



# Friends of the Metolius

Protecting The Metolius Basin  
since 1990

Winter Newsletter, 2020 – 2021  
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## Black Butte Cupola Restoration

COVID and wildfires slowed progress on the second phase of the Black Butte Cupola restoration project, but significant work was accomplished, nonetheless. The project components included: repairing and painting the interior, constructing furniture per the 1920 plans for the lookout, constructing a viewing deck and new stairs on the front of the Cupola. Over the winter months, a group of retired woodworkers constructed a bed and table based on the original plans from the 1920s. Youth Conservation Corps members carried the furnishings up the Butte to the cupola in July and assembled the furniture, and a local contractor built the steps and deck.



The project won an Oregon Heritage Excellence Award! Check our website at [www.metoliusfriends.org](http://www.metoliusfriends.org) for details and to watch a video that features the project.



*President's Corner*

2020 has been a year of challenge across the globe. We are in a raging and worsening pandemic. We have experienced devastating wildfires. Millions in the U.S. alone face economic uncertainty. Many cities in the U.S. and elsewhere are experiencing civil unrest. I, for one, will be glad to bid adieu to 2020. But I am an optimist and know that there are brighter days ahead. Among other things, I am hopeful that we can stem the relentless assault on environmental protections for our overburdened planet. There is a lot of work to be done. Let's get started!

Measured against the problems we all face, the challenges to Friends of the Metolius in the past year have been trivial. Perhaps diving into good work brought a sense of normalcy to an otherwise very abnormal year. Out of public health concerns, volunteer programs such as Adopt-a-Trail and interpretive walks were canceled for the year. The board of directors have become accustomed to meetings via Zoom, by teleconference, and on widely-spaced picnic tables at the Community Hall. Through it all, Friends have accomplished a significant amount of work.

We highlight in this issue some of the projects that we have been working on this year. High on that list are noxious weed eradication efforts, the now-award-winning Black Butte cupola restoration project, and ongoing water quality monitoring. If you visited the basin this past summer, especially in the early days of lockdown, you know that visitor numbers skyrocketed and that dispersed camping was rampant while the campgrounds were closed. We are launching data collection projects to get data on the number of visitors driving into the basin and numbers of hikers on certain trails. And we are planning a comprehensive inventory of dispersed campsites. This information will be invaluable in coming years.

As you can see from the other articles in this newsletter, there are many things Friends are doing to benefit this "slice of heaven" that we all love so much. Your donations are important to

these efforts and future projects. All of the work that Friends does is funded by you, our supporters. We have no staff and the board receives no compensation. We rely on your generosity and ask you to continue to support Friends with financial donations.

Keep in mind that Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, permits eligible individuals who do not itemize deductions to deduct \$300 of qualified charitable contributions as an "above-the-line" deduction, i.e., as an adjustment in determining adjusted gross income, for tax years beginning in 2020. If you qualify for this deduction, please consider including Friends in your donations for 2020.

So, we ask you, please, dig into your pockets and contribute. Thanks in advance for whatever you can do to support this worthy cause. You can send a check directly to us or use the donation link on our web page, [www.metoliusfriends.org](http://www.metoliusfriends.org).

Even though politics have divided much of the country, there are a few things that nearly everyone agrees on. One of those is the majesty of the Metolius Basin and the need to protect it. That is our only mission and we will continue our quest to carry it out. I speak on behalf of the entire board of directors when I say that we wish you health and security in the coming year, and we hope to see you along the river in 2021!

You can always reach us at [friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthemetolius@gmail.com).



### ***Data Collection to Support the Wild & Scenic Metolius River***

The numbers of recreational users in the Metolius Basin has increased dramatically, a trend which has only accelerated during Covid-19. In order to manage visits and mitigate damage caused by increasing visitor numbers, it is critical to develop a data-driven management plan for the Metolius river.

Thirty-two years ago, on October 28, 1988, the Metolius River was designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This designation, which covers the river from its headwaters to Lake Billy Chinook, was designed to preserve the Metolius in a free-flowing condition “for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” The Wild and Scenic Rivers System is managed by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, which consists of representatives of the four wild and scenic rivers administering agencies, the BLM, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs federal river-administering agencies to address user capacities in a comprehensive river management plan prepared for each designated river. “User capacities” for purposes of the management plans includes visitor use, other public use, and administrative use, with particular emphasis on the recreational aspect of visitor use.

In 2018, the Interagency Council released a technical paper, *Steps to Address User Capacities for Wild and Scenic Rivers*, which recommends the use of a 9-step framework for addressing user capacities on designated rivers like the Metolius. Step 1 recommends the development of a description of “baseline and current conditions of river values, as well as the existing kinds and amounts of public and other use in the WSR corridor.”

To support the development of these baselines, Friends has undertaken a data capture project on the amount of public use in the Metolius basin, focusing initially on two data points: (1) the number of recreational users on the streamside trail system; and (2) the number of vehicles on the Basin’s main roadways.

#### ***How We Collect Data***

With respect to trail users, Friends has installed two game cameras on the east and west side of the river trail, which are triggered when users break an infrared beam. The resulting images are periodically downloaded and fed through a computer program that uses artificial intelligence to screen out false positives – deer, for example – and generate a simple spreadsheet of the number of daily users.

