



INSTREAM

Spring '18 Newsletter



Rogue River by Bob Wick, Bureau of Land Management

Stream of Consciousness: The Shape of Water

By John DeVoe, Executive Director



Some may associate the title of this column with the film which won the 2018 Academy Award for Best Picture.

To me, it sounds like the title of a Craig Childs book that I'd like to read. But this column will be about neither of these things. As we head into yet another drought year, I'd instead like to ask our many incredible supporters who dearly love Oregon's rivers and streams to consider: What is the shape of water in Oregon?

One key fact to keep in mind when considering Oregon's water is the condition of our snowpack. This is because 57% of Oregon's land mass, much

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WaterWatch's mission is to protect and restore streamflows in Oregon's rivers for fish, wildlife, and the people who depend on healthy rivers.

Portland Office

213 SW Ash St., Suite 208
Portland, OR 97204
T: (503) 295-4039

Southern Oregon Office

P.O. Box 261
Ashland, OR 97520
T: (541) 708-0731

Staff

- | | |
|---|---|
| » <i>Lisa Brown</i>
Staff Attorney | » <i>Kimberley Priestley</i>
Senior Policy Analyst |
| » <i>John DeVoe</i>
Executive Director | » <i>Molly Whitney</i>
Development Director |
| » <i>Nancy Drinnon</i>
Comptroller | » <i>Jim McCarthy</i>
Communication Director &
Southern Oregon Program
Manager |
| » <i>Megan McAfee</i>
Administrative Assistant | » <i>Jack Dempsey</i>
Contract Lobbyist |
| » <i>Brian Posewitz</i>
Staff Attorney | |

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Jim McCarthy, Editor*

(Stream of Consciousness: The Shape of Water... Continued from page 1)

of it on the east side of the Cascades, is dependent on mid-elevation snowpack for its dry season water – for streams, for agriculture, and for other uses. This kind of snowpack is most vulnerable to climate change. We have begun to see the consequences of this vulnerability already, and unfortunately we are going to see a lot more.

