



Friends of the Metolius

Protecting The Metolius Basin
since 1990

Winter Newsletter, 2019 – 20
Highlights in this Issue:

President's Corner
Page 2

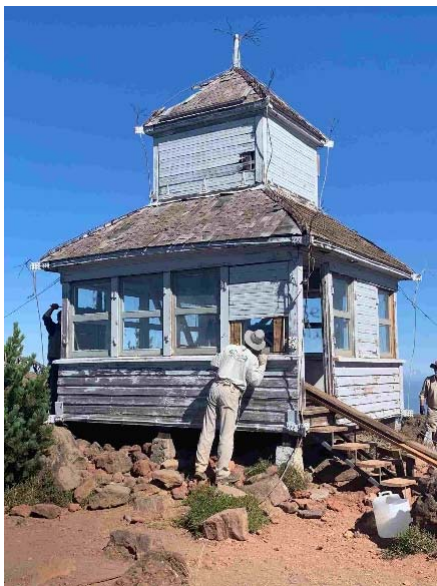
Fisherman's Page
Page 3

Heritage Demo Update
Page 4

Donate to *Friends*
Page 6

Black Butte Cupola Restoration

Friends of the Metolius, in collaboration with the Forest Service and numerous local volunteers, completed structural repairs on the 1920s cupola on Black Butte in September. Lanny Schriener, a Camp Sherman resident and retired contractor, lead the all-volunteer effort. This was a major project to restore the iconic structure that is one of the most visited spots in the Deschutes National Forest. The cupola is one of three remaining D-6 style buildings. The harsh weather on top of the butte had badly degraded the building and it was in danger of collapsing.



Phase 1 included new roofing, new siding, new shutters, new flooring, repaired supporting structures, and much more. This was completed in October just as the weather was turning and the cupola is now buttoned up and ready for winter.



Next spring or summer phase 2 begins: we will renovate and furnish the interior so that it is ready for public viewing.

Please email us at friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com if you'd like to be on the list to volunteer for Phase 2.

President's Corner

When the Metolius Wild and Scenic River Management Plan was adopted in 1995 it recognized that the river was at its carrying capacity in terms of visitor numbers. Owing in large part to that recognition, commercial activity on the river is prohibited without a special use permit. This is the reason why guided fishing, rafting and kayaking are prohibited on the river.

Nearly 25 years have passed and in those years the population in Central Oregon has skyrocketed – often at the highest rate in the nation. Mirroring this, the number of visitors to the Metolius has risen dramatically. This single factor presents one of the biggest challenges that Friends is dealing with; namely, how do we mitigate environmental damage that inevitably accompanies increasing numbers of visitors? As aptly stated by a former Forest Service employee, “How do we get all these people to stop loving the Metolius to death?”

The Wild and Scenic River Management Plan enumerates many tasks that are intended to protect the river. While good progress has been made in accomplishing these tasks there is much work to be done. Friends is actively working on several projects that were contemplated by the management plan. For instance, noxious weed eradication has been a major Friends initiative for many years. In 2020 we hope to install infrared cameras along the river to get counts of the number of boaters, and perhaps the number of hikers. These are just a few examples.

As usual, we have many other active projects. We highlight some of them in this newsletter. The Black Butte cupola restoration was a super-exciting project that received a lot of media attention. Invasive weed eradication continues. And our two newest board members, Bret Campbell and Gavin Ferguson, are avid fishermen who keep a close eye on the river and its fish biology.

All of the work that Friends does is funded by you, our members. We have no staff and the board receives no compensation. So we rely on

your generosity and ask you to continue to support Friends with financial donations. If you have some time and are interested in getting engaged in on-the-ground projects, there are volunteer opportunities available, including: weed warriors, trail crew, interpretive walk leaders, helping with the Black Butte cupola restoration.

You can always reach us at friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com.

Doug Hancock

Bait Boxes are a Problem

Here's a heads up about a problem that is killing squirrels. Extermination companies are putting out bait boxes around homes and cabins that are supposed to target mice and rats. However, most have holes in them that allow squirrels to enter and consume the poison bait. The poison makes the victim seek water and travel in search of it until they die. To make matters worse, once it has died, other critters may feed on the carcass, ingesting the poison as well. Through this secondary poisoning it works its way into the food chain. Even the boxes with small holes that keep squirrels out allow affected mice to spread the poison around the neighborhood. Bait boxes are prohibited on National Forest Lands.

