

OCRF Grant Project Completion Report

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Introduction

Project Name*

Insert the full project name assigned by ODFW, including the unique code before the Project Title that was given in the agreement.

(Example) **OCRF 2020-2-45_Turtle Island Park Restoration Project**

Character Limit: 200

Upon completion of the project, please complete this Final Report document and submit it before the Project Expiration Date in the Agreement. The information you provide will be used for accountability and reporting and displayed to the general public. Please be as clear and concise as possible and avoid jargon or acronyms.

Project Location*

Westfir, Oregon

Actual Impact Measurement Unit

Acre

4

Number of volunteers engaged

34

Number of students engaged

55

Number of plants planted

1,105

Pounds of native seed spread

58 lbs

Oregon Conservation Strategy Species *

List the Oregon Conservation Strategy Species and Oregon Conservation Strategy Opportunity Areas that the Project benefited.

OCS species able to inhabit the project area: Cascades Frog, Clouded Salamander, Coastal Tailed Frog, Foothill Yellow-legged Frog, Northern Red-legged Frog, Oregon Slender Salamander, Oregon Spotted Frog, Western Toad, Flammulated Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Goshawk, Northern Spotted Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Peregrine Falcon, Pileated Woodpecker, Purtle Martin, Short-eared Owl, Western Meadowlark, White-breasted Nuthatch, Willow Flycatcher, Spring Chinook Salmon, Coastal Cutthroat, Franklin's Bumblebee, and Western Bumblebee, California Myotis, Fringed Myotis, Hoary Bat, Long-legged Myotis, Pallid Bat, RedTree Vole, Silver-haired Bat,

Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Northwestern Pond Turtle, and Western Rattlesnake.

Oregon Conservation Strategy Opportunity Area: Middle Fork Willamette River, COA ID 115

Final Report Questions

Project Statement*

Briefly describe what the project accomplished and the problem(s) it addressed. Make a clear and concise statement; avoid jargon and acronyms.

The Turtle Island Restoration Project, now referred to as the Westfir Confluence Park Restoration Project, removed Japanese knotweed, scotch broom and Armenian blackberry from the riparian habitat within Westfir Confluence Park and began replanting and re-seeding with native species. This work was accomplished through a combination of community volunteer, Oakridge student and contracted efforts.

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council (MFWWC) worked with Kevin Rowell, the Trails Manager for the US Forest Service Middle Fork Ranger District, to scope and develop designs for an accessible trail through the riparian forest at Westfir Confluence Park.

The MFWWC Restoration Projects Manager collaborated with the City of Westfir, Oakridge Trails Alliance, US Forest Service, and the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network Tribal Liaison to develop a Park Management Plan to guide restoration, stewardship, future trail and facility construction, and funding actions for Westfir Confluence Park.

Summary of Goals*

Describe how project goals, objectives, and/or milestones were completed. Discuss any measurable and achieved benefits (# of volunteers engaged, acreage restored, retrofits, planning documents created, research results, etc.).

Scoping for an accessible trail at Westfir Confluence Park began in 2023 and was conducted by Kevin Rowell in collaboration with MFWWC staff, the Mayor of Westfir, and Oakridge Trail Alliance staff. Preliminary trail designs and cost estimates were received in December 2023 and incorporated into the Westfir Confluence Park Management Plan and subsequent funding proposals.

Development of the Westfir Confluence Park Management Plan began in 2024, and a draft was sent to project partners and the City of Westfir for review in December 2024. On January 6, 2025, the plan was signed by members of the City of Westfir local government and adopted into practice.

Restoration actions started in the summer and fall of 2023 with invasive species removal across 4 acres of riparian habitat at the confluence of the Middle Fork Willamette River and the North Fork of the Middle Fork Willamette River. Invasive species removal included mechanical removal of invasive Armenian blackberries, chemical treatment on small patches of Japanese knotweed, and hand pulling invasive false brome and geranium species. Invasive removal in 2023 was conducted by restoration contractors including R. Franco Restoration and Walama Restoration Project. Community volunteer and student stewardship initiated in 2024 and continued in 2025 in concert with contracted stewardship and restoration from Walama Restoration Project. After initial chemical treatment, Japanese knotweed has not resprouted at Westfir Confluence Park. Mechanical and hand maintenance of other invasive species is ongoing.

Beginning in the spring of 2024 the MFWWC began hosting community stewardship events for volunteers to help remove invasive species and plant native plants. Volunteer attendees per event ranged between 2-10 participants with 6 participants being the most consistent volunteer turnout. A total of 34 community volunteers were engaged with restoration across 6 volunteer events at Westfir Confluence Park from 2024 - Summer 2025. The initiation of this project gave the MFWWC Regional Education Team the opportunity to set up a Watershed

Action Team for Education, Restoration, and Stewardship (WATERS) program with Oakridge High School. The close proximity to Oakridge allowed their Career and Technical Education class to engage with a WATERS program which centers outdoor education around professional development opportunities, allowing students to receive lessons anywhere from plant identification to marine biology from natural resource professionals. Student stewardship under the WATERS program started in 2024 and consistently saw 10-12 students participating, with 22 participating in the spring of 2025. Overall, 4 student stewardship events occurred engaging 55 students total. Between contracted crews, community and student stewardship 1,105 native plants were planted and 58lb of native seed was spread at Westfir Confluence Park.