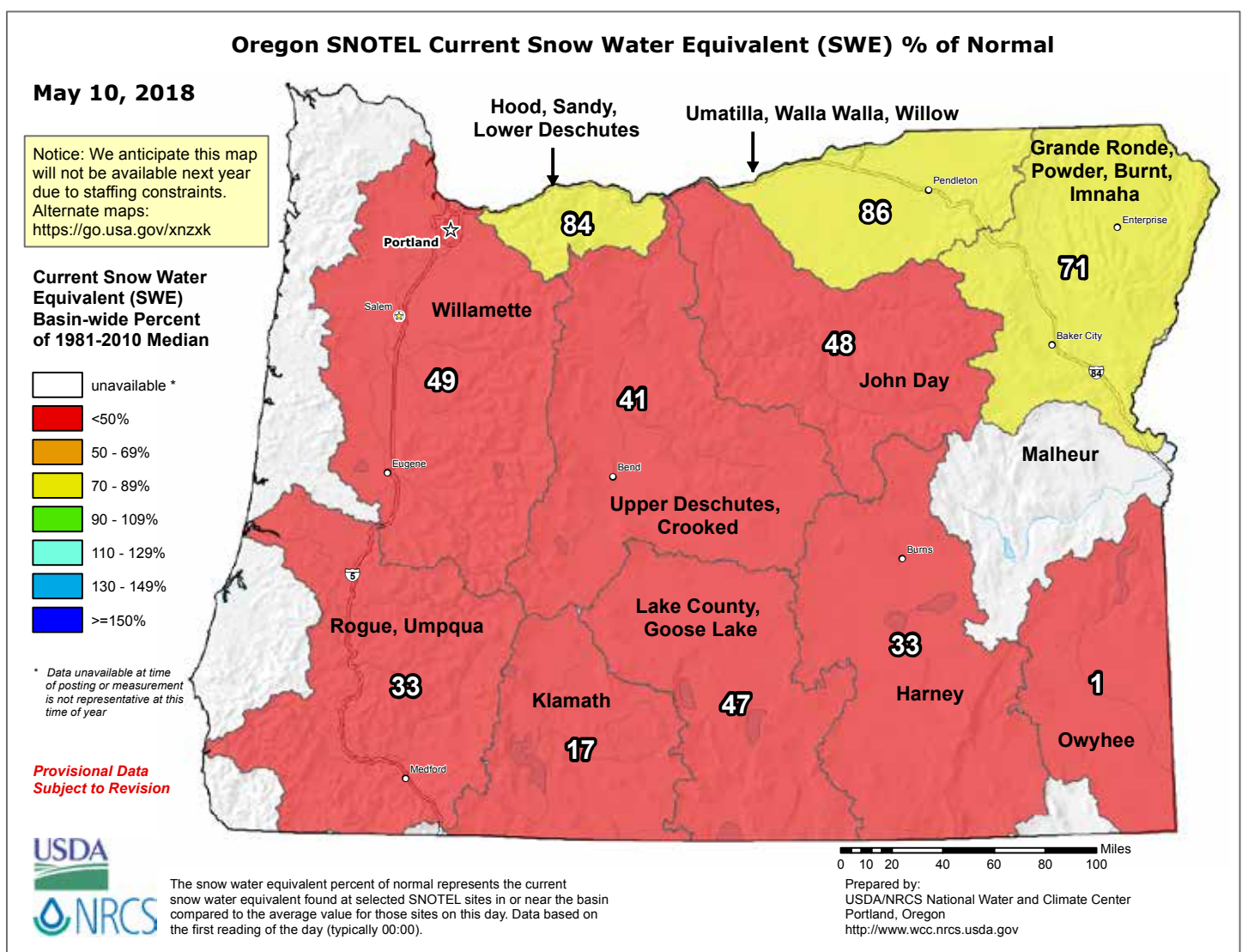
Oregon's snowpack – and hence its water – is unfortunately in terrible shape across most of the state. On May 10th, most basins in Oregon – except for those in the northeastern corner – were under 50% of average snow water equivalent in the snowpack – where there was any snowpack at all. In most of the state, we are looking at another 2015 type water year, where streamflows got very low and warm, there were massive fish kills of pre-spawning adult salmon and steelhead, and other water users saw some shortages due to scant snowpack. On May 10th, the Klamath and Owyhee basins were at 17% and 1% of average snow water equivalent respectively. The Willamette was at 49% of average, the Upper Deschutes 41%, the Rogue/Umpqua 33%, the John Day 48%. Oregon is looking down the barrel of grim drought conditions across much of the state. The best basins the state, the Hood/Sandy and Umatilla/Walla Walla, were at 84% and 86% of average, respectively. We are not where we'd prefer to be there either.

Computer models suggest we could lose up to half of the cold water habitat in the Oregon portion of the Columbia Basin by the end of this century. WaterWatch members understand the problems of recurring drought and a changing climate mean an

uncertain future for our rivers, aquatic species and aquifers. I am grateful that our members have been so constantly willing to fight for Oregon's rivers in dry years like 2015 and in wet years like 2017. There is still a great deal to accomplish to provide meaningful climate change and drought response measures for rivers and aquifers in Oregon. Your diligence and support on these issues is as fantastic and helpful as

a giant winter storm hitting the mountains. The fact is, we know that we won't be able to rely on those storms as much to bail us out in the future. We have to work hard to achieve real reforms soon to protect our river and streams. That's what WaterWatch is hard at work doing, with your support.

The Shape of Water in Oregon? It's in your hands.



***Oregon's snowpack – and hence its water –
is unfortunately in terrible shape across most of the state.***

2018 Legislative Round-Up

The 2018 short legislative session started with a bang and thankfully, ended quietly, with no water bills advancing that would harm our state's beloved rivers. Three bills of note included two that targeted the Klamath Basin. The third originated in the Deschutes, but would have harmed rivers statewide.

In the Klamath basin, a broad coalition of voices including Native American Tribes, commercial fishermen, and conservationists are celebrating the defeat of both SB 1552 and HB 4016. SB 1552 was a poorly disguised attempt to stop longstanding efforts to remove the four lowest Klamath River dams to aid struggling salmon runs. This bill included language that would have abolished the fund collected under state law for this widely supported project before demolition of these outdated structures could even begin. Removal of the four obsolete hydro dams will benefit the many communities which depend upon the Klamath River's invaluable resources, help fulfill Native American fishing rights throughout the basin, and protect thousands of commercial and recreational salmon fishing jobs.

