

# Network of Oregon Watershed Councils 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Gathering raises awareness and builds support for Oregon's Watershed Councils

## 2009 Gathering summary:



The 2009 Watershed Council Gathering took place at the beautiful Running Y Ranch in Klamath Falls, Oregon on October 27 – 30. This year's event was sponsored by 17 different organizations, many of which were on hand to meet and greet over 230 people that attended the three day event. Additional exhibitors displayed new products, services, and/or programs to watershed councils during networking breaks and evening receptions. Highlights of the 2009 Gathering included a welcome reception and art exhibit (pictured left), a pre conference tour, two watershed project field trips, fifteen different workshops, four keynote speakers, a panel

discussion, awards ceremony, and a BBQ with live music. The event not only provided workshops and trainings for watershed councils, but also provided an opportunity for local, state, and federal natural resource agencies, environmental consulting firms, non-profit organizations, and a variety of other watershed council partners to learn more about how to raise awareness and build support for Oregon's watershed councils.

## Featured author and artist inspire participants with their words and with their art:

On Tuesday evening after a long day of traveling to Klamath Falls, attendees were greeted with a warm fire, beer and wine, and hors d'oeuvre during a two hour welcome reception with featured author and artist Valerie Rapp and Jennifer Williams. Valerie Rapp spoke about her experiences living along the McKenzie River and how it has inspired her write about rivers and natural resource issues in Oregon. Joining her was landscape artist Jennifer Williams, who brought a number of different paintings that were inspired by the words that Valarie had expressed in her book *What the River Reveals*. Valerie explained that Jennifer's artwork was able to capture everything that she could not put into words and that their collaboration has helped them both find inspiration to express themselves through their respective mediums. Rapp encouraged conference attendees to find their voices and to tell their stories and those of their organizations. The partnership and collaboration between Val and Jennifer is a perfect example of what watershed councils are accomplishing in communities throughout Oregon.



Jennifer Williams and Valerie Rapp

## Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement Panel discussion highlights a model for environmental cooperation and natural resource management:



Wednesday morning attendees gathered together for the highly anticipated panel discussion that included six stakeholder groups who were involved in the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement. Two days prior, and again the day of the discussion, the local Klamath Falls newspaper covered the event and highlighted the statewide and national significance of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA). Facilitators Terry Morton from Cascade Solutions and James Honey from Sustainable Northwest (pictured left) outlined the structure of the

agreement and facilitated a discussion with the major interest groups involved. Panelists spoke candidly about what their interests were and agreed that the KBRA was not a perfect solution. However, many of them also praised the agreement and found that the process has helped alleviate a lot of uncertainties. Most panelists agreed that before the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement there was a high degree of uncertainty about whether or not decisions were going to be made that could negatively impact their interests.

**Thursday afternoon tours highlight challenges and opportunities throughout the Klamath Basin:** After hearing from members of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement in the morning, conference attendees participated in two different field trips that visited restoration sites and



discussed how to balance economic and environmental needs throughout the Basin. The Klamath Watershed Partnership, the Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, as well as local land owners, helped make these field trips possible. The first field trip visited four sites along the major tributaries of Klamath Lake. The different stops highlighted fish passage, water quantity, and irrigation, in the Wood River Valley and wetland restoration at the Williamson River Delta.

The second field trip visited the Goolds' Ranch and discussed how the Goolds have been able to incorporate sustainable ranching practices that have achieved water savings through irrigation efficiencies and dryland cropping, while also improving riparian functions along the Sprague River.



Land owner discussing sustainable ranching

**Expanded workshops highlight new opportunities for watershed councils and provide tools and resources for building effective organizations and getting projects on the ground:** This year's expanded workshops were very well attended and received positive



One of fifteen workshops at the Gathering

feedback from conference attendees. The organizational development workshops helped both watershed council staff and members identify tools and resources to help them build effective organizations. In addition, the emerging topics workshops and the advanced project management workshops provided opportunities for local, state, and federal natural resource agencies, environmental consulting firms, non-profit organizations, and a variety of other watershed council partners to learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing watershed councils across the state. The workshops also helped identify opportunities for local, state, and private businesses to partner with watershed councils to address these challenges.

