide tours of a recently thinned 120-acre Douglas-fir stand. About half the stand was thinned in March.

Cota, along with Scott and Robbie Melcher were the Oregon tree farmers of the year and the top western states tree farmers in 2010.

A shelter on the property has a wood stove that was orginally a steam pot used to operate a mill in the Hamilton Creek watershed, said Cota.

The New York company that built it went out of business in 1892, Cota said, making the steam pot at least 130 years old.

"It's last years in life it ran a cedar mill in late '30s or early '40s," according to Cota's research.

A 20-passenger trailer will be available for the thinning tour.

Registration is required.

See www.linncountyswa.com for more details.

Date set for 2027 LCSWA seedling sale

Online orders can be placed starting in December

By Lena Tucker | LCSWA seedling sale chair

The Linn County Small Woodlands Association (LCSWA) will host the annual tree and shrub seedling sale on Feb.13, 2027 from 8 a.m. to noon at the Linn County Fair and Expo Center in Albany.

Pre-orders can be placed online at the LCSWA seedling shop starting in early December 2026. Watch our LCSWA website <https://linncountyswa.com/> for more details on when and how to place your pre-order.

Pacific dogwood, *Cornus nuttallii*, is a favorite native tree of the Pacific Northwest.

The LCSWA is excited to be offering Pacific dogwood seedlings for purchase at our 2027 seedling sale.

Famous Scottish botanist David Douglas was the first European to observe the Pacific Dogwood. He encountered it but mistook it for the Eastern Flowering Dogwood and did not collect seeds or specimens. It wasn't recognized as a distinct new species until naturalist Thomas Nuttall collected and formally described the tree at Fort Vancouver in 1834.

Pacific dogwood with its distinct showy white springtime flowers grows best in part shade, well-drained acid soils high in organic matter. The bark can be damaged by hot sun. Pacific dogwood's native range extends along the Pacific coast, inland to about 200 miles, from just beyond Vancouver Island, British Columbia, to southern California. A disjunct population occurs in north-central Idaho.

The seedling sale provides money for college-level and 4-H forestry scholarships.

Five OSU students to share LCSWA scholarships

Almost \$20,000 goes to forestry students; Scio High project receives \$500

By Bonnie Marshall | LCSWA Scholarship Chair

Nearly \$20,000 in educational funding was approved June 4 by the Linn County Small Woodlands Association (LCSWA).

University scholarships relating to forestry were awarded to five Oregon State University students. The scholars will share \$19,000. Another \$500 was awarded to an environmental education project at Scio High School. Money for these educational opportunities come from the LCSWA Seedling Sale — the 32nd annual event will be Feb. 13, 2027.



The two returning scholars are Mason Montigue and Emmaline Westfall. Mason just completed his AAOT degree (Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer) at Linn-Benton Community College and will be entering Oregon State this fall as a junior, majoring in Forest Restoration and Fire Prevention.

Mason is originally from Sweet Home. He will be working as a wildland firefighter out of La Grande this summer.

Emmaline will be starting her junior year at Oregon State in Natural Resources specializing in Ecological Restoration. She has landed two summer jobs, one as a research assistant working with a graduate student and one with the Corvallis Parks and Recreation, working as a Youth Volunteer Core Leader. She will be leading youths in service projects related to maintaining natural habitat areas around Corvallis.

We are also excited to announce three new scholarship recipients for the 2026/2027 school year — Blaise Pindell, Allison Dariano, and Camryn Kolouch.

Blaise is from Philomath. He recently completed requirements for an associate's degree in Forest Engineering from Southwestern Oregon Community College. He will be attending Oregon State this fall working toward his Forestry degree with a specialization in Forest Management.

Allison Dariano, a junior, is seeking dual degrees: a Natural Resources degree with an Ecological Restoration specialization in the College of Forestry and a Sustainability degree through the College of Agricultural Science.

Camryn Kolouch will be entering Oregon State University College of Forestry this fall as a freshman, focusing on forest ecosystems and conservation. Her goal is to become a dendrologist.

We are proud to be a part of these outstanding scholars' college careers and look forward to engaging them this year in chapter activities. LCSWA members should feel free to introduce yourself and share a little bit about your forestry experience with the students.

The \$500 Scio High School donation will be used for building materials and compost for the school's Environmental Studies program.