HB 4016 purported to expand an existing pilot irrigation project. In reality, this bill would have allowed long-unused claims to water that attached to currently un-irrigable lands in the Klamath Project to be moved to irrigable

lands. This would have increased water demand in a river basin where water demand already wildly exceeds supply, and regularly sparks disasters. In a corner of the state where salmon and other fish are threatened with extinction, waterfowl regularly die of disease by the tens of thousands due to lack of water on the basin's National Wildlife Refuges, fishing-dependent Tribal cultures are being denied their right to fish, and downstream commercial fishing families are reeling from Klamath-driven ocean fishing closures, this bill would have helped only one select group of irrigators within the Klamath Project at the expense of all other interests.

Finally, WaterWatch worked hard before the 2018 short session even started to stop SB 1558, which hid a radically harmful proposal for Oregon's rivers and streams under the innocuous-sounding title: "Irrigation Storage Efficiency Act." SB 1558 would have opened the door to the creation of new reservoirs and dams – of any size – on-channel or off-channel, with no state-level environmental review whatsoever. This would have been achieved by creating a loophole in the state's established water transfer process, and undermining the state's water permitting process. The results could have been devastating for rivers. Thanks to your support, WaterWatch stopped this misguided bill in its tracks.

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Learn more about our work, become a member, or sign up for RiverAction Alerts at waterwatch.org.



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Water Briefs From Around the State

Deschutes River Habitat Conservation Plan Update

In 2007 Deschutes Basin irrigation districts asked conservation groups, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, and state and federal agencies to help develop a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to govern irrigation water management in the Upper Deschutes Basin. After an investment of more than \$3.3 million in public funds and over ten years of work, HCP development is now in its final stages.

Scoping took place in August, and draft conservation measures were unveiled to stakeholders in December. Unfortunately, it appears that the irrigation districts' proposed conservation measures for the Upper Deschutes River below Wickiup Dam will not meet the needs of the Oregon Spotted Frog, one of the most vulnerable populations of all the fish and wildlife covered by the HCP. The frog is also listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

As noted in WaterWatch's last newsletter, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recently released Biological Opinion for spotted frogs recommended winter flows in the Upper Deschutes River of 600 cubic feet per second (cfs) over time. The draft conservation measures developed by irrigators, on the other hand, top out at 400 cfs, and if the irrigators' draft plan is to be believed, will not reach even this inadequate level for another 21 years. Higher flows are needed in the winter – and much sooner – to ensure that the complex wetland habitat where the frogs overwinter stays wet. On the flip side, flows in the summer need to be scaled back because summer releases for irrigation scour riverbanks and destroy riparian habitat and vegetation. The Districts' plan is silent on capping summer flows.

WaterWatch is paying close attention to this plan as it develops. Your voice matters in this process! Please stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to submit public comment on the HCP.



Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass. Dramatic fluctuations in river flows due to irrigation water management can dry out and kill these eggs. Photo courtesy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