This problem can be best dealt with by those who use these exterminator services. Just ask them to not use a bait box outside of the home or cabin. And share this information with a neighbor who does use one of these services.

There are many poison-free methods of dealing with mouse infestations that can be found online. A lot of them revolve around the use of a bucket of water or a conventional mouse trap.

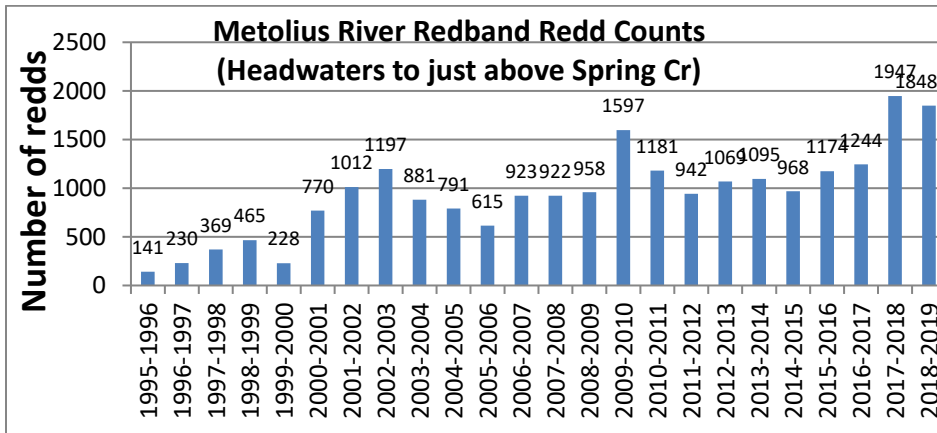
Our native squirrel population has enough challenges trying to survive cats, coyotes and birds of prey hunting them down. Bait boxes are a threat that should be easy to eliminate.

Fisherman's Page

Healthy Redds

You may have noticed people inspecting the river every autumn, often lying prone in the cold water with a mask over their face while they inspect the streambed. What are they doing? Counting redds!

Two winters ago, the Metolius saw its largest Redband redd count to date. This past winter was another good reproduction year for the native Redband trout. The total redds for the year was just shy of the previous year. In our water quality testing the River is healthy. We did see one little spike of E. coli from the fishing pond outlet in the spring. This was also the same time the geese were raising their goslings in that area. The next month the out flow of the pond tested fine.



Great Fishing

As the fishing days grow fewer, the heart grows more wistful.” Mary Orvis Marbury (1892)

With Central Oregon enjoying a warm, smoke-free autumn, Metolius fly fishermen are reporting a productive fall season and a healthy trout population. Jeff Perin (The Fly Fisher’s Place, Sisters) believes that the Metolius is fishing as well as it ever has. Based on both angler reports (credible?) and redd counts (reliable) trout numbers continue to increase. Jeff credits the Forest Service’s decade-old introduction of woody structure into the river with providing critical holding water and protection for the Metolius’ native fish. You may recall that Friends were very active in the wood introduction efforts.

For the dry fly fisherman, Adam Bronstein (Metolius River Outfitters, Camp Sherman) reports midday BWO hatches and afternoon October Caddis hatches. Dry flies have been productive from noon until about 3 pm, but warmer weather can mean rising fish until dark. Nymphing, whether using American or European techniques, is also producing good results throughout the day. Jeff says that his go-to dry fly this fall has been an ancient pattern – the Quill Gordon, first tied by Theodore Gordon in the early 1900s for brook trout. In 1938 Ray Bergman described it in *Trout* as “particularly effective,” while in 1958 Joe Brooks listed it in *Fly Fishing* as one of the ten dry flies he would use “country-wide.” Thankfully, Metolius trout don’t read.

Bull Trout move into the Metolius’ tributaries to spawn during the fall, but by late November should be more widely-distributed throughout the river. Adam reports increased numbers of Bull Trout redds, which indicates a healthy and growing population. Targeting these aggressive fish with large streamer patterns, fished either with a sunk tip or dead drifted under an indicator, is the preferred method. One Bend angler described to this reporter his recent netting of a two-foot Bull Trout that would not let go of a small rainbow he had hooked. It appears that Bull Trout are unaware of the Metolius’ strict catch and release rules.