Photo and vegetation monitoring has demonstrated an overall increase in native vegetation cover and decrease in invasive cover, however more work is needed to increase native herb cover throughout the project area and reduce overall invasive cover to the 5% goal specified in the Westfir Park Management Plan. Only 8 plants that were planted through restoration efforts were observed as dead during monitoring surveys. Monitoring results are tabulated below. Unit 2 was unable to be surveyed in 2023 due to dense thickets of Armenian blackberry that blocked access. Unit 4 was not surveyed in 2023 due to it not yet identified as a focus area, and surveyors in 2025 ran out of time on the survey day to cover this area. Survey techniques were altered from plot surveys to transect surveys to improve survey efficiency which may partially account for the increase in tree/shrub cover between survey years. 2025 monitoring surveys were conducted in April which may account for the low amount of native herb cover observed.

Table 1: Vegetation monitoring

	Unit 1 2023	Unit 1 2025	Unit 3 2023	Unit 3 2025	Unit 2 2025
Tree/Shrub Native	96%	184%	90%	120%	109%
Tree/Shrub Invasive	22%	8%	3%	0%	44%
Herb Native	<1%	6%	1.5%	0%	3%
Herb Invasive	31%	14%	0.5%	18%	40%

Lessons Learned*

Describe lessons learned and challenges faced during the grant performance period. Examples being delays, contractual issues, permitting, funding, changes to the project Scope of Work or amendments, etc.

Lessons learned during the grant performance period include the extent to which weedy invasive herbaceous forbs were lying dormant in the seed bank suppressed by the dense blackberry thickets. This will inform native seed mixes and seeding rates moving forward in continued stewardship and underscores the need for at least 2 community stewardship days per season to get a handle on invasive vegetation in the riparian understory. The MFWWC plans to increase the proportion native herbaceous forb species that can better compete with emergent invasives like tarweed and yarrow in native seed mixes and include more forb planting in future interplanting efforts.

The discovery of invasive sweet cherry at the park was also a significant lesson learned in this grant performance period. The MFWWC plans to direct contracted and community/student stewardship actions towards addressing emergent sweet cherry sprouts and will consider removing established cherry canopy as planted native trees reach a free-to-grow state and grow to a size that can functionally replace the cherry canopy if removed.

Monitoring surveys were also refined to allow for one person to efficiently conduct monitoring surveys which allowed for more accurate data collection in 2025. The timing of monitoring surveys is also a lesson that was learned after the 2025 monitoring effort, highlighting the importance of these surveys being conducted in May – June instead of earlier in the spring season to adequately capture herbaceous forb cover data.

Smaller than expected local engagement in restoration volunteer events was also observed, highlighting the need for broader engagement between the MFWWC and the Westfir/Oakridge community to increase awareness and participation in restoration at Westfir Confluence Park.

Project leads also received feedback early in the grant period from the Tribal Partnership and Decolonization Forum (an advisory group of the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network who works with a regional Tribal Advisory Committee to increase tribal partnership and decolonization in the work implemented by members of the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network) that the original name for the park “Turtle Island Park” may be seen as culturally appropriative by Indigenous community members due to Turtle Island being the Indigenous name for the continent referred to as North America by western settlers. The park name was changed to Westfir Confluence Park in an effort to not cause harm or discourage Indigenous collaboration or use of the park while the conversation around regional Indigenous comfortability with using the name “Turtle Island” continues given its historic local term for the park due to previous turtle presence in the area. These conversations will continue as the project moves forward and will include both local Indigenous and settler community members.

Next Steps*

Describe any next steps for the project, if any.

Next steps for the Westfir Confluence Park project include continued habitat restoration utilizing community and student volunteer work forces in addition to contracted restoration work. This will include continued grubbing out of Armenian blackberry and pulling emergent scotch broom and invasive herbaceous forb species in addition to continued seeding and planting native species.

The MFWWC has also secured funding from the EPA Thriving Communities program and USFS Title II funds to support continued restoration, construct the designed accessible trail, and develop informational materials and construct an informative kiosk at the start of the trail to welcome visitors to the park.

The MFWWC also plans to work with the City of Westfir and project partners to apply for a Recreation Trail Program grant through the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to construct vault toilet facilities at the parking area and trailhead.

Attachments

Include all project data collected, such as surveys, reports, PDF maps, photo monitoring and planning documents. Upload any color photographs of the Project area(s) before and after the Project completion taken at the pre-set photo points as one document.

Documents included in a zipped file upon report submission include the following:

- Westfir Confluence Park Project Map
- Westfir Confluence Park Paired Photo Points
- Accessible Trail Conceptual Design
- Westfir Confluence Park Management Plan
- 2023 Pre-implementation vegetation monitoring data
- 2025 Post-implementation vegetation monitoring data

Certification

Drafts of final reports for review may be submitted to ODFW.OCRF@odfw.oregon.gov

Certifying Statement*

I certify that the above and attached information is true and accurate.

Choices

Yes

Applicant Authorized Representative Name*

Virginia Pritchard

Authorized Representative Title*

Restoration Projects Manager