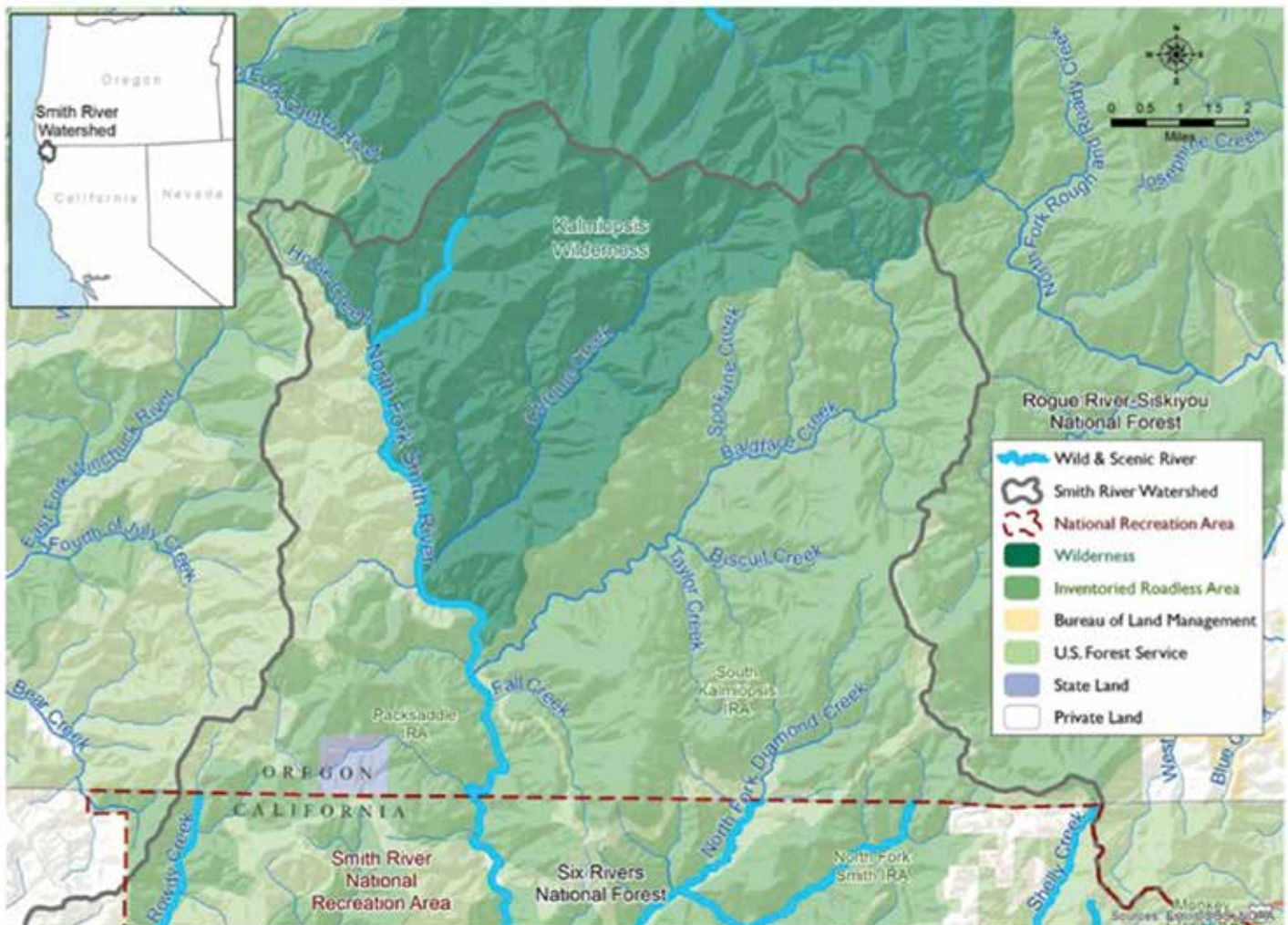
Victory for North Fork Smith

In December, at the urging of WaterWatch and a broad coalition, the Oregon Water Resources Commission adopted new rules that reserve the surface waters of the North Fork Smith for the support of instream fish and wildlife, recreation, livestock, and domestic human consumption. The Commission also limited groundwater development in the subbasin. This decision protects fish, wildlife, recreation, and water quality and is a major win for what is arguably the most pristine coastal river in the Lower 48 states.

WaterWatch and a coalition of local, statewide, and national groups and businesses worked since 2015 to help pave the way for this decision.

Reserving the Smith's surface waters is important, as it will help safeguard the pristine waters of the North Fork Smith River into the future. Thanks to the Commission for taking this needed step to protect the spectacular North Fork Smith.

Smith River Watershed, Oregon



Though the Smith River enters the Pacific Ocean in California, 11.6% of its watershed, or 59,200 acres, lies in Oregon. Of this area, 98% lies within the North Fork Smith watershed. Map courtesy of Trout Unlimited.

Rogue River Fall Chinook Boosted

This year, the Rogue River is projected to have the biggest fall chinook return on the Pacific Coast south of the Columbia River for the second year running. The anticipated salmon return on the Rogue is just blowing other rivers away.