Teacher Steven Westbrook attended the June 4 meeting, outlining proposed projects and those already under way.

Raised beds, fencing and a nature walk are in the works. The board approved the donation unanimously.

How to get the upper hand in noxious weed control

By Jim and Anna Merzenich | LCSWA members

Some noxious weeds may be controlled by pulling them out by the roots. Consider manual and mechanical options of control prior to using herbicides.

Check labels and ask for advice before using any herbicide. Many herbicides sold at the hardware store are not approved for forestry use. Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) herbicide requirements mandate filing an E-Notification (FERNS) at least 15 days before application. Your Stewardship Forester can answer questions and help you file this permit. A daily record of herbicide use must be maintained.

When using herbicides, we use Stihl backpack sprayers and mix three gallons (384 oz) of water with each load. We also use an ATV with a 20 gallon spray tank, when possible.



Hand spraying with a backpack rig is a key in the fight against invasives at Oak Basin. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter

We normally use a specific herbicide to control a targeted weed.

A surfactant helps adhere the spray to the leaves, and a colored dye, indicates where you have sprayed. Using both a surfactant and a dye is essential.

We use Garlon4 Ultra (triclopyr) to control our noxious shrubs and vines. This herbicide should not be used in riparian or aquatic areas. Garlon 3A was developed for use in wetlands.

To conserve moisture for planted tree seedlings, we spray a five foot diameter circle each seedling using a 1.5% solution of glyphosate product such as Accord (5.56 oz). If you use Velpar note that it is highly toxic to both oaks and incense cedars.

To control maple sprouts in plantation areas we wait 2-3 years after cutting so there is sufficient leaf area to absorb the spray. We then used 1.5% solution of Imazapyr applied in mid-July.

For Italian, Bull, and Milk thistles we use a 0.2 % solution of Milestone (aminopyralid) (0.8 oz) for each tankful. Transline (clopyralid) is also effective when using a 0.25 @ solution (1.0 oz). Once the thistles have flowered and are beginning to produce seed we pull and bag the plants and put them in a covered pile to be burned in the fall.

For Canada thistle we spray each emergent stalk in the colony. Trying to kill all the thistle in a conifer plantation often not worth the effort for us. We just spray around our seedlings.



Blackthorn is an early flowering invasive. It is easily identified now so this is a key time for treatment. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter



About 30 people toured Oak Basin to learn about the struggles connected with invasive weeds. Jim Merzenich explained that invasives often show up along forest roads before getting deep in the woods.. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter

Here's a partial list of the culprits

Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*): Once used for erosion control along highway cuts. Seeds remain viable in soil for 50+ years.

European (English) Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*): Introduced as an ornamental. Spreads by seeds. Overtakes open meadows and oak woodlands. Hybridizes with native hawthorn species.

Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*): European native introduced by settlers. Spreads by seed and rhizomes (below ground stems). Used for walking sticks and Sloe Gin; established in Coburg hills.

Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*) & Evergreen (cutleaf) blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*): Stems can create new roots and plants through tip layering. Do not confuse with native *Rubus* species which may be growing alongside introduced species.

For Hawthorn, Blackthorn, maple, etc we apply a concentrated solution of Garlon4 Ultra onto each freshly cut stump. A “Dauber”, enables you to treat cut stumps without bending over or contaminating your hands with herbicide. Daubers can be purchased at JTI supply in Tangent, OR and currently sell for \$35.



Jim Merzenich displays a “Dauber” during the March 26 tour. The device allows treatment of cut stumps without bending over or contaminating your hands with herbicide. Daubers can be purchased at JTI supply in Tangent. They currently sell for \$35. Anna Merzenich carries a pair of loppers used to cut stalks. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter

For thorny bushes with sufficient leaf area we spray a 1.5% solution of Garlon4 Ultra or Imazapyr.

Non-native blackberries: Spray after flowering but before the first hard freeze in November or December. The optimal month to spray is September. We use a 1.5% solution of Garlon4 Ultra (triclopyr). We generally avoid spraying when the temperature is above 80 degrees.

After mowing blackberry patches, we wait six months to a year before spraying. The key is to have sufficient leaf area to absorb the herbicide. Mowed blackthorn may take two or more years to become susceptible to the spray although it may be ready earlier on some sites.