**Keynote Speakers welcome watershed councils to Klamath County and challenge them to find new and innovative approaches to develop community based solutions while also getting the word out about the good work they are doing:** On Wednesday morning Klamath County Commissioner John Elliot (pictured below) welcomed everyone to Klamath County and spoke of the significant environmental and economic challenges that both watershed councils and communities are facing throughout Oregon. Specifically he mentioned the work that is being done in the Klamath Basin to find balanced solutions to these issues. After his



welcome address, Commissioner Elliot joined councils and partners for the rest of the conference. Earlier that morning plans were in place to have Congressman Walden welcome Gathering attendees via video from Washington DC. Unfortunately, the first winter storm of the season knocked out the internet connection at the Running Y Ranch and the video connection to his office failed. However, the Congressman was determined to make his remarks, and used his cell phone to call in and address the group. He spoke of the great work that watershed councils are doing, highlighted the partnerships that have been developed, and encouraged councils to continue to partner with

Federal and State programs and agencies. At lunch, former Lake County Commissioner, Jane O’Keefe (now with the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition), challenged councils to get the word out about the good work they are doing. As a former board member of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Ms. O’Keefe is very familiar with the work of watershed councils and praised councils for their tireless efforts to improve Oregon’s watersheds. After the awards ceremony on Wednesday evening, keynote speaker Todd Graham, President of Aeroscene Land Logic in Montana (pictured right), was able to bring a new perspective to the work of Oregon’s watershed councils. By highlighting examples from Montana, Mr. Graham encouraged councils to become social, economic, and environmental entrepreneurs and to find new and innovative approaches to develop community-based solutions. In summary, all of the speakers on Wednesday were able to provide watershed councils with relevant, interesting, and inspiring ideas to encourage them to continue to work towards healthy watersheds throughout Oregon.



### **Watershed council annual meeting asks councils to weigh in on “Measure 66” renewal funding and OWEB’s 5 year strategic plan:**

After the workshops on Wednesday morning, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils convened an assembly of Oregon’s watershed councils for their 2009 annual meeting. The goal of the Network board of directors was to discuss



two very important issues that will have a direct impact on the work of watershed councils now and in the future. Network Board members Jeff Oveson and Ryan Houston helped set the stage and invited feedback from councils to address any issues or concerns they may have with the proposed changes and renewal of “Measure 66”, which is now being called Parks and Natural Resources funding. Nan Evans, from The Nature Conservancy, one of the proponents of the renewal effort, also talked to councils about the reasons for early renewal, as well as the significance of securing this funding in perpetuity. The second

half of the annual meeting was dedicated to discussing the strategic planning process and strategic vision of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). Tom Byler, OWEB’s Executive Director, outlined the process and invited councils to provide input. Councils provided their thoughts on some of the major aspects of OWEB’s work, including their council support grants and other grant programs.

**Wednesday evening reception provides an opportunity for watershed councils and partners to welcome incoming Network Executive Director, Tom Obrien:**



Tom O'Brien and coordinator Eve Montanaro

Immediately following the annual meeting, watershed councils and partners had an opportunity to welcome Tom O'Brien to Oregon and to the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils. Before joining the Network as the new Executive Director, Tom was the Executive Director of the Watershed Agricultural Council of the New York City Watersheds, Inc. With a career built to date in Massachusetts and New York State, Tom comes to the Network with a tremendous background in watershed restoration, facilitation of natural resource issues, and nonprofit management. The hour-long reception provided councils and partners with an opportunity to hear from Tom about his travels to Oregon. In addition, Tom had the opportunity to meet and greet with councils over evening refreshments to discuss their work and the role of the Network in supporting their work around the state.

**Awards ceremony honors the hard work and dedication of watershed council volunteers and OWEB staff. It also provided an opportunity for a heartfelt goodbye to the Network's outgoing Executive Director, John Moriarty:**

On Wednesday evening after the banquet dinner, State Representative Bill Garrard helped present awards to three Watershed Council Volunteers, thanking them for their service to Oregon watershed councils and to the Network. Each award winner was presented with a glass statue and was given an opportunity to speak about their rewarding volunteer experiences with watershed councils. Don Mench from the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council and Charles Davis from the MiddleFork Willamette River Watershed Council each received the honor of the 2009 Oregon Watershed Steward award. Liz Redon, Coordinator of the North Santiam Watershed Council was presented with the 2009 Network Volunteer of the Year award for her volunteerism to the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils. Congratulations and thank you to all our award winners!



In addition to these awards, a special life time achievement award was given out by Dana Erickson and Paula Burgess to highlight the work of an OWEB staff member whose dedication to watershed councils has spanned generations and has inspired many fledgling councils and council coordinators. Ken Bierly, the Deputy Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement board was given a set of



Birkenstock sandal book ends (pictured above) as a testament to his unique choice of footwear and the inspiring words he has provided throughout his tenure. Last, but not least, the Chair of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, Denise Lofman, provided the outgoing Executive Director of the Network, John Moriarty (pictured left), with a special gift and heartfelt goodbye that highlighted John's work with the Network and the sincere and personal relationships he built with so many people along the way. To thank John for all his work with the Network, a special painting was commissioned and given to him during the awards ceremony.

The painting was created by Jennifer Williams and included the words of a letter John had written, beginning with the words "Every drop of water." Those words are the title of the painting and the actual letter and words are part of the canvas and visible under the paint. Thank you John, for all you have done with the Network and for the watershed councils of Oregon!