For vehicles, Friends has been working with stakeholders, Jefferson County and the Forest Service, to obtain the necessary permissions to install electronic traffic counting equipment on FS Road 14, the entry road coming into the area from Highway 20. We anticipate that the equipment will be installed early next spring. Initially we will be recording daily vehicle traffic during the heavy summer months. While vehicle counts are greatly reduced in the winter, we will continue to collect data (provided the snow cover isn’t too deep for the electronics to function properly!). You will not notice the traffic counting equipment – it will be buried. But it will be doing its job every time a vehicle passes by. As with data from the game cameras, we plan to generate spreadsheets, share the results with the agencies involved, and upload it to our website.

Our hope is that Friend’s data collection program will help support these development efforts and ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy the Metolius in its free flowing and unspoiled condition.

### *Native Plant Restoration*

Do you remember last fall when invasive plants that out-compete our native Metolius River riparian species were treated with herbicides? There was more treatment this year. The surviving populations of ribbon grass, yellow iris and reed canary grass were re-sprayed by a Forest Service/Oregon Department of Agriculture crew in early October. Friends assisted with the treatment of private lands along the river. The weather was perfect, the crew well organized and all went according to plan. Last year's spraying resulted in a 95% reduction in treated populations. This 2020 re-treatment will reduce these invasive species even more and over time, native plants will reoccupy the sites. However, some areas were not sprayed and anyone walking along the trail in Tracts H and O will see areas with healthy ribbon grass and yellow iris; these were not sprayed because they are too close to potable wells, but they are still targeted and we expect to design a control method next year.



(Perennial peavine)

In addition, perennial peavine was sprayed. This spreading vine is noticeable along fences just below the Camp Sherman bridge, but occurs in scattered sites farther downstream too. The small population of false brome at the Headwaters was re-treated.

The areas treated this year will be monitored in June 2021 and may be re-sprayed in the fall. We may never extirpate noxious weeds, but we will continue efforts to control them.

In 2005 Friends and the Forest Service began a partnership to study control options. In 2013 the first herbicide application was done at Gorge Campground. More treatments were done from 2014 -2018 and last year all populations except those near certain wells were sprayed from the Tract C Bridge to below Lower Bridge. The 2020 re-treatment used 66% less herbicide than the 2019 application and if another spraying happens next year a similar reduction in chemicals is expected. Water testing during applications has shown no detectable herbicides in the river.

### *Looking Ahead: Projects on the Drawing Board*

We have never been a group that is satisfied to sit back and relax. There is always a lot of work to be done. Here are a few of the projects that we will be working on in 2021. Some are continuations of existing projects, and some are new initiatives. If you are interested in volunteering on any project, we would love to hear from you.

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**Field Guide:** common plants of the Metolius Basin. This winter a team of volunteers will work on a guidebook featuring flowers, trees, and some invasive plants that you will see in the basin.



**Black Butte Summit:** collaborating with the Forest Service, Friends will work on a management plan for the top of Black Butte to better manage visitors and minimize damage from existing meandering trails.

**Black Butte Cupola:** we hope to install interpretive signs at the now-restored cupola and kick off a "docent for a day" program. If you are interested in participating in the program, please get in touch.

## *Metolius Fishing Report*

“Fall fishing is a revival after the quieter times of summer.” Roderick Haig-Brown (1964)

“Quiet” would not be the best word to describe the summer of 2020 on the Metolius. Even before Memorial Day weekend, the river was seeing crowds and overflowing parking lots as a result of increased visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Then, from mid-August through the end of September, much of the Camp Sherman area was under evacuation warnings as a result of the Green Ridge and Lionshead wildfires. Fortunately, due to the hard work and bravery of hundreds of fire fighters, none of the fires moved into the Metolius basin.

On a positive note, the evacuation warnings and unhealthy air quality levels suppressed angler numbers and gave Metolius trout a rare break from fishing pressure during these normally busy months. On September 22, the first day the Forest Service re-opened the river below Allingham Bridge, healthy fish were actively feeding (see photo right).

Jeff Perin of the Fly Fisher’s Place in Sisters reports that dry fly fisherman had good success this fall imitating mayflies with BWO Sparkle Duns, PMD Film Critics, and Quill Gordons. Productive caddis flies included large October Caddis and, when the sun was on the water, smaller tan Elk Hair Caddis patterns.

For the nymph fisherman, October Caddis Pupa and Golden Stone Nymphs are recommended for fall and early winter on the Metolius. Perdigon nymphs, originally developed by Spanish fly fishermen for the shallow, clear streams of the Pyrenees, are a great choice for a second trailing fly. This simple, fast-sinking pattern can be dressed in almost any color combination, although the tail is traditionally tied with fibers from the saddle of a coq de León rooster.

From behind the fly counter at the Camp Sherman Store, Eric Gunson reports that fall anglers have had good success targeting Bull Trout. The Metolius enjoys healthy populations

of both resident fish and migratory Bulls that follow the Kokonee up during their spawning run from Lake Billy Chinook. Eric recommends swinging or dead-drifting large, flashy streamer patterns like the Dolly Llama when pursuing these big fish. Adding a trailing egg pattern (known locally as “bacon and eggs”) can help increase the odds of a hook-up.

“Best of all he loved the fall ... the fall with the tawny and grey, the leaves yellow on the cottonwoods, leaves floating on the trout streams and above the hills the high blue windless skies.” Ernest Hemingway (1939)



## *Website Updates*

We are always working to improve our website at [www.metoliusfriends.org](http://www.metoliusfriends.org). There are several new posts with photos and information about the Black Butte cupola restoration project, the Oregon Heritage Excellence Award, and all water quality testing results from 2020 are now uploaded to the mapping software that implements the search and graphing functions for our water quality data ([www.metoliusfriends.org/metolius-map/](http://www.metoliusfriends.org/metolius-map/)).

Check it out!