Last year the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife projected 246,900 fall chinook would return in the Rogue. This year the department is projecting a whopping 462,800 will return to the Rogue with the fall run.

The Rogue stands out compared to neighboring rivers such as the much larger Klamath River just to its south, which saw near record low fall chinook returns last year, and is still struggling this year. What might explain the relative health of these Rogue runs? Well, there are two key factors: 1) The Rogue's salmon have a dedicated water supply under federal law, shaped by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists each year to benefit fish; and 2) Thanks to your support, the Rogue has seen a series of high priority fish barriers removed in recent years. No river on our coast has seen so many high priority barriers removed. And no other river is doing so well.

The lesson here seems to be if you give the salmon a chance, they will respond, and people will benefit too. WaterWatch will continue to work to ensure the still crucial work of barrier removal continues in the Rogue, and the Rogue's example is replicated in other basins.



Coming Soon

We're excited to announce we will be unveiling a new WaterWatch logo and updated design for our newsletter and website this summer. Stay Tuned!



Join WaterWatch at the Big Float!

Beach party here we come!

WHEN: Saturday, July 14, 2018 - Bastille Day!
11:00 am - 7:00 pm

WHAT: The Portland summer celebration and annual fundraiser benefitting Human Access Project. Featuring four bands on two floating stages, two 100' long slip and slides and more!

WHY: To give our Willamette River a big community hug.

WHO: 4,000+ floaters, observers, and after-partiers. The Big Float is open to all ages. All floaters must wear a life jacket. It's a safe voyage, not a race. Join the flotilla and attend the grandest pool party Portland has ever seen!

WHERE: Tom McCall Bowl - Waterfront Park (SW Columbia & Naito). To get to this year's Big Float, Go By Transit! TriMet can get you right by the waterfront and yes, you can bring your water wings on board. To plan your trip to Waterfront Park, visit trimet.org to use their Trip Planner!

COST: \$5 through July 8th, \$10 after, \$15 Day of event. Discounted pricing under age 18.

More information is available at thebigfloat.com

Klamath Refuge Water Taken for Private Agribusiness

This March, in a move that reduced habitat for migratory birds during drought at the peak of spring waterfowl migration, and could set the stage for more of the lethal disease outbreaks which have claimed tens of thousands of birds on the Klamath refuges in recent years, federal water managers took 11,000 acre-feet of publicly owned water from the wetlands of Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge to benefit private agribusiness on the Klamath Project.

Specifically, managers took 4,000 acre-feet of water they had previously planned to move from Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge to Lower Klamath to reduce chronic water shortages at America's first federally designated waterfowl refuge. In addition, federal officials pumped roughly 7,000 acre-feet of water directly out of Lower Klamath wetlands critical for waterfowl migrating

on the Pacific Flyway. Managers publicly admitted the move would reduce breeding birds, a designated refuge purpose. In recent drought years, Lower Klamath has received as little as 17,000 acre-feet of water, resulting in birds packed together on what little wetland habitat remains, and sparking catastrophic disease outbreaks. In 2013, a similar move by water managers contributed to a summer outbreak of botulism that claimed 11,000 birds in the refuge complex.

WaterWatch and our allies will continue to bring public scrutiny and accountability to management of the Klamath refuges while we pursue ongoing litigation alongside our conservation allies to ensure eagles and ducks take priority over commercial agriculture on this irreplaceable designated fish and wildlife habitat.



Parched wetlands on Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, Sept. 20, 2013, after managers had taken refuge water that spring to benefit private agribusiness. Photo by Jim McCarthy.

Supporter Appreciation: Bob and Gayle Borst

Please tell us about yourself.

We live right by the water on East Evans Creek, part of the Rogue River Basin in southern Oregon, with two creeks running through our property.

We are licensed professional engineers, licensed general construction contractors, and licensed certified water right examiners, specializing in green building. We have a privately held company, Borst Engineering and Construction LLC, with our green showcase headquarters located here in the beautiful Evans Creek Valley. We provide engineering and construction design/build services for commercial and custom residential projects. Our focus and passion is hydronic radiant floor heating, passive solar heating, and water work projects.