Smaller Scotch broom may be pulled by hand or with a weed wrench while the soil is moist. We cut larger plants low to the ground and either apply concentrated Garlon 4 Ultra or simply cover the stem to reduce the chance of regrowth. Older plants are less likely to resprout from cut stems, particularly where the stems are no longer green. Garlon 4 can also be applied to the leaves of actively growing plants in late spring and early summer.

Oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*):

Introduced. Spreads by seeds and rhizomes. Can form dense mats in pastures displacing all natives. Number one problem in our upland prairie.

Tansy Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*): Eurasian native, toxic. Flea beetle, cinnabar moth, seed-head fly are bio-controls. Populations fluctuate.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*): Escaped garden flower that can establish quickly in disturbed areas; Beautiful but toxic.

Italian Thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*): Non-native annual or biennial. Regenerates by seed which can be viable in the soil for ten years. Introduced bio-controls are not effective.

Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*): Eurasian steppe species; spreads by both seeds and rhizomes. Rhizomes survive for decades without being apparent.

Shiny Geranium (*Geranium lucidum*): European invasive which thrives in open woodlands. Displaces native annuals such as spring-beauty *Clatonia sibirica* (aka miner’s lettuce). Has exploded in abundance in the last ten years.

False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*): Apparently spread by deer. We have had poor success controlling it.

Tall fescue, Velvet grass, etc.: No perennial turf grasses are native to the Willamette valley. Non-native turf grasses and invasive annuals have displaced native bunch grasses and forbs. Velvet grass, an annual, grows quickly and if left unchecked will use water needed by a conifer seedling for survival.

Reed Canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*): This non-native perennial can take over native wetlands and overwhelm streams and pond edges. Often spread by waterfowl to new areas.

— Jim and Anna Merzenich

Noxious weed mapping and recording:

We use free programs called QGIS for the computer and Qfield on our phones to help us map and monitor weed populations and their treatments. This is very useful for keeping track of where weed populations are, how they change over time, and how they respond to treatment. It allows us to accurately revisit the same spots to ensure the weeds are being managed and to find the same spots for secondary treatment measures. QGIS and QField require some learning if you are not familiar with GIS programs though online tutorials are available. Other options for mapping such as Oregon Explorer, Caltopo, and Avenza can also work well for a lot of uses.

Identification:

Identifying the right plants that you want to treat is important. We use phone apps such as Oregon Wildflower Search, Seek, and iNaturalist to help identify things we're not sure of. The first 2 work offline and iNaturalist has many experts who often help identify posts.

Pigeon haven, mature pines on display

Site near the Calapooia River featured in May 1 LCSWA tour

By Larry Mauter | LCSWA member

Linn County old-timers might know Phil Callaway's 38-acre forest property along Crawfordville Drive as the "Pigeon Shoot."

Not so today.

Callaway's parcel just north of the Calapooia River still has flocks of band-tailed pigeons that visit a sodium-rich mineral springs there between April and late September.

Hunting was stopped in 2016 when Callaway and his wife Karyn purchased the property and built a home.

He has now renamed the property as Camas Springs.

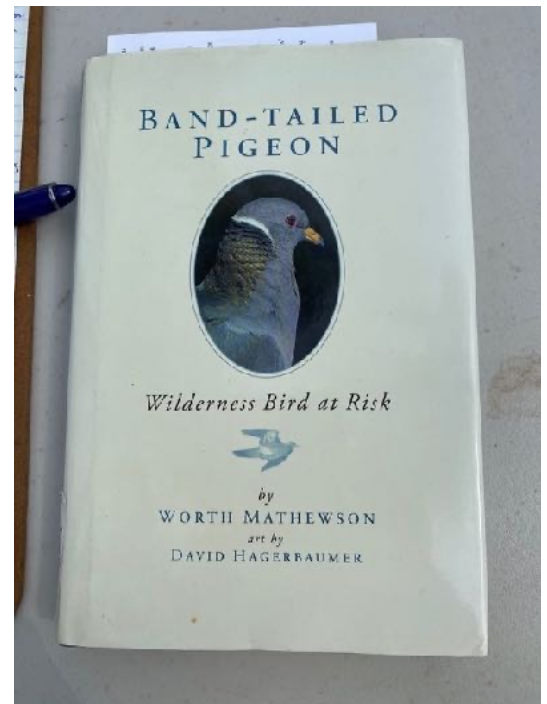
The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has told Callaway his spring hosts the largest pigeon population in the south Willamette Valley. Future land improvements call on planting elderberry and cascara — among the favorite foods for the Oregon native game birds.