Heritage Forest Demo Updates

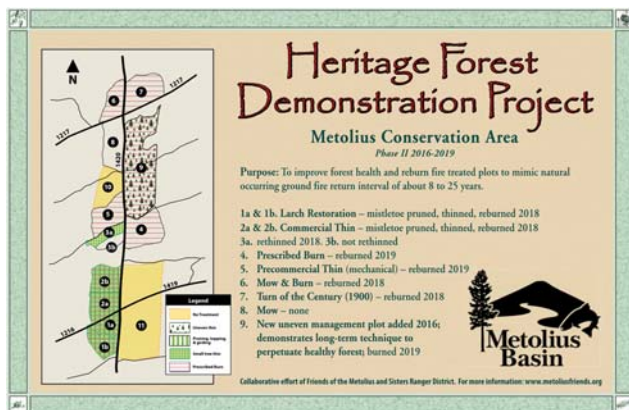
The Heritage Forest Demonstration project was implemented in the years 2001-2003. Plots were established to show residents and visitors what forest restoration might look like. Phase II re-treatments and new treatments have been implemented beginning in 2016. Phase II includes additional pruning, thinning, prescribed burning, and the establishment of an uneven aged management plot. Existing signs do a great job of capturing the original 2001-2003 treatments. They don't, however, describe phase II treatments and updated signs are needed.

The first sign to be replaced is the large, rather obtrusive 4 x 8 foot sign at Four-Corners. It describes the whole project. This sign will be replaced by two smaller signs, one that describes the original project and another that describes Phase II treatments. Timeline: December 2019 or early 2020, depending on weather.

Some individual plot signs need Phase II treatments added. Some signs will be replaced and some will have smaller signs added that describe Phase II treatments. Prototypes are being developed. Keep an eye out for the appearance of these updated signs in 2020.

Plant Identification Signs Replaced

The plant identification signs along the Black Butte Trail were over 25 years old. Most were either broken or missing. This past summer, Friends collaborated with the Sisters Ranger District and retired USFS Ecologist, Maret Pajutee, to replace the signs and to add two new signs to identify the Black Butte fire scars. Rod Bonacker, retired USFS Special Projects Coordinator, assisted in sign location marking. The Sisters Forest Service Youth Conservation Corp crew carried the signs up the Butte, removed old posts, and installed new signs.



Native Plant Reintroduction

In an ongoing effort to restore native plants along the Metolius River, Friends collaborated with the Forest Service and the Oregon Department of Agriculture in spraying invasive plants from the Tract C Bridge down to Lower Bridge, a total of 10 river miles. On October 1-3, 2019, ribbon grass, yellow iris and reed canary grasses were treated with approved herbicides. On Forest Service river sections this was a re-treatment and on private lands the first treatment.

We expect most invasives will be killed, allowing native species to slowly re-occupy dozens of sites along the riverbanks; this will probably take several years as evidenced by past Friends work along Lake Creek.

In May/June 2020 an effectiveness survey will be conducted on private and public lands, and with that information we will decide if follow-up spraying is needed.

These invasive plants will probably never be eliminated, but their presence will be minor and native plants abundant. That is our goal. The outstanding cooperation of summer cabin owners, private landowners and all who care about the river is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

A few populations of ribbon grass and yellow iris were not sprayed because they are within 100' of a well. This winter Friends and the Forest Service will decide on how to control these sites near summer cabins. Options include hand removal and solarization. If you have any ideas please let us know. We hope to take action this coming summer.

In addition, the Camp Sherman Weed Warriors hand pulled knapweeds, Scotch broom and other invasives on dozens of sites in the Basin. These folks have been at this for 20 years and their effort is paying off. If you want to join us or want more information contact Pete Schay, mp.schay@gmail.com.



Website Updates

We are always striving to improve our website at www.metoliusfriends.org. There are several new posts with photos and information about the Black Butte cupola restoration project, and all water quality testing results from 2019 are now uploaded to the mapping software that implements the search and graphing functions for our water quality data (www.metoliusfriends.org/metolius-map/). If you ever want to investigate water quality information for the Metolius, our mapping pages are the best source available. Repeated thanks to our software expert, Rick Thomas!

If you find it easier to make donations online rather than with a check, we've made it easy to donate online, too.

And if you are a photographer who would like to have some of your images of the Metolius Basin highlighted on our website, just get in touch. We have photos from several photographers uploaded and can always use more.