We enjoyed a lot of hiking, backpacking, and skiing while raising our two sons, who are now adults with their own careers. We also belong to the Southern Oregon Fly Fishers and do a lot of fishing.

These days we've been doing a lot of building, so we aren't as active as we used to be.

How did you become a WaterWatch supporter?

We've been supporters since 2009. We were quite interested in seeing the Evans Creek area restored, and became aware of the WaterWatch efforts to remove the dams on Evans Creek and reached out Molly Whitney (WaterWatch's Development Director) one day to ask what we could do to help. We ended up becoming a sponsor at the annual auction in 2014.

What are your hopes for the future of the Rogue?

We'd like to see more salmon in the river, and see it protected in its natural state. It's a beautiful spot and we'd like to see it stay that way.

We're concerned with over allocation of water as we head into climate change, and the fact that this will

cause huge strain on fish. We would like to see steps taken to preserve flows for fish before we lose a lot of our fisheries.

What are your concerns for the future?

We're concerned for the country at large, but also encouraged about state level action, and the possibilities here.

Certainly there is good news around here. An Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist recently visited the creek on our property, doing a survey for lamprey, but he also found coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and steelhead. He had never found coho here before. It may have been first coho the Department ever recorded here. We are seeing the benefits of dam removal right where we live.

The local watershed council is also working to improve the culverts on our property. So the work of restoration continues, and that's exciting and hopeful.





WaterWatch in the Community

WaterWatch...

- ... Tabled at the Northwest Fly Tiers Expo in Albany
- ... Spoke on water issues to multiple college classes at Oregon State University
- ... Conducted a SPARK Lecture on Climate Change and Water at Portland's Lincoln High School
- ... Tabled at Wild Rivers Night in Portland
- ... Spoke on water law at Willamette Law School
- ... Spoke at the premiere of the film *Blue Heart* at Patagonia Portland
- ... Tabled at Sandy River Spey Clave



WaterWatch Welcomes... Board Member Kathryn "Katie" Walter



Katie is an attorney with Allied Employers, a labor and employment law firm, with a background in construction litigation and environmental engineering. Prior to moving to Oregon, she worked in government contracting in Washington D.C., including work with the Project on Government Oversight. In her free time, Katie is usually birdwatching or hiking with her dog, especially along the Oregon coast. If it is too rainy, she can be found curled up with a good book or playing her cello. We are thrilled to have Katie join the board!

Megan McAfee, Administrative Assistant



A native Oregonian, Megan felt compelled to enter the environmental movement prior to her college career, then earned a Bachelor's in Environmental Science from Humboldt State University. Welcome to the WaterWatch team Megan!



Do you want to invest in the health of Oregon's rivers, aquifers, and wetlands? *Please donate now!*

We rely on the support of donors like you to watchdog, defend, and restore Oregon's waters. There are many options for giving. Donations large and small help protect and restore Oregon's waters.

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Donations may be sent to:

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213 SW Ash Street, Suite 208
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Make a one-time or reoccurring donation at
waterwatch.org.

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Donating securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc.) can be one of the most effective, and economical, ways to support WaterWatch.

Estate Planning

When you include WaterWatch in your estate plans, you help secure a legacy of healthy rivers in Oregon. We can help you find a plan that meets your needs and benefits Oregon's rivers long into the future.

Fred Meyer Rewards

Take full advantage of your grocery runs by choosing WaterWatch to receive a percentage of eligible shopping through Fred Meyer Rewards.

WaterWatch is proud to participate in the following programs:



Telephone

Our Development Director, Molly, is available at (503) 295-4039 x0 to answer any questions, take a donation by credit card, or provide pertinent information regarding our many donation options.

Become a Monthly Donor

Monthly donations can be automatically deducted from your checking account or credit card. They keep your membership current and provide reliable support.

Workplace Giving

Many employers make it easy and efficient to donate through payroll contributions, and many will match your donation. Talk with your employer to find out if your workplace is able to help you support WaterWatch.

Donate Your Vehicle

WaterWatch accepts vehicle donations with Charity Connections, a non-profit vehicle donations program.



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Early bird tickets are on sale for \$125 now until September 1st at the link shown!