"It was just bare land. We built a home and moved in in 2018," said Callaway, a retired software engineer. "It was a dream come true to get this place."

A Linn County Small Woodlands Association (LCSWA) tour of the property on a sunny May 1 showcased the beauty the Callaways found.

Mature stands of Willamette Valley Ponderosa pine — likely about 80 years old — and tall incense cedar grace the upland slopes. Fields of camas and buttercups flourish in a 6-acre "wet prairie" area that is mowed annually.

The changed landscape was shaped with help from federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cost-sharing money and professional assistance, Callaway explained to the 45 people on tour.



Band-tailed pigeons are native game birds that rely on mineral springs.

Advanced Land Management LLC of Sweet Home used a masticator to chew up the brush and invasive blackberries that dominated forest areas.

Llew Whipps, with the non-profit Institute for Applied Ecology based in Corvallis, assisted Callaway with the land transformation. She was on hand May 1 to help explain the reclamation process.

Callaway moved to Oregon after earning a degree in wood science and technology from Colorado State University.

His philosophy about the property is that he is “temporary caretaker” of the land. “I want leave it a little better than when I found it, he said.”

He is striving for both “horizontal and vertical diversity” among the trees.

Challenges and uncertainties remain for Callaway. The ice storm of January 2024 took a heavy toll on deciduous trees. “Messy is good. So I guess I’m good,” he said.

Also, a developer on a neighboring property is building a subdivision. Callaway is concerned the building may alter water flows on his land.

He harvests firewood and burns about six cords a year, but has no plans for logging. While the Willamette Valley has seen an upsurge in Valley pine plantings since the 1990s, the closest mills for pine are south in Roseberg, he noted.

The day was part of a year-long list of activities hosted by the LCSWA. For information of future events, visit www.linncountyswa.com.



Above: Phil Callaway has a mix of mature pine and incense cedar along with six acres of wet prairie. | Left top: Tour goers Greg and Karen Harty examine an ash tree that is likely several trees that grew together. | Left center: Tour host Phil Callaway uses a free plant identification app — Seek by iNaturalist on tour. | Left bottom: Native camas blossoms on the Callaway tree farm. The property includes a 6-acre wet prairie filled with buttercups and camas.

Beaver pond on the rise

Restorative work at Dragon Fly Ranch showing results

By Larry Mauter | LCSWA member

In a sequel to a tour three years ago, the story at Dragon Fly Ranch is the water is rising.

That's a good thing.

Dan and Sandy Nelson have seen their pond along One Horse Slough growing in recent years as their restorative efforts and busy beavers have had their way.

The Nelsons opened up their 200 acres along Totem Pole Road northeast of Lebanon on May 30 for a hiking tour sponsored by the Linn County Small Woodlands Association (LCSWA).

About 45 people — grandkids to grandparents — were treated to a sunny walk through the woodland property. Songbirds were plentiful and springtime flowers were in full bloom in the wet prairie and oak woodlands that were traversed.

A highlight of the walk was viewing the expanding pond that feeds the slough. "Generational beavers" have enlarged the pond. "It keeps growing," said Dan Nelson. "They use mud, sticks, willow, everything," said Nelson of the beavers' building tools.

One Horse Slough eventually feeds into the South Fork of the Santiam River.

Working with federal and state agencies during the past decade, the Nelsons have thinned unproductive fir areas — producing oak woodlands — and enhanced a wet prairie environment by removing hawthorn and other invasives. Work included diverting a ditch into fields now lush with camas, buttercups, narrow-leaf mule's ear and daisies to slow the flow of water in the spring.

On the 9-acre pond, there are beaver houses and wood duck boxes for nesting. Once the wood ducks finish nesting purple martins take them over for their young, said Nelson.

Overall, the Nelsons have 50 bird boxes scattered on their land. "They need to be cleaned every year," he noted. "But I don't mind."

The walking tour concluded with conversation, a sack lunch and cold drinks furnished by the LCSWA at the Nelson's shop.



Hikers were treated to a rainbow of colors as wildflowers were in peak form. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter



Dan Nelson has an app on his cell phone to identify birds through their songs. He spoke with tour goers alongside an expanding beaver pond at Dragonfly Ranch. | Photo credit: Larry Mauter