

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils 3rd Biennial Gathering a Success!

2007 Gathering summary

The 2007 Watershed Council Gathering took place in beautiful Hood River, Oregon on November 13 – 16. This year's event was sponsored by 24 different organizations, many of which were on hand to meet and greet the 195 people that attended the four day event. Additional exhibitors displayed new



ESA Adolfsen representative John Gordon

products, services, and/or programs to watershed councils during networking breaks and lunch periods. Highlights of the Gathering included a watershed project tour, twelve different workshop sessions, four keynote speakers, two lively panel discussions, and volunteer awards. Overall, the event was well attended by watershed councils, local, state, and federal natural resource agencies, environmental consulting firms, non-profit organizations, and a variety of other watershed council partners and conference sponsors.

Keynote speakers inspire participants

An excellent lineup of keynote speakers addressed the conference. On Wednesday morning, Hood River County Commissioner Les Perkins recommended watershed councils as a model for addressing other challenging needs such as sustainable local energy production and distribution. On Thursday afternoon, former Governor John Kitzhaber provided a passionate reminder of the importance of council restoration efforts and the perseverance necessary to accomplish lasting change. Thursday evening, Charles Hudson of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission offered a powerful and personal message about the commitment we are making to changes that will affect our grandchildren. On Friday morning, Angus Duncan of the Bonneville Environmental Foundation outlined a broad social and natural context within which councils must work to address future challenges. One conference participant noted that the keynote speakers provided a “tremendous combination of knowledge and perspective.” An audio recording of each keynote speaker will soon be available on the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils website.



The Network presents gift to former Gov. Kitzhaber

Watershed project tour kicks off four day conference

After high winds and heavy rainfall on Monday, conference participants were pleasantly surprised to have sunny skies and amazing mountain views just in time for the Tuesday afternoon Watershed



Commissioner Les Perkins explains fish screens

Project Tour. The tour was co-sponsored by the Hood River Watershed Group, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. Over 50 participants enjoyed presentations and tours at four restoration sites in the Hood River Watershed. Many tour participants had previous restoration experience and used the tour as a way to learn from the experience of other restoration practitioners. Some tour participants noted that their level of understanding and support for community-based restoration increased because of the tour.

Organizational and technical workshops inform conference participants



Hood River County Commissioner Les Perkins welcomed approximately 135 conference participants to the Hood River area on Wednesday morning. He said during his seven years as a county commissioner he has seen firsthand the unique attributes of the watershed councils in making decisions. “Their collaborative nature allows voices from all perspectives to contribute,” Perkins said. After the morning address it was a busy day of workshops and

training sessions. Approximately 65 volunteers and presenters helped organize and conduct 12 organizational and technical training workshops. Workshop participants indicated that the sessions were right on target and met their expectations and training needs.



Diversifying funding workshop

Policy discussions provide councils with new perspectives and ideas for the future

Two separate panels that included representatives from the Governor’s office, state natural resource agencies, conservation organizations, tribal interests, the timber industry, agriculture, and watershed



Panelists discuss the Oregon Plan

councils engaged the participants and each other in policy discussions about the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. On Thursday, panelists discussed the origins and evolution of the Oregon Plan. That discussion provided a backdrop for Friday’s panel which challenged Oregon natural resource leaders to provide new ideas and strategies to continue to make the Oregon Plan an internationally recognized approach to salmon recovery and watershed restoration. Both panels generated lively discussions and identified watershed councils as leaders for conservation in their local communities.

Annual meeting highlights Network accomplishments, solicits feedback from councils, and initiates \$10,000 pledge drive!

After a night of music and dancing at the Network’s concert fundraiser in downtown Hood River it was back to business on Thursday morning for the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils’ Annual Meeting. The meeting began with words from John McDonald (Oregon Association of Conservation Districts) and Tom Byler (Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board). Hearing from two of the Network’s major partner organizations helped reinforce the importance of outreach efforts for both councils and the Network.

John Moriarty, Network statewide coordinator, provided an in depth look at the background and history of the Network and its accomplishments. This included thanking an amazing list of people and organizations for their support and contributions over the years. The meeting concluded with a panel/council discussion which included both current and past Network Board members. The panel asked watershed councils to provide input and ideas to the board about different strategies to attract both human and financial resources to the Network. The discussion reinforced the importance of developing an advisory council for the Network Board

In addition, Coast Fork Watershed Council Coordinator Pam Reber proposed that watershed councils around the state match a \$10,000 private donation by pledging \$200 or more to support the Network. By the end of the afternoon over \$5,000 in pledges had been made (pending council board approval).

Rep. Patti Smith presents awards to both Network and watershed council volunteers

The event came to a close on Friday with State Representative Patti Smith presenting awards to both Network and Watershed Council Volunteers, thanking them for their service to Oregon watershed councils. Each award winner was presented with a certificate of appreciation and the book, *Rivers of*



America, signed by author and photographer Tim Palmer. Bud Baumgartner of the Calapooia Watershed Council and Rennie Ferris of the MidCoast Watersheds Council shared the honor for the 2007 Watershed Council Members of the Year. Jeff Oveson of the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Council was presented with the 2007 Network Member Volunteer of the Year award, and John Runyon was presented with the 2007 Network Community Volunteer of the Year award. Congratulations and thank you to all our award winners.

John Moriarty Introduces Rep. Patti Smith and Network Chair Liz Redon

In sum, both anecdotal and evaluation feedback indicate an extremely successful event. Speakers and participants were nearly unanimous in their sense of the value of the 2007 Watershed Council Gathering. Respondents pointed to the opportunities for informal networking—as well as formal sessions—in describing their appreciation